

What Matters is "What Is!"

I've been thinking about this quite often lately. We read everyday in the newspaper of an Islamic zealot who has sacrificed his life to further the cause of Allah. No one could question how passionately his beliefs are held, for he is willing to lay down his life. But when it comes down to it, it doesn't matter **what we believe**, despite how passionately we believe it. What matters is "**What Is!**" If Allah is God, and if Muhammed is a prophet, and if God is pleased when the zealot sacrifices his life for the cause, then the zealot has truly served God. But if the beliefs of the zealot are wrong, then he has wasted his life ... and he has taken other lives ... and he must answer to God.

But it is no different for those of us who are Christians. It doesn't matter how passionately we hold to our beliefs ... what matters is "**What Is!**" ***Opinions are opinions, and facts are facts; and we must seek to understand the facts as opposed to simply defending our opinions!***

I heard of a man who approached people on the streets, putting them on the spot by asking them what they believe about God ... and then going further with follow up questions asking the individual why he believed these things. The interviewer found out very quickly that people often did not know why they believed the things they believed ... they just knew they were correct beliefs; and many folks held their beliefs with great passion.

Most Christians believe that the Bible is the Word of God ... it is God revealing Himself to mankind thru the means of His Word. He tells us things about Himself and His plans for humanity that we would not know if He had not revealed these things to us.

But others in different cultures do not believe the Bible is the Word of God. As a matter of fact, some believe the Koran is the Word of God, or the Book of Mormon, or some other holy writ.

If we sit down in a room with a Mormon, a Muslim, a Hindu ... what would we tell them to convince them that the Bible is the Word of God, and their cherished holy writ is not? The best that most could do would be to quote some Christian scholar, or perhaps some popular Christian author.

Now I clearly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but I have seriously considered this question and I have read and considered certain evidences that exist that have led me to this conclusion. It does me no good to passionately **believe** that the Bible is the Word of God if, in fact, it is not.

What matters is "**What Is!**" That there is a God is something that is clearly displayed thru the operations of this world and this universe. But what we know about God can only be based on how He has revealed Himself to us, if He has chosen to reveal Himself to us, and we should all seriously consider this question.

Now after considering the evidence and coming to the conclusion that the Bible is the Word of God, how do we approach the Bible? Thus far those of you who are Christians have been with me. But now I will ask you why you believe the things that you believe about the Christian faith?

Why do you believe there is an eternal hell for those who do not believe in this lifetime? Why do you believe in the Trinity? Why do you believe water baptism is necessary, and why do you disagree with other Christians over the

mode of baptism? Why do you believe one must speak in tongues if he is truly a Believer, or why do you believe that God no longer dispenses the gift of tongues? These questions and many more divide Christians, and have divided Christians even since the days of the apostles.

Let me focus on just one of these questions ... why do you believe God will torment forever and ever anyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ in this lifetime? Trust me ... many folks hold this belief with great passion. And why do they believe this? Many believe it because this is all they have heard their church teach them. Many believe it because their preacher or Bible teacher believes it. Many believe it because the majority of Christian believes it, and have believed it for a long time ... and it is in the creeds, or their articles of religion, or because it is considered "orthodoxy." But all of these are just the opinions of mankind. What matters is "**What is!**"

Some will point to their KJV or NIV Bibles to prove that there is, without question, an eternal hell. I once believed this with great passion myself. But I have come to see that the English translations of the Bible that we have today are actually part translation and part interpretation. The translators, biased by the common teachings of "the church" (orthodoxy) since about the 5th century have incorporated these "opinions" into the Word of God.

This is easily proven. The word commonly translated "forever" or "forever and ever" cannot possibly mean this. An "aion" (Greek, from which our word eon comes) is a time period with a beginning and an end. Even the common English translators recognize this in some passages where "aion" is used, since it cannot possibly fit the context. It is not "forever" but "for an age or eon."

This is just one example of the inconsistency that is built into the common English versions. We are today more concerned with a Bible translation that is easy to read (i.e. "tickles the ears") instead of one that carefully and consistently seeks to translate God's Word. Remember, what matters is not what a teacher, preacher or even Bible translator says ... but "**What is!**"

Much, much more is available on this particular study in my book, "At the End of the Ages .. the Abolition of Hell." I'm not trying to sell my book, but I want every Christian to understand the evidences behind this issue, so as to decide for himself, based on the evidence, "**What is!**" Whether you believe God will torment the unbeliever forever and ever, or whether you believe God would not do such a thing ... it doesn't matter. What matters is "**What Is!**"

I highly recommend that you acquire a Concordant Literal New Testament, available from Concordant Publishing Concern. (15570 Knochaven Road, Santa Clarita, CA 91387 www.concordant.org). This is not just a translation developed by a man based on his understanding of the meaning of the Greek. The translation itself is not as important as the method used. This version seeks to be very consistent in the handling of each and every Greek word, and most importantly it enables the Bible student to seek out every other instance where the same Greek word is used to check the meaning. You cannot do this with most English translations, since several different words Greek words are blended together into a single English word, or a single Greek word is translated in several different ways, with drastically different meanings, to fit the context and to satisfy the bias of the translator.

Don't take my word for this. God has revealed Himself to us. **What you believe** about the things He has revealed do not matter, despite how many other people believe these things to be true, or what their qualifications might be. What matters is "**What is.**" ***When something you believe is challenged, do not be so quick to defend your beliefs, but search the Scriptures to re-study and to determine what God is saying to us.***

"Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

- Bob Evely -