

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Nehemiah: Pattern For Solutions In Spiritually Hard Times **O. Encouraging Discernment Through Glaring Contradictions** **(Nehemiah 4:1-3 with 6:15; 12:27-43)**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

In today's world, we need an encouraging way to discern the truth regarding disturbing claims:

(1) A recent op-ed reported that we "live in" a "country we are told is defined by white privilege, xenophobia and ruthless oppression of minorities." ("Quotable," Republican-American, June 30, 2021, p. 8A, citing Gerard Baker, "Progressives Disdain America but Love Being Free to Do So," The Wall Street Journal, June 29) Is our country then largely populated by white folk who ruthlessly oppress minorities? How do we know if this disturbing claim is true?

(2) A letter by Jean Bieluczyk of Woodbury in the Republican-American (Ibid., July 2, 2021, p. 8A) cited "historian and author Victor David Hanson" who claimed that "journalists and entertainers . . . made much of the defects and foibles of Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford and Donald Trump" but not about Democratic presidents. Are Republican presidents then lower in character than Democratic ones? How do we know if this disturbing idea is true?

(3) We need edifying discernment regarding disturbing statements that occur in evangelical circles:

(a) Ken Ham of Answers In Genesis wrote in his June 25, 2021 letter to friends of his AIG ministry that "Holt International, a child sponsorship and adoption agency" that had partnered with AIG has begun to let LGBTQ people adopt children from their agency. Mr. Ham wrote an email to Holt International, objecting to this practice, stating, "God's Word does not change and our stand on God's Word as our absolute authority should not change." (Ibid.) Holt International replied, "The absolute word of God and how it's interpreted through (flawed) men . . . and then executed through deed and action throughout the world is an extremely slippery slope . . . When children are suffering, hungry, endanger [sic] and at immediate and urgent risk around the world . . . we serve children not because they are Christian, but because WE ARE." (Ibid.)

Does this statement by Holt International mean that no mortal living today can accurately interpret the Bible because we are all "flawed" people? How do we know if this disturbing statement is true?

(b) I recently heard a report that some people in a church in another part of our country that teaches Bible truth claim (i) they are not being "fed" God's Word! I myself have also faced that criticism! Often, other charges accompany such criticism such as (ii) "Something is wrong with the teacher!" or (iii) "The church needs more programs to 'feed' believers at various levels of maturity!" How do we know if such disturbing statements are true?

Need: *So, we ask, "How can we gain encouraging discernment regarding disturbing statements?!"*

- I. When the Hebrews had begun to rebuild the Jerusalem city wall, their Gentile foes mocked them with several disturbing statements about them and their reconstruction effort, Nehemiah 4:1-3 ESV:**
 - A. The Gentile Sanballat publicly asked several demeaning questions of the Jews, saying, "What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?" (Nehemiah 4:2)
 - B. Tobiah the Ammonite added his own deriding statement, asserting, "Yes, what they are building -- if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!" (Nehemiah 4:3)
- II. However, with God's help, Nehemiah and the Hebrews at the dedication of the wall realized the error of each disturbing statement by sharply contrasting reality with each statement, Neh. 6:15; 12:31-43a ESV:**
 - A. Opposite Sanballat's belittling the "feeble Jews" (Neh. 4:2a) for trying to "restore" the wall "for themselves" (Neh. 4:2b) and mocking their effort to "finish up in a day" (Neh. 4:2c) by reviving stones out of "heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that" (Neh. 4:2e), Nehemiah 6:15 reports that the Jews finished rebuilding the wall in 52 days, "a tremendous accomplishment, and one that was recognized" even by the Hebrew's enemies "as due to the power of God (v. 16)," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1976, fn. to Nehemiah 6:15; Nehemiah 6:16.
 - B. Opposite Tobiah's claim that "if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall" (Neh. 4:3), at the dedication of the wall, Nehemiah sent two choirs up onto the wall to circle the city on it, going in opposite directions and meeting each other at the temple where they worshiped the Lord for His goodness in enabling them to finish rebuilding the wall, Nehemiah 12:27, 31, 38, 40; Ibid., fn. to Nehemiah 12:31-37.
 - C. Opposite Sanballat's deriding question, "Will they sacrifice?" in celebration of completing the wall project, Nehemiah 12:43 reports that following the presentation of the choirs, the Hebrews offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced because God had made them rejoice with great joy, Nehemiah 12:43a ESV.

