



March 13, 2022

“Stay the Course”

SS at 9:30. Service at 10:30 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

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JOHN 1:29-34 ~

John _____ Jesus. He had a good idea that Jesus was the _____ (Matthew 3:14), but he didn’t know with _____ as he said twice in these verses.

There is a fine line between unquestioning _____ and presumptuous _____.

How can we tell the difference?

Unstopping our ears by _____ our heart is the first step and then proceeding on with what God has already _____ is the second. Impressions, feelings, arbitrary signs, and mental gymnastics are never the Christian Biblical answer.

There’s comfort in the chaos when God is _____ to you, and you are _____ Him. When that connection is lost, what do you do?

Well, _____ can follow Christ when walking by sight (II Corinthians 5:7). This is not the time to go off of how you feel, or with what you think you sense, or with what your truth is...

This is the time to _____ the same steady course as before.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

When God stops talking, it may just be us not _____. Self-assessment followed by taking corrective action may be necessary, but sometimes God is _____ for the purpose of building our faith.

When God is silent, follow suit. _____ that while you don't hear Him, He's still right there. Allow His Spirit to reveal sin and to make _____ adjustments as necessary. Stay the course, trust the instruments and sooner or later, you will pop out of the cloud exactly where you're _____ to be.

To do that you must know God from the consistent revelation that He has given. What constitutes that revelation? The surest bet by far is the _____.

God will _____ tell anyone to violate His Holy Word.

It never occurred to the delegations to figure out to Whom John referred. They had no clue because they had no expectation of finding one there. Biblically, a clue only comes to those _____.

God promised to turn the _____ of stone to _____ of flesh and that is precisely what John's Baptism was all about.

God has designed everything to have a rational explanation right alongside a supernatural one. It is the human heart that will choose which to believe. Trusting God will always require a leap of _____.

The "Lamb of God," is interpreted by the qualifying phrase, "Who takes away the sin of the world."

That's why the _____ is no more. There is no difference between sacrificing a dove and sacrificing some other personal resource.

God has freely offered the gift of eternal salvation and as with any gift it comes with a choice and a consequence. _____ accept the gift and embrace the Giver, or do not.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



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JOHN

ΕΝΑΡΧΗ Η ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΚΑΙ Ο ΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΝΗ ΠΡΟΣΤΟΝ
 ΘΗΝ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΤΗ ΝΟΛΟΓΟΣ ΕΣΤΟΣ Η ΝΕΝΑΡΧΗ ΤΙΡΟΣ
 ΤΟΝ ΘΗΝ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΓΕΝΕΣ ΤΟ ΚΑΧΟΤΙΣ

When we were together last, we talked about the delegations sent by the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem to confront John the Baptizer in the Jordan. Then...



John 1:29-34, 29The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30“This is He on behalf of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ 31“I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water.” 32John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33“I did not recognize Him, but He who sent me to baptize in water

said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' 34 "I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God."

Matthew 3:13-17

- 13 Then Jesus arrived from Galilee at the Jordan *coming* to John, to be baptized by him.
- 14 But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"
- 15 But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit *it* at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him.

Long before this "Next day," described here, John knew Jesus. He knew Him as a nearly same-age relative. He was no doubt constantly reminded about the nature of Jesus' birth, and His early life, as well as the supernatural events that surrounded his own birth (especially, Luke 1-3). John had a very good idea that Jesus was the Christ (Matthew 3:14), but he didn't know with absolute certainty as he said twice in these verses.

There's probably an element of familiarity breeds contempt and some see it as a lack of faith on John's part, but I prefer to see it as the humbleness that God requires from His agents.

