

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

THE TRUE WORLD WONDER

I often hear references made to the “Seven Wonders of the World,” but until recently, I never really knew what they were. With a little research, I found some very useful information. Considered by the ancient Greeks and Romans to be the greatest feats of mankind, these “wonders” represented the seeming inexhaustibility of man’s creativity.

These seven “wonders” include:

1. The Pyramids of Egypt (26th century B.C.)—Incredibly well designed and symmetrical buildings erected as tombs and temples by the Egyptians.
2. The “Hanging Gardens” of Babylon (600 B.C.)—Designed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to remind his wife of her homeland (they did not actually “hang;” instead, they grew from the roofs and sides of palace buildings.
3. The Statue of Zeus (5th century B.C.)—The main sculpture (a 40-ft. representation of the mythical god Zeus) contained in the Temple of Zeus in Olympia, Greece.
4. The Temple of Artemis (356 B.C.)—A massive ornate temple located in Ephesus.
5. The Mausoleum of Halicarnassus (353 B.C.)—A beautifully sculpted tomb for King Mausolus of Caria (from whose burial tomb we get our word “mausoleum”).
6. The Colossus of Rhodes (280 B.C.)—A 100-ft. statue of the Greek sun god Helios, erected to guard the entrance to the harbor at Rhodes.
7. The Pharos of Alexandria (280 B.C.)—An ancient lighthouse in Alexandria, Egypt standing 440-ft. tall.

Each of the edifices mentioned above is quite impressive. However, with a closer examination, some facts should strike the inquisitive mind:

1. Four out of the seven mentioned above represent either an idol or a temple erected to worship idols. This should be an indication of the idolatrous tendencies of ancient man. But has man changed? *“Mortify, therefore...covetousness, which is idolatry”* (Col. 3:5).
2. Of the seven “wonders” of the ancient world, only one is left intact—the Pyramids of Egypt (and many of them are badly damaged). Though ancient (and modern) man often set(s) up monuments to his own achievements (Gen. 11:1-9), only God’s Word will stand forever: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away”* (Mat. 24:35). And with that in mind, how should we live? *“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness”* (2 Pet. 3:11).
3. The greatest “wonder” of the world is not mentioned: Jesus Christ. Though each one of the above was erected before the birth of Jesus, had those who recognized them been followers of Jehovah, they would have known the Messiah would come. *“For unto us a child is born...and His Name shall be called Wonderful...”* (Isa. 9:6). *“...The chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did...”* (Mat. 21:15).

Indeed, man is quick to praise his own works, to glory in his own abilities. However, the humble heart of the Christian should not look to his own accomplishments, but instead say with the Psalmist, *“Oh that men would praise the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!”* (Psa. 107:8, 15, 21, 31).

-Chris Perry

“...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel...” (Amos 7:8)

HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE?

Text: _____

I. Be _____ of the Scriptures

Notes:

II. Be _____ of the Scriptures

Notes:

III. Be _____ of the Scriptures

Notes:

ALL ABOUT THE CHURCH

Text: _____

I. The _____ of the Church

Notes:

II. The _____ of the Church

Notes:

III. The _____ of the Church

Notes:

“Daddy, I want to ask you a question,” said little Bobby after his first Sunday school. “Yes, Bobby, what is it?” “The teacher was reading the Bible to us, all about the children of Israel building the temple, the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel making sacrifices. Didn’t the grown-ups do anything?”

CLEAN THE TANK, AND KILL THE FISH

I was a young father. I wanted some tropical fish for the kids. I really wanted them for me. I knew to be prepared. Have the tank ready before you buy the fish. I did.

I bought a used tank for five dollars. It had a leak. I fixed it. Then I scrubbed it up really good with hot, sudsy water and some strong cleaners to get the stains off the glass and slate bottom. Things were perfect.

We filled the tank with fresh water and installed a heater, which brought the water up to just the right temperature. All was great.

We bought some fish—cheap ones, and slipped them gently into the water. Within a couple of days they were all “belly up” and floating on top of the sparkling clear water. Stupid fish! The kids cried. I almost did. I was a failure.

I asked a friend who had a jillion healthy fish what I had done wrong. He grilled me. I felt like a killer. His diagnosis: I WAS a killer! The cleansers killed them. In my attempt to “clean things up,” I had destroyed the ones I was trying to preserve and nourish. I learned a lot that week.

The biggest I learned was that in life, while we are trying to fix things and purge out impurities, we may, through, our will-meaning but overexcited convictions, destroy the ones we proposed to love, salvage, and rescue. While you are priding yourself in cleaning out the tank, you can kill the fish. Jesus wouldn’t like that. Neither would the apostle Paul, for he said in II Timothy 2:24 to “*be gentle unto all men.*”

Remember, fish are cheap—souls are not! Please, be careful!

