

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of The Chronicles: God's Preservation Of His Davidic And Levitical Covenants

XLI. Heeding Scripture Over Competing Religions

(2 Chronicles 29:1-31:21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We believers at Nepaug Bible Church face several "religions" that strongly compete with our Biblical faith:

(1) We face the "religion" of evolution: last Sunday, one of our members told me how a committed Christian he knows recently told him that through extensive study, this Christian had concluded that the "days" in Genesis 1-2 referred to long ages of time where God would have used evolutionary processes to create the universe!

Actually, evolution is an **ancient** religious view: ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, or creation accounts, held that innate creative powers of the universe resided in the body of a sea monster that was restraining creation until a hero god(s) slew the monster, and out of the monster's body flowed the seas and up from them spontaneously arose life forms. (Bruce K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 1974, p. 6) Moses' Genesis 1-2 account **countered** these cosmogonies, asserting there were **no** innate, evolutionary forces residing in the impotent material world, but that God sovereignly created the entire universe by sovereignly speaking it into existence over six "days" of time!

(2) We face the "religion" of Roman Catholicism: some members of our Church from Catholic backgrounds tell me they can use all the help we can give them to answer the Catholic theology they face from acquaintances. We face this theology in the public forum, too: a letter from Frank Mirto of Waterbury in the Republican-American, July 28, 2020, p. 8A told how the founder of the Knight of Columbus, the Reverend Michael J. McGivney, who ministered in Waterbury, will be beatified one step shy of being a "saint" because of a miracle he allegedly performed when someone prayed to him! Mr. Mirto exclaimed, ". . . (H)ow wonderful! . . . Who says there is no God?" (Ibid.)

(3) We face the "religion" of political correctness: last Sunday, another member told me his appreciation for our July 26th morning sermon that answered the Smithsonian Institution's Museum chart depicting what allegedly constitutes white racism, for the contents of the chart had bothered this member, and he needed help responding to it.

Even some progressives realize their ideology is becoming a religious view: when Bari Weiss resigned as op-ed staff editor and writer for The New York Times, she expressed concern over a "new consensus" that had "emerged in the press . . . that truth isn't a process of collective discovery, but an orthodoxy already known to an enlightened few whose job is to inform everyone else." (Letter by Jim Morgan, Oxford; Ibid., July 29, 2020, p. 11A)

(4) We face the "religion" of the "god of money:" much as in ancient pagan Baal worship where the "nations around Israel" believed "Baal . . . could bring the rain and make all your economic problems go away" (Michael Rhodes, "God's Battle for Your Bank Account," July 25, 2018; christianitytoday.com), due to much unemployment caused by the pandemic, recent high electric bills by Eversource in Connecticut and people vying for federal unemployment insurance bonuses of \$600/week that enables them to make more on unemployment than working, retarding their drive to return to work, money is fast becoming the "god" that supposedly solves all of our problems!

Need: *So, we ask, "How are we to respond well to the strong competition we face from competing religions?!"*

- I. **When Hezekiah came to Judah's throne, the nation was steeped in false idols and false religions: king Ahaz before him had imported the economically-based Baal worship from Israel and Aramean worship while also practicing child sacrifice, burning incense on all of Judah's high places and emptying out God's temple of its treasures and shutting the temple up, angering the Lord, 2 Chronicles 28:1-4, 21-25.**
- II. **Hezekiah chose to follow God, cleansing the land of all of his father's false religions, 2 Chron. 29:1-17.**
- III. **Having purified Judah of its false religions, Hezekiah restored the worship of God, 2 Chron. 29:18-36.**
- IV. **Indeed, he led the nation in a great and wonderful observance of the Passover, 2 Chronicles 30:1-27:**
 - A. Hezekiah invited all the Hebrews in the Northern Kingdom of Israel along with his people in the Southern Kingdom Judah to join him in observing the Passover at Jerusalem in obedience to the Law, 2 Chron. 30:1-3.
 - B. His invitation got a mixed response in Israel: many of Israel's people scornfully laughed at it (2 Chronicles 30:4-10), but some of them traveled south to Judah to join in the celebration, 2 Chronicles 30:11.
 - C. Nevertheless, God motivated those who attended the Passover to give them unity in destroying pagan idols in the country, in celebrating the Passover and keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread for an extra seven days by popular demand amid great joy and the blessing of the people by the priests and Levites! (2 Chron. 30:12-27)
- V. **This spiritual renewal produced not only great joy, but God's rich blessing in Judah, 2 Chron. 31:1-21:**
 - A. The people celebrating this Passover went throughout Judah and Israel destroying pagan altars, 2 Chron. 31:1.