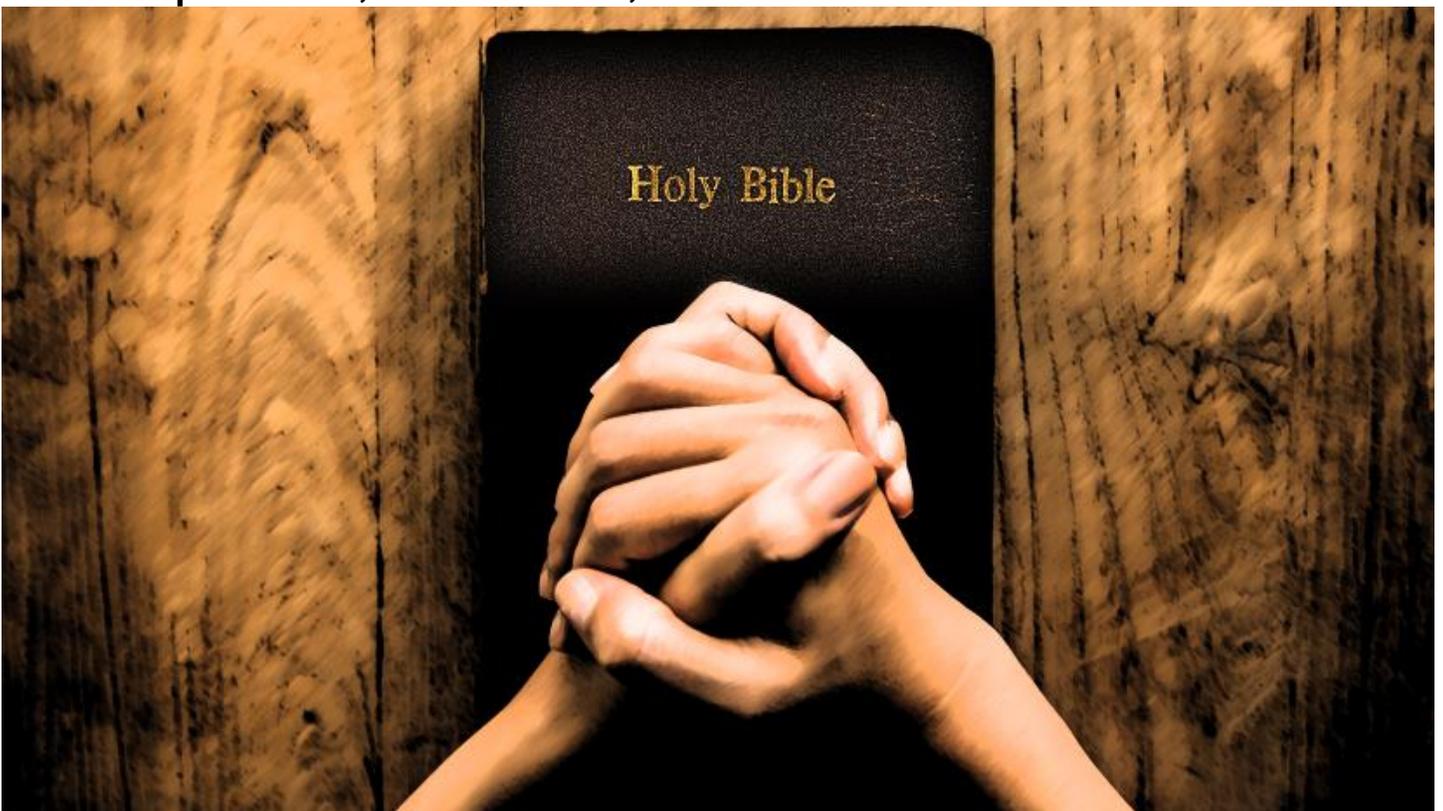
You might not immediately get what I'm saying. There is a very fine line between unquestioning faith and presumptuous arrogance. While God wants the first, He can't use the later – not in a positive sense anyway.

How can we tell the difference? It's about what God has actually said as opposed to what we think He said, wish He said, or extrapolated out from what He said. John made it abundantly clear right here that when God called him to the ministry, He told him as part of his commissioning that, "He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit."

God didn't say, just go with what you've heard, or what you assume to be true. He didn't say just go with your instincts on this, or just wing it, or just wait until you get a feeling from the Spirit – some kind of burning in your bosom. He didn't say, do some careful calculations of

Scripture and current events, extrapolate out an interpretation that fits your confirmation bias and get irritated with anyone who disagrees.

These are the things we humans use as guides when we cannot hear God's voice and it is non-biblical, anti-Christian nonsense. Conspiracy theories focusing on the wrong, on the evil, on the secret, is merely a psychological trick, a mental deception, to help inconsequential, powerless, fearful human beings to feel important, in control, and safe.