“*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient*” - II Timothy 2:24).

-Tom Butterfield

STOOP DOWN TO REACH GOD’S HIGHEST GIFTS

F.B. Meyer once said: “I used to think that God’s gifts were on shelves one above the other, and that the taller we grew in Christian character the easier we could reach them. I now find that God’s gifts are on shelves one beneath the other. It is not a question of growing taller but of stooping lower; that we have to go down, always down, to get His best gifts.”

“*Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time*” (I Peter 5:6).

THE BOOK OF CONVERSIONS

It has been pointed out that the New Testament is arranged much like the gospel plan of salvation is laid out. Matthew encourages his readers to hear (Matthew 17:5), Mark encourages his readers to believe (Mark 16:16), Luke encourages his readers to repent (Luke 13:3,5), and John confirms man's faith in Christ by revealing the wonders and signs performed, much like one's confession confirms that in which he believes (John 20:30-31; Romans 10:9-10). Now as the book of Acts unfolds, the precepts previously mentioned culminate in the precious and faith-filled act of baptism unto the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16); and then the remainder of the Bible contains instructions as to how to live faithfully.

The book of Acts contains precisely what its name would indicate "the acts of the apostles." In other words, the book of Acts contains the actions with which the apostles fulfilled their final commission to be witnesses unto Christ "*both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*" (Acts 1:8). Its account spans a time period of almost forty years, from the ascension of Christ to Paul's two year house arrest in Rome. Most of the first half of the book chronicles the actions of all of the apostles, mainly Peter (Acts 1-12) and the second half of the book records mainly the work of Paul and those associated with him (Acts 9-28). Its purpose in preserving these accounts is to reveal when and how the church was established and the extent to which it spread into all of the world; first in Jerusalem (Acts 1-7), then to all Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8-9), and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 10-28). The book of Acts is a success story of an "underdog" the world supposed would never amount to anything, but came to be, grew, and impacted the entire world for good (Acts 17:6).

Though the human writer of this book does not name himself, from all accounts and evidences the penman has been concluded to be Luke. From all antiquity Luke has been believed to be the writer of both Acts and the third gospel account referred to by his own name. And when one compares Acts 1:1 with Luke 1:1-4, the exact parallels easily allow one to conclude the same. Luke was a common companion of Paul in his journeys and endeavors for Christ, and was actually imprisoned with him at Rome in the mid A.D. 60s (II Timothy 4:11). It is believed that it was at this time that Luke actually did the writing of the book, inspired of God (II Timothy 3:16).

The value of the book of Acts cannot be adequately expressed. Not only does it provide a vast amount of instruction, examples, implications, and doctrine, but it also serves as a tool of encouragement to every child of God. It is doubtful that a Christian has ever lived and died that did not in some way wonder in fear about the great task assigned to all children of God to teach the lost and build up the kingdom. Especially in the last several decades has doubt arisen to the validity of the church's task of teaching all nations the truth. But the book of Acts proves it can be done and emphasizes the fact that it must be done. In this book one reads of the primitive methods to which the apostles and first century Christians were limited, and yet their vast success in preaching the word in every place to which they were scattered abroad (Acts 8:1-4). Some might claim the time just is not right for the entire world to hear the gospel, but the book of Acts proves that the time is always right for the world to be taught. The world needs the gospel and this book proves that it can be taken to every one.

Likewise is this book of value to encourage all Christians to stay the course regardless of what may betide. New Testament Christianity is the best life there is, but is also a most difficult life to live. There are, and always have been, pressures in this world trying their best to belittle the blessings of Christianity and disprove the very foundation upon which it rests. With all of the trouble heaped upon the church it is easy to see what appears to be "greener pastures" out in the world. However, the records provided in the book of Acts of those dedicated servants of God in the early church should be a motivation to every child of God to stay the course. Christians risked, and often lost, life and limb in order to have the privilege of serving their God in spirit and truth, and when put to death they often suffered it gladly looking forward to the glory that awaited them. If not for the book of Acts, this great motivation by brethren of ages past would be lost and not be the great tool for good that it currently is. Any Christian who has to sacrifice a little money of their abundant wealth, or give a little of their time for the greatest cause should be ashamed of themselves in view of the extent to which those brethren suffered so many years ago. We, like the apostles, should not be able but to speak the things we have "seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

The book of Acts is such a precious jewel in the treasure chest of the Bible. Most importantly it is of value by its revelation as to how the soul can truly be converted and enjoy the blessed hope for eternity found in Christ Jesus. May we never take for granted all God has done, but instead use His blessings to be a blessing in the life of another as did those recorded in the book of Acts.

-Andy Brewer