- B. Hezekiah then organized the courses of the priests to keep the services at the temple perpetually going and he directed the people to bring tithes of their produce for the livelihood of the priests and Levites, 2 Chr. 31:2-4.
- C. The people of Israel responded by bringing so much produce that Hezekiah blessed them for their generosity and organized temple storage for the produce and its disbursements to the priests and Levites, 2 Chr. 31:5-21b.
- D. In the end, Hezekiah "prospered" totally apart from economically-based pagan Baal worship, 2 Chron. 31:21c.

Lesson: *As king Hezekiah rid his nation of false religions and invited Hebrews even in the Northern Kingdom of Israel to join him in Judah to celebrate the Passover, God so moved in those who responded to his invitation to follow Hezekiah's devotion to the Lord that they abounded in joy, in works and in God's blessing.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) May we rid our hearts and minds of all devotion to false religions to enjoy God's happiness, and to be productive in bountiful works and recipients of God's rich blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this message by heeding Scripture on the false "religions" we face as mentioned in our introduction:

(1) On the "religion" of evolution, and its requirement for the word "day" in Genesis 1-2 to be an age of millions of years for evolutionary processes to occur, note that **each** of the six days of God's creative activities in Genesis 1:5b, 8b, 13, 19, 23 and 31b are said to be composed of an "evening" and a "morning," parts of solar days that cannot be construed to mean the "day" is an age of long ages in time! Also, Exodus 20:8-11 presents the Sabbath **solar** "Day" observance to be based on the **solar week** of Creation! God created the universe without evolution.

(2) On the "religion" of Roman Catholicism in its teaching on acquiring sainthood, 1 Corinthians 6:2 reveals that all of Paul's readers in that epistle were "saints," but they were guilty of various great sins, including incest and not disciplining it (1 Cor. 5:1-2), abusing the Lord's Table to where God had slain some of them (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and denying belief in the resurrection, an essential doctrine of the Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:12). These people were "saints" because they were saved by grace apart from human meritorious works (Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) in contrast to Roman Catholicism that claims one must excel in good works and answer prayer after their death in producing miracles in five steps to sainthood for sure to escape the pains of purgatory! (Loraine Boettner, Roman Catholicism, 1978, p. 219; "How does someone become a saint?" April 27, 2014; bbc.com) Besides, for every believer, due to God's grace, to be absent from the body in death is to be with God in heaven, 2 Corinthians 5:8!

(3) On the "religion" of political correctness with its "'orthodoxy already known to an enlightened few whose job is to inform everyone else'" (Ibid., Jim Morgan, citing Bari Weiss), 2 Timothy 3:13-17 warns that in the latter days of Church History, people would go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived, what occurs with progressive ideology. However, to combat such error, we believers are to stick with what God let us learn and be convinced was true as taught by credible teachers, and to realize that Scripture is God's inspired Word that is sufficient to prepare us for every good work until the coming of Christ and His Kingdom. We must thus rely on the "orthodoxy" of written Scripture versus the **alleged** "'orthodoxy'" of political correctness!

(4) On the "religion" of the "god of money," (a) Hebrews 13:5-6 teaches us to live free from greed, to be content with what things we possess, and to trust God to be our Help no matter what occurs around us. (b) Also, the Hebrew word **harus**, translated "diligent" in the book of Proverbs (B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 358) is used in Proverbs to provide **five directives from God on avoiding financial trouble** (as follows): (i) Proverbs 10:4 claims lazy hands lead to poverty where diligent hands lead to wealth. **We should be diligent and not lazy in our work for our financial welfare.** (ii) Proverbs 12:24 claims the hand of the diligent will rule where the lazy will be put to slave labor. Slavery resulted from the inability to pay off debts, so **we should try to avoid debt by diligent effort for our financial welfare.** (iii) Proverbs 12:27 claims the lazy will not bother to roast the game he has spent time and energy hunting where the diligent gets precious wealth. The lazy man here is wasteful where the diligent is frugal, so **we should be frugal, not wasteful for our financial welfare.** (iv) Proverbs 13:4 claims the "life principle" (**nephesh**, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual life; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 1170; Robert B. Girdlestone, Synonyms of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59) the lazy man craves but gets nothing where the "life principle" of the diligent is bountifully satisfied. **We should be diligent and not lazy for even our emotional and mental health!** (v) Proverbs 21:5 claims the plans of the diligent surely lead to abundance where those who are hasty in laziness come only to poverty. **We should take time to plan well for success versus carelessly making hasty plans that only lead to poverty.**

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we rid our hearts and minds of all devotion to false religions to enjoy God's joy and blessing.