Unstopping our ears by humbling our heart is the first step and then proceeding on with what God has

already said is the second. Impressions, feelings, arbitrary signs, and mental gymnastics are never the Christian Biblical answer. The only code Jesus wants you to break is the reality that all the answers are in Him.

When I wrote this sermon I just glossed right past this point, but I think it's important to spend a moment here.



I'm going to make an analogy. In flying an airplane there's a certain trepidation in the sense that things can and do go wrong and they can easily be fatal. Even now after decades and many thousands of hours as a pilot, every time I strap on an airplane, I consider that I

may not come back in one piece. Flying is the third most dangerous job in the world. Remove the incredibly safe airline flying from the equation, and it's much worse.

I routinely fly over unforgiving terrain without much margin for error and often let someone who has never landed an airplane, land it with me in it. As uncomfortable as that might be, the thing that makes it tolerable, is that I can see. There's comfort in the chaos because I can see that I am on track – all my senses agree with what I perceive. That's like God is talking to you and you are hearing. Him. The scariness is abated because you know that you are on track – your senses confirm that He has you and you are following His Will.

Imagine being able to see and having all of your senses confirm what you're seeing. As you're flying along you are also aware that all of your instruments are working correctly and confirm what you know to be true, and life is good.



Now you enter a cloud bank and can see absolutely nothing outside. Your senses immediately start giving you contradictory information. What do you do? You push all of your natural instincts aside and focus solely on your instruments for aircraft attitude, altitude, vertical speed, heading, turn coordination, and airspeed, not to mention navigation, communication, engine, and other systems performance. Easy, right? But again, every fiber of your being is telling you that the instruments are wrong. What you must do is simply trust in what you knew before you lost the obvious, straightforward reality of seeing everything and the

confidence that comes from that. “Anyone can fly on a nice day.”

Well, anyone can follow Christ when walking by sight (II Corinthians 5:7).

Absent that, it's not the time to go off of how you feel about it, or with what you think you see, or with what your truth is – it's time to stay the same steady course as before.

There are times that God stops talking to us, sometimes it's our fault and there's a way to fix our problem and restore our connection. If God isn't talking to you, ask yourself “Am I properly honoring my spouse, or my parents?” “Am I giving time, effort, and money, to Him?” “Am I properly prioritizing Him?” “Am I allowing Him to love others through me in tangible ways?” “Am I as forgiving of others as He is of me?” “Am I a blessing, or just a curse?” Self-assessment followed by taking corrective action is a way to hear God.