III. As a result, God made all the Hebrew men, women and children greatly rejoice so that the sound of the joy in Jerusalem was heard far away to the humiliation of their Gentile foes, Nehemiah 12:43b!

Lesson: *The Hebrews' dedication of the Jerusalem city wall exposed the glaring contradictions between their foes' disturbing statements that they could not rebuild the wall and the reality of what had been accomplished by God's help, and discerning this truth caused the Hebrews great joy while greatly humiliating their enemies.*

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 Cor. 15:1-11. (2) May we rely on the Lord to provide encouraging discernment of true versus false, disturbing claims by exposing glaring contradictions between what is false and what is reality.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply this sermon's lesson to the issues presented in our sermon introduction (as follows):

(1) Regarding Gerard Baker's report how we are told we live in a land defined by white privilege, xenophobia and ruthless oppression of minorities, Mr. Baker added the **glaring contradiction** that "Blacks from Africa, Latinos from Central and South America, and Asians from Kamchatka to Kerala are yearning to live in" our nation! (Ibid., Baker) He added, "Think of that. What kind of enduring appeal must a country have, what kind of values must it convey to the world, that it can so easily supersede the strenuous efforts of its own people to defame it?" (Ibid.)

(2) Regarding how journalists and entertainers have made much of the defects and foibles of Republican but not Democratic presidents, historian Victor Davis Hanson observed the **glaring contradiction** that "Mr. Biden's physical- and mental-health problems; his lies and exaggerations; and his past racist comments" are given a pass by journalists and entertainers, and "(w)hile Joe Biden is also pointing fingers at white America . . . the press is quiet about (his son) Hunter Biden's exchanges" of racist remarks, Ibid., Bieluczyk. This contradictory set of facts reveals that not just Republican presidents, but Democratic presidents also have their share of defects and foibles!

(3) On the emails between Ken Ham and Holt International on Holt's letting LGBTQ parties adopt their agency's children, and Holt's implication that "flawed men" interpreting Scripture is a slippery slope, that Holt is "Christian" for helping suffering, hungry, endangered children, we note a **glaring contradiction** in the Holt statement itself: Holt International is sure they interpret the Bible correctly to claim that helping suffering, hungry, endangered children is "Christian," otherwise they are only guessing as to what is "Christian." However, Holt then implies that AIG is "flawed" in interpreting 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 that opposes LGBTQ practices and actions as **also** being "Christian"! For consistency, if Holt uses the Bible to condone aiding children, it must likewise oppose LGBTQ sins!

(4) On the complaints from some evangelicals that (a) they are not being "fed" God's Word, that (b) something is wrong with the teacher or (c) the church lacks adequate programs to teach believers at different maturity levels, Scripture **glaringly contradicts** each claim (as follows): (a') After He taught on the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:14-20), Jesus said, "Pay attention to what you hear; with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away," Mark 4:24-25 ESV. Thus, if a believer does not apply what he hears of the Word, Satan will take from him what he has already heard because that believer is the hard ground in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:15). Conversely, believers who apply the Word are "sown" more of it by the Lord, the Sower (Matthew 13:37), so they can continue to grow in proportion to their appetite for more truth! (b') A Bible teacher or pastor may indeed be guilty of not expounding Scripture, but according to 2 Timothy 2:6, if he is fulfilled by what he himself expounds to others, that is God's signal to him that he is expounding like he should with God's approval! (2 Timothy 2:15) (c') On ministering to different levels of maturity, Scripture displays how each of the three maturity levels of "little children," "young men" and "fathers" are spiritually "fed" in the epistle of 1 John (as follows): (i) John wrote that he was writing his epistle to believers at all three of these levels of maturity in 1 John 2:13-27. (ii) Significantly, John's message to "fathers" that Christ was their All-Sufficient Lord (1 John 2:13a, 14a) is found elsewhere in the epistle at 1 John 1:1-4, John's message to "young men" of their need to stop loving the world (1 John 2:14b-17) is found elsewhere in the epistle at 1 John 5:19-21 and John's message to "little children" on false teachers (1 John 2:18-27) is found elsewhere in the epistle at 1 John 4:1-6. (iii) Thus, if a teacher or pastor simply teaches God's Word, God will provide all the "feeding" each believer needs at his respective level of maturity through that teaching due to the enormous power and versatility of the Word of God to disciple every human heart, Hebrews 4:12-13; 2 Timothy 3:15-4:2.

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 then rely on the Lord to provide encouraging discernment of true versus disturbing claims by exposing glaring contradictions between what is false and what is reality.