

University Heights Church of Christ

BULLETIN

February 15, 2009

Which Came First?

In the centuries following the deaths of the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ there were a number of written discussions of the faith by uninspired disciples. Many of these documents have been preserved as “*the ante-Nicene church fathers*” and are still available for us to read today. One of the interesting things about this material is that **it treats the Old Testament and the writings of the apostles of Jesus Christ of the first century as inspired scripture but it does not treat the writings of any other as inspired scripture.** Beginning with Clement of Rome these uninspired religious writers acknowledged that the writings of the apostles were inspired and quoted the books written by the apostles that appear in our New Testament today as **the word of God.** In his letter to the church at Corinth, Clement said of the apostle Paul, “*Truly, under the inspiration of the Spirit, he wrote to you concerning himself, Cephas and Apollos*”. Clement himself was not inspired and **did not claim to be.** Clement knew **what** the apostles had written, and made a difference between **what Clement wrote** and **what the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ wrote.** In his letter to the Corinthians Clement demonstrated familiarity with the New Testament books of **Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, and Revelation.** Clement may have written his letter before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70AD because in chapter 41 of his letter to the Corinthians, Clement referred to the sacrifices at the altar of the temple in Jerusalem that were being made daily. Even if he wrote later, after 70AD, it was still centuries before any council of digressive religionists, like those at the council of Nicea (325 AD), or those at the council of Constantinople (381 AD), ever met to discuss doctrine or scripture.

After the death of the apostles churches were started and maintained **by the written words of the apostles.** **These written words of the apostles were the standard of authority, by which was settled all controversies about faith among the faithful.** **For the first three hundred years after the death of the apostles the doctrinal discourses of the disciples all used as their standard of religious authority the Old Testament and the books that are contained in our New Testament and they all used only those books as the standard of authority.** One example of many is Irenaeus, who, writing in the second century AD **drew from every book in our New Testament except Philemon and 3 John.** The books that are contained in our Holy Bible are the only books that those writers treated as inspired scripture. At that time there had been no councils of digressive church leaders that met to identify the inspired books. **The disciples of Jesus Christ knew and used those books and only those books as their standard of religious authority beginning while the apostles were still alive.** About Paul’s writings Peter said, “*And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given to him has written to you; 16 As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.*” (2Peter 3:15-16). **The disciples understood from the beginning that the writings of the apostles of Jesus were inspired scripture and they honored and preserved and set apart those messages just as they did the messages in the Hebrew scriptures.**

So, which came first, the New Testament or the church? That question only exists because, in an attempt to manufacture an excuse for not following the New Testament, one of the popular religions that originated in early departures from the teachings of the New Testament, falsely claimed that it had created the New Testament. That false claim seeks to establish that because it is responsible for the New Testament existing that religion is free to do with the New Testament anything it wishes including ignoring the teachings of the New Testament anytime it chooses. Neither the claim nor the assumption made from it is true.

In **Luke 8:11** Jesus, in explaining the parable of the sower, said that, “*the seed is the word of God.*” In Matthew’s account of the same parable the reader is told in **Matthew 13:19** that the word is, “*the word of the kingdom.*” In **Acts 2:4** the apostles spoke, “*as the Spirit gave them utterance.*” The result of their inspired speech on that occasion was that about three thousand of the hearers became repentant, baptized believers and were added by the Lord to His church. (**Acts 2:41, 47**) Not long after the events recorded in **Acts 2**, the New Testament books began to be produced by the inspired apostles. As the inspired books were produced they were **copied and collected by multitudes of Christians.** That is how the inspired writings of the apostles so soon became so widely known. God’s people know that God’s word is alive and powerful and they want to be able to have it to read and study and reflect and meditate on whenever they choose. **It only took the same amount of time and effort to make copies of the inspired books that it did to write them in the first place.**

At some point the last inspired book ever to be written by one of the apostles of Jesus was completed, and the last inspired apostle died. From that day to this all of God’s people have had to rely altogether on the Hebrew scriptures and the books of the New Testament to know how to be saved from God’s eternal wrath against sin.