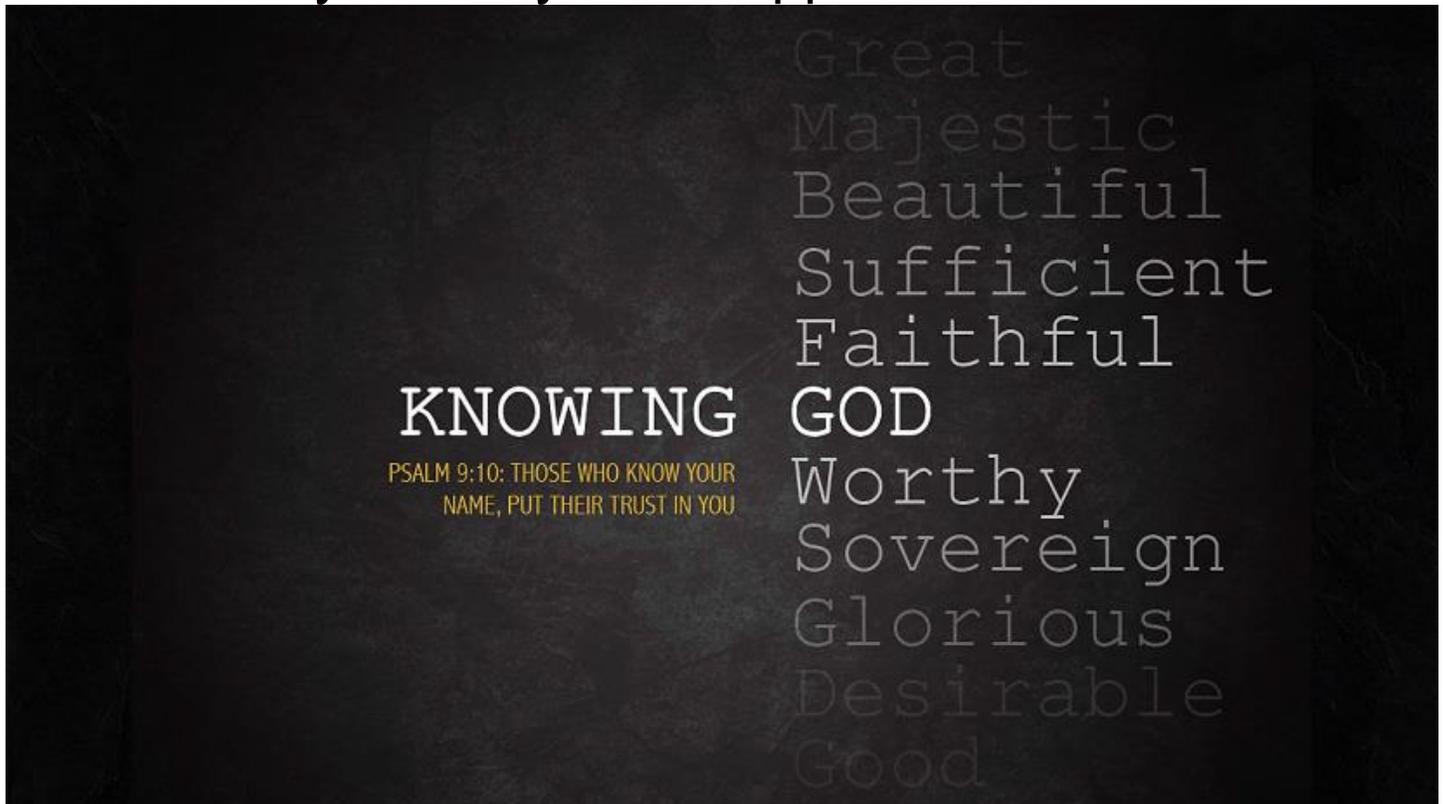
Sometimes though, God is silent for the express purpose of building your faith. As a flight instructor, I can hold your hand for a while, but eventually you must

solo. Eventually, you must become the pilot, or you'll never be a pilot.



I have experienced many lengthy silences from God and at first there's a desire to figure it out and when that fails, there's a bit of resentment and then a somewhat reduced trust, because God isn't texting back. Many, perhaps most, people in that situation then resort to all kinds of insane schemes to feel connected as they once were. They ignore their instruments because they trust their own ideas, impressions, feelings, calculations, and conspiracy theories, more.

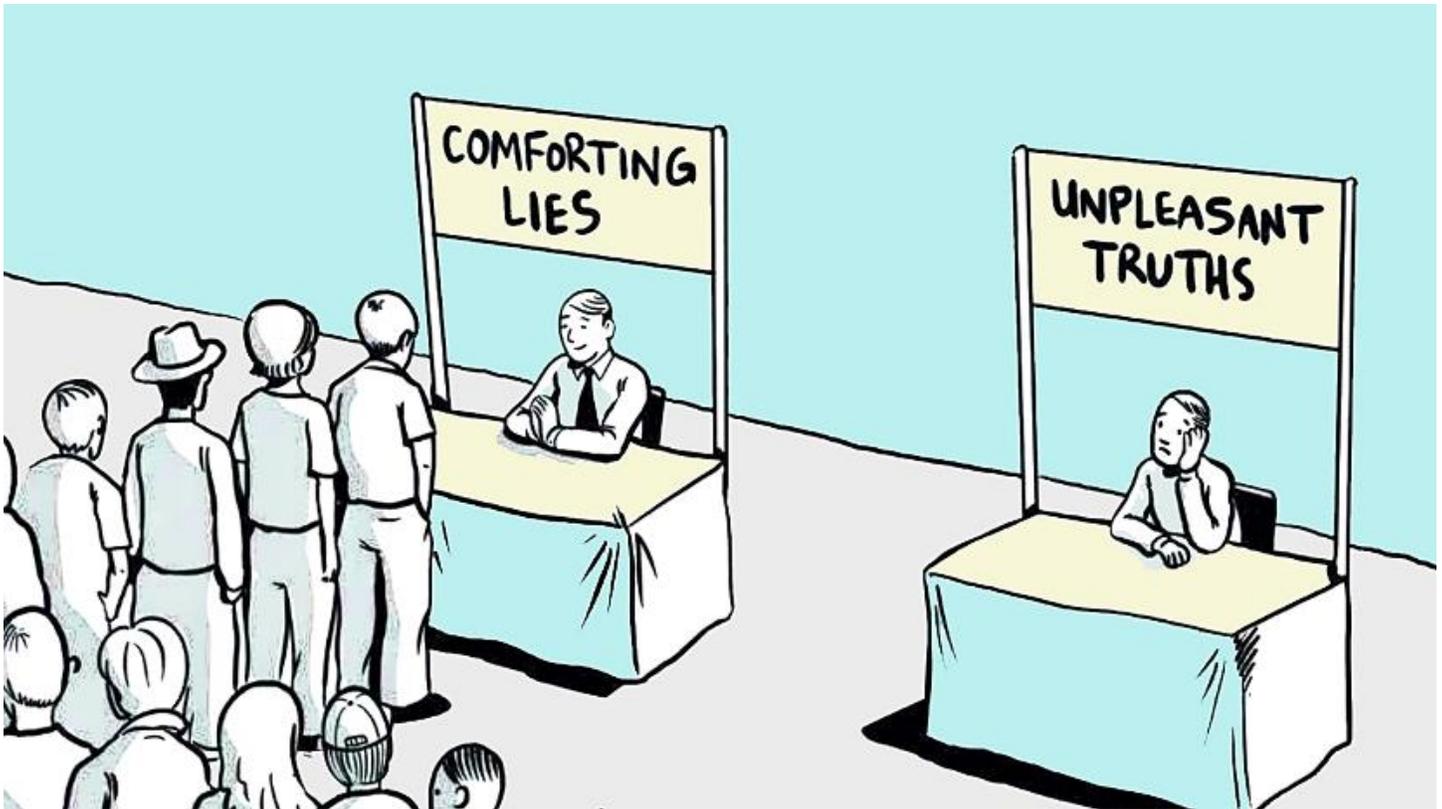
When God is silent, follow suit. The very first thing you do is wait in His presence. Continue to do everything you did before when communication was good. Trust that while you don't hear Him, He's still right there. Allow His Spirit to reveal sin and to make attitude adjustments as necessary. Stay the course, trust the instruments and sooner or later, you will pop out of the cloud exactly where you're supposed to be.



What am I saying? You must know God, and that means our Heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, you must know God from the consistent revelation that He has given.



What constitutes that revelation? The surest bet by far is the Bible. I could spend a few hours and go into all the reasons that that is true, but suffice it to say, only the Bible has withstood the test of time. Nothing on planet earth can compare. Further, if we accept the Bible as the basis of knowing God, then we must accept the totality of that basis.



It is completely impossible and utterly naïve to imagine that any person, or even all people collectively, could ever discern what parts are truer than other parts. It instantly devolves into a self-serving subjective exercise in futility. Trust me, it is truly an all or nothing proposition. I have far more respect for people who dismiss it entirely than I do for people who pick and choose the parts they like.

With that established, God speaks to you as a man speaks to His friend, if you can hear. Knowing His voice from all other voices is a matter of experience and a matter of alignment with the Bible.

God will never tell anyone to violate His Holy Word. I knew a person many years ago who was in the middle of an ugly divorce. They had a 16-year-old who, quite understandably, was giving them fits. That person heard from God that they were to immediately go out onto the mission field in Israel. Do not pass go. Do not collect \$200. Go instantly. Walk away from the chaos and go.



They wanted me to commission and bless their call from the Almighty. They were pious about the hardships they would endure for God in a foreign country where everyone speaks English, and they have

a first world economy. What a travesty. God would never instruct a person to run away from their responsibilities in the midst of a divorce and abandon their child.

That was nothing more than self-centeredness masquerading as devotion. If you think about it, that was representing God the one responsible for making that dear saint of immeasurable love and integrity someone who ran away. That was a person who put their words into God's mouth. A person who did not know God's voice, because frankly, they did not know God – at least not well enough to come up with a different excuse.