The uninspired writings of the early disciples that lived after the apostles of Jesus had written demonstrate that from the very beginning those disciples knew that the written words of the apostles of Jesus were inspired scripture. Because it is the books of the Hebrew scriptures and the books of the New Testament **and only those books** that the early disciples refer to as **the standard of authority to settle all religious questions in determining what constitutes properly obeying God.** People who were converted to Christ learned in the process of being converted what books were inspired. It was not a mystery to the faithful. The same thing is true today. The faithful know that **authority in religion is only in the inspired word of God found in the Holy Bible.** The faithful know that there is **absolutely no authority in matters of true religion in councils or doctrines of men.** **Matthew 15: 9** “*But in vain they do worship me, teaching [for] doctrines the commandments of men*” **We must obey Jesus.** In **John 12:48** Jesus said, “*He that rejects me, and receives not my words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*”

Remember To Pray For

Ron Tirey recuperating from heart surgery
Ron Catchen the brother of Bobby Atkisson also recuperating from surgery
Jackson Scott Spivey
Mildred Collins, David's mother is to undergo thyroid surgery in the near future
Dallis and Alma Isaacs
Francis Nations
Mary Jane Frost
Melanie Bilye
Rick Shamas
Bonnie Wells
Sarah Phillips
Carol Bach
Edith Tirey
Lucy Hale
Pamela Clayton
Ella Wells, and her family
Freddie Ward
David and Chessie Harwell
Donna Caldwell
Mabel Greene
Tony Tyree
Ruth Brundige
Cindy Miller
Christie Ellis
Shirley Lewis
Brady Gibbons
Gail Hunter
Larry Flannery
Donnie Joseph
Cheryl Spear
Lanny Hiller
Charity and Abdiel Pallafox
Helen Stephens
Chris Handshoe
Jeffrey Howerton
Addison Pervine
Tom Kemp
Freda Blakey

Who Will Ever Know?

Isaiah 29:13 "Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near [me] with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: 14 Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, [even] a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise [men] shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent [men] shall be hidden. 15 Woe to them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the LORD, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who sees us? And who knows us?"

Thoughts

In written history where are the faithful? In every age in history from the days of Jesus forward there have been people that claimed to follow the teachings of Jesus but they were not. It is obvious in written history that by the fourth century AD the religious people that were appearing on the pages of history were not following the teachings of Jesus. That they had those teachings and knew them is proven by the fact that they wrote about them and quoted them. But the majority of religious people who made it to the pages of recorded history certainly were not following the teachings of Jesus.

Where were the faithful? The faithful were the same place that the faithful are at today and that the faithful have been in every generation of this earth. Stop and think about it, of all the **faithful** followers of the teachings of Jesus that you know of, how many will ever be described in history? If you know one that you believe will be described in history, do you think that person's faith will also be described in such a way that future generations will actually be able to know and understand what that person believed and practiced?

In history the usual position of the faithful is to be invisible or persecuted and misrepresented to the point of being unrecognizable. One of the most frequent persecutors of the faithful has been whatever was the popular religion of whatever time and place in history is being examined. The religious leaders of the Jews persecuted Jesus, and Jesus was killed at their instigation. After the death of Jesus those same religious leaders of the popular but digressive religion among the Jews were the first persecutors of the disciples of Jesus.

Jesus said it would be that way.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, you know that it hated me before [it hated] you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 Remember the word that I said to you; The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

John 16:1 "These things have I spoken to you, that you should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yes, the time comes, that whosoever kills you will think that he does God service. 3 And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."

Jesus said that the way of salvation would never be popular.

Matthew 7:13 "Enter you in at the strait gate: for wide [is] the gate, and broad [is] the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait [is] the gate, and narrow [is] the way, which leads to life, and few there be that find it."

In the religious inquisitions in Europe popular digressive religion tortured and wiped out of existence godly people who were willing to die rather than stop reading and obeying the Bible. What those almost anonymous Bible believing people were willing to die for should give the thoughtful a clue or two as to **who** they served.

Notes

Adam Litmer will begin working with this church on **Sunday, March 1**. We certainly look forward to that.

The Men's business meeting will be next Sunday, February 22, at 3:00PM

The informational meeting will be at 4:30PM

Begin to make plans for our gospel meeting with David Phillips, Sunday April 5 -- Friday April 9

Topics for the Meeting

*More Than Simple Faith
Courage to Stand
Knowledge for Life
Strength to Conquer Self
Patience Under Fire
Aspiring to be Like God
Brotherly Kindness
Agape Love*

EVERYBODY PLAN TO COME

Everybody Try To Bring Somebody

God's word will be taught and that's what everybody needs

Schedule of Services

Sunday Morning

Bible Classes 9:45am
Worship Service 10:45am

Sunday Evening

Worship Service 6:00pm

Wednesday Evening

Bible Studies for all ages
7:30pm

Monthly Song Service

First Friday 7:30pm

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COME STUDY THE BIBLE AND WORSHIP WITH US

**HELP GOD'S WORD GROW
LEARN IT • OBEY IT • TEACH IT**