The Bible and your past confirmed experience with the Lord, are your instruments. Always trust your instruments. If your eyes, or in this case, your heart tells you something, check it against your instruments. Is it something that God would say? Beyond that, when God isn't talking, you have practice staying the course already set, not assuming a change of course is required.

Let's bring it back to our passage. Let's say for a moment that John was already convinced that Jesus was the One. For the sake of argument, let's say that when he baptized Jesus nothing supernatural happened. John might have thought, I missed the sign, or maybe the sign was metaphorical. It's likely that his confirmation bias would have kicked in and he would have rationalized how Jesus was indeed the One. That's what operating from presumptuous arrogance looks like.

Instead, John put all of his preconceived ideas on hold and trusted what God had specifically told him. That's unquestioning faith.



We know from the other three Gospels what happened with Jesus and John on that occasion. In Matthew 3:16&17, 16After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him, 17and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

The Baptism of Jesus has been an embarrassment to many Christians over the centuries. Why would God made man be baptized, especially when John’s ministry was all about repentance from one’s evil

ways? We talked about it quite a bit a few years ago when we covered that portion of Matthew.

In general, John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptized, but Jesus insisted. Why? What most people would expect is that Jesus would show up and baptize John, and then John would worship Him and all of John's followers would do likewise. Jesus would take charge of the crowd and off to the races we go. Well, God's ways are not our ways.

God made man humbled Himself and had John Baptize Him. That did a few things, chief among them is it demonstrated that Jesus was the type of Messiah promised, "Humble and Gentle." It also confirmed the validity and importance of John's ministry in preparing the way. John was used by God to prepare people, not to gather a huge following that Jesus could simply co-opt as His own. Jesus would build His own following.

While Jesus was Baptized, He never confessed to any sin, nor did He ever repent by turning from a less perfect path. Rather than glossing over His Baptism, we should celebrate it.



“I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” Ezekiel 11:19

We know that Jesus was in close proximity to the Priests, Levites, and Pharisees who all demanded to know what John was doing. We also know that John confirmed that He was there to prepare for the Messiah and that the Messiah was among them. Finally, we know that it never once occurred to any of them to earnestly figure out to Whom John referred. They had no clue because they had no expectation of finding one there.

Biblically, a clue only comes to those willing. God promised to turn the hearts of stone to hearts of flesh and that is precisely what John’s Baptism was all

about. What most people didn't get then, and they don't get now, is that God does that for those who are humble. It was specifically, only those humble enough to publicly confess their inability to do anything to save themselves, repent of their sins and submit to open Baptism, who had their heart softened by God to accept His Savior. Those too proud for that nonsense, rejected both the Gift and the Giver and died eternally in their sins.

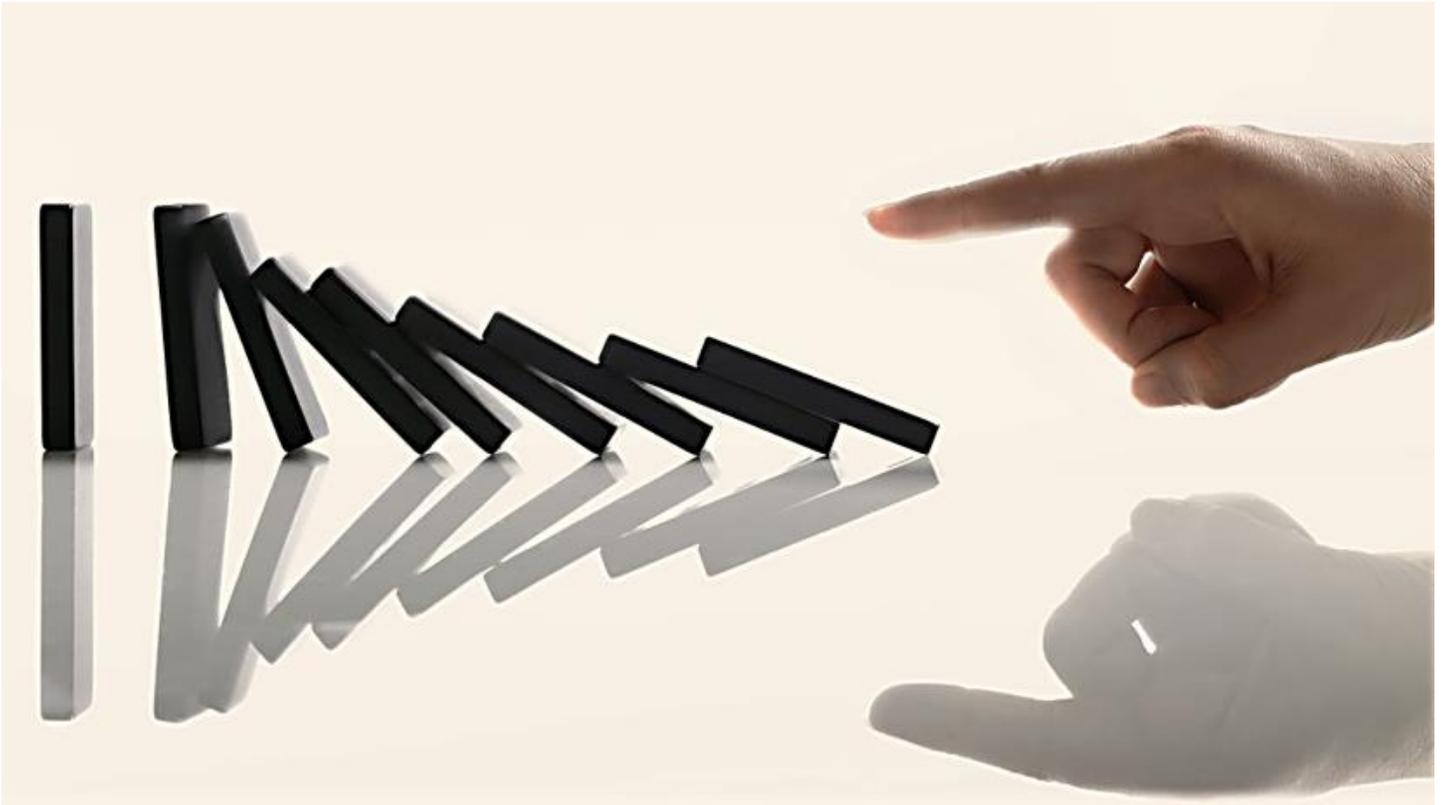


There is a branch of Theology that has become very popular with Americans in the last 30 years. It's called Apologetics. It isn't about apologizing for Christianity; it

refers to the older sense of the word that means to give an explanation or to make a defense.

There is this idea spawned from it that if you could just answer people's questions and objections, you could argue them into Heaven. Show them enough proof, enough plausible reasoning and they would be convinced. That's the force behind "Answers in Genesis," as one example.

It's interesting. Some of it is good. A lot of it is pure conjecture and a manipulation of both the Biblical text and science. It has its place, but it often leads to strife in the Christian Community, which cannot possibly be good for the stated goal of evangelizing unbelievers. More than all of that, is it is a fool's errand.



God has designed everything to have a completely reasonable and purely physical explanation right alongside an entirely miraculous and perfectly divine explanation as well. It is the human heart that will choose which to believe. Of course, good information and a good explanation and a well-reasoned defense of Christianity can help a person choose rightly, but it is impossible to become a Christian and enter the Kingdom of God by merely acknowledging irrefutable proof. It will always require a final leap of faith – always. By God's Own design, always.

Since that is true, you already know enough. You already have enough information and enough evidence to take that leap... if you haven't done so already. Leap into the arms of Jesus and trust that He will catch you.



The “Lamb of God,” can only be interpreted by the qualifying phrase, “Who takes away the sin of the world.” As such, scholars are essentially split on one of four main ideas. 1) The Lamb refers to the sacrifice provided to Abraham in sparing Isaac. 2) The Lamb refers to the Passover Lamb. 3) The Lamb refers to a daily sacrificial lamb. 4) The Lamb refers to the Day of Atonement sacrifice. 1) The problem with the sacrifice provided in place of Isaac is that was a ram, not a lamb

and it was an act of obedience, not a sacrifice for sin. 2) The problem with the Passover Lamb, is it also wasn't to take away sin, but had to do with a celebration that the Angel of Death had passed over the obedient Children of Israel while still in Egypt. 3) The daily lamb sacrifice was for a general cleansing of the nation's sin and was performed every morning and every afternoon every day. That's two lambs per day sacrificed on general principle for sin. The problem is it seems too common – too every day to apply to the Lamb of God. 4) Finally, the Day of Atonement sacrifice was that once a year, extremely solemn day when all Israel would assemble and repent of their sin and the High Priest would go into the Holy of Holies of behalf of the nation so that God would forgive them all and restore them for another year. The problem was it was two animals, and they were both goats, not lambs and one of the goats was released with the nation's sins still attached.

What's clear, when we take in the whole counsel of God's Word is that a bit of all of that is intended. The entire sacrificial system, whether 1) Abraham's sacrifice, or the 2) Passover, or the 3) twice-daily sacrifice, or the 4) annual Day of Atonement, or the

myriad other collective and personal sacrifices constantly taking place... They were all wrapped up in the one and only perfect sacrifice to put an end to the sacrificial system as people applied the Blood of God to their account by faith.

That's why the Temple is no more. The sacrificial system was done away with because the final sacrifice has been made. There can be no further sacrifice to atone for sin. Sin has been destroyed and therefore the result of sin, which is death has been destroyed. Put another way, God saved us by causing death to eternally Pass Over because He destroyed the source of Death which is Sin.

Please note that there is no fundamental difference between sacrificing a dove, a lamb, a goat, or a bull on a stone altar and sacrificing some personal resource. Please think about what I'm saying. In ancient Judaism, a Jew would atone, do penance, or pay for their sin through the blood of another, which was, in point of fact, them sacrificing some personal resource. Today, we have people doing the exact same thing, only the blood is in some other form. Perhaps it is in the form of church attendance, or in forgoing some

form of pleasure, or in putting money in the offering plate. Whatever it is, when the goal is that of atoning, it is self-flagellation and it is not just a wasted effort, it is a sin in and of itself.



It says, "I do not accept that the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was sufficient to cover my sins and so I will add to that work to be right with God." Can you see the travesty of that? The insanity of works-based religion? The folly of legalism? The diminishing of the sacrifice God Himself made through this attitude of performance-based acceptance?



Look, Biblical Christianity is all about Christ. He paid, it's over. You either fully accept His sacrifice on your behalf, or you do not. Once you do, you realize that you do the things I mentioned and more, because you love Him and want to do the things that involve Him.

We do for God because we are forgiven, not to become forgiven... Never reverse that order.

Sin in verse 29 is singular, it's not sins, plural. And "World," is not Israel. It means that the Lamb of God took away all sin, from all mankind, for all time. God's righteous justice is satisfied.

The entire debt owed Him was paid by Him, because He was the only one who could pay that debt. Nothing stands in our way except us. “We have met the enemy and the enemy is us.”

God has freely offered the gift of eternal salvation and as with any gift it comes with a choice and a consequence. By definition, a decision is forced by the offer and by definition that means two different paths result with two different destinations possible.

Please understand that if I were to offer you a free gift – a present with no strings attached, there are by the mere offer, strings attached. It is impossible otherwise. I offer the gift to you, and you are now forced to act, forced to choose. You may say that you could simply refuse to act, refuse to decide, but that is in effect refusing the gift. There are only two outcomes once I offer the present. You either accept it fully for what it is, or you do not. In the first case, you get the full benefit of the gift, and the full consequences of possessing the gift – those are strings attached. I give you a coat. Fully accepting it for what it is, has you wearing it. Wearing that coat is a string attached – it was your choice, but

you're wearing the coat. Beyond that if you do accept, well, then the gift has achieved its intended effect.

The only other option is something less than that. You do not accept it fully for what it is, and you have no benefit from the gift – you're not wearing the coat, and get this now, the gift still has achieved its intended effect.

That is if my desire in giving the gift was to weed out those who embraced my gift and therefore me as the giver from those who disdained me and my gift, then either way it goes the gift has achieved my purposes.

God, through His own personal sacrifice, has offered you and everyone else the greatest gift possible. The mere offer requires a choice. Fully accept the gift and embrace the Giver, or do not. Either way the Gift has been perfectly effective.