

Cut and Paste Christianity Part 4

Here a Little there a little

I think I need to install a seatbelt on my dining room chair. Each week, the roller coaster becomes a little more intense and maybe a little faster. This week's ride actually started on Thursday. Now I am not a Bible scholar or even learned in the academic sense but "I can do all things through Christ Who empowers me."- **Phil. 4:13**. I never fully know what will be shared until we read it together at Sabbath Fellowship. But this I do know, "But when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how or what you should reply in defense, or what you should say; For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in that same hour what needs to be said."- **Luke 12:11-12**.

Isa. 28:9-10- "Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? *Those* who are weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts, For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; ***here a little, there a little***;" I thought I'd open with this scripture as a reminder of how we are to read God's Word. It seems apparent that it's one of the first things most "Sunday Churcher's" forget. They do away with the entire context of God's Word to fit their narrative or agenda. Sometimes it's not just an omission of a scripture or two from a paragraph to support their beliefs but they

even discard the whole Old Testament as being Jewish as are God's Sabbaths and Holy Days. Right?

In another twist on misreading God's Word, they miss a foretelling of an occurrence maybe even in the same book. Or they overlook circumstances prior to one of their "cut and paste" scriptures. If they're like me, they simply forget what they just read. Sometimes, they just don't listen to what's being said in their mind as they read God's Word. The more we read and listen, the more we understand, the more *we seek*, the more *we will find*.

One of the biggest lies Satan pushes is going to Heaven when we die. There are so many ways to twist God's Word to fit their doctrines it is amazing anyone gets any truth. I found this particular scripture interesting as it's one used to support the "go to heaven" doctrine by most protestant churches. The "Transfiguration" and the "thief on the cross" are frequently quoted to show we're off to heaven when we die. Briefly in **Luke 23:43**- "And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you today, you shall be with Me in paradise." (I tell you today (this day) Future tense).

The Transfiguration

Matthew 17:1-5- “And after six days, Jesus took with *Him* Peter and James and his brother John, and brought them up into a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His face shined as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. Then behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with Him. And Peter answered *and* said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If You desire, let us make three tabernacles here: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight. **Listen** to Him!”

Wow! Can you imagine being in the presence of a friend on a camping trip, and all of a sudden, he transforms into this glowing entity? And then summons two guys you know to be dead? And to top it off, a voice from nowhere booms out of a cloud enveloping you? I’m sure there would be a streak of fire leading away from where I was just standing. The disciples had to be terrified and they were (v 6).

They reflected on this event later in their ministries. **2 Peter 1:16-18**- “For we did not follow cleverly concocted myths *as our authority*, when we made known to

you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His magnificent glory; Because He received glory and honor from God *the* Father when *the* voice came to Him from the Majestic Glory, “This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased.” And this *is the* voice from heaven that we heard when we were with Him on the holy mountain.

In closely looking at this event, why did Jesus choose to do this when He did? Why this dramatic display?

The Reasons

To fully understand the reasons behind this incident, we need to take a look *back* at the week before leading up to this point in **Matthew 16:1-4** - “Then the Pharisees and Sadducees came to *Him*, tempting *Him and* asking Him to **show them a sign** from heaven.”

But He answered *and* said to them, “When evening has come, you say, ‘*It will be* fair weather, for the sky is red.’ And in the morning, *you say*, ‘Today *it will* storm, for the sky is red and lowering.’ Hypocrites! You know *how* to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot *discern* the signs of the times. A wicked and adulterous

generation seeks after a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah the prophet.” Then He left them and went away.”

The Pharisees and Sadducees wanted a demonstration of Jesus’ power to validate what was being said about Him. They wanted Him to prove to them who He was. His rebuke to them included a foretelling of His own coming crucifixion and time in the grave. But as they had rejected those that had come before Him, their understanding was out of reach. Much like the reasons we do not hand out tracks in parking lots and go door to door (**Matthew 7:6**).

Now when he joined back with His disciples, He gave them a warning. “Now when His disciples came to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. And Jesus said to them, “Watch out, and be on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Then they reasoned among themselves, saying, “*It is* because we did not take bread.” But when Jesus knew *this*, He said to them, “O *you* of little faith, why are you reasoning among yourselves that *it is* because you did not bring bread? Do you still not understand? *Do you* not remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets you took *up*? Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets you took *up*? How is it that you do not understand that I was not speaking of bread *when I told* you to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees?” Then they understood that He did not say

to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Now after coming into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus questioned His disciples, saying, "Who do men declare Me, the Son of man, to be?" And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But you, who do you declare Me to be?" Then Simon Peter answered *and* said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered *and* said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood did not reveal *it* to you, but My Father, Who *is* in heaven. And I say also to you, that you are Peter; but upon this Rock I will build My church, and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you may bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you may loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven." - **Matthew 16:5-19**.

This was a huge step in the revelation to His disciples of Who Jesus actually was. Jesus tells them not to reveal this truth to anyone in **verse 20**. Still not convinced they were in tune with Who He is, Jesus continues His lessons with them for the remainder of Matthew 16.

Jesus lets His disciples know in advance that their calling will not be for the fainthearted and what lies ahead with respect their very lives and to His Own death **(verses 21-28)**.

Certainly, a lot to grasp and overwhelming to a point. In just how overwhelming, I think back on an old Bill Cosby comedy bit called “Noah Right! Noah hears the voice of the Lord telling Him to build an ark and his sinical response to God saying, “It’s The Lord” is, “right!” Doubt is always present somewhere and Peter and the other disciples as well were not yet fully convinced. As a human being, how much would you believe (not having the proof we now do) of a guy running around saying He’s the Messiah? We’d wrap him up in a strait jacket and send him off to the mental health facility. This doubt correlates to our level of faith. These ideas spun around in the disciples' minds for six days before the event of the transfiguration.

Much like their ancestors who witnessed miracle after miracle in leaving Egypt, the plagues, the pillar of fire and smoke, parting the Red Sea, manna from Heaven and receiving the 10 Commandments, they failed to grasp just Who it was they were following. They were still somewhat *skeptical*. True, they witnessed Jesus perform miracles too but it seems like all of mankind has attention deficit disorder

(ADD) when witnessing the Hand of God in action. Satan is always at the ready to shower us with doubt and apathy. Doubt is faith's worst enemy as witnessed in half-hearted prayers. Here we are 2000+ years later and how strong really is our faith having not seen these things? (**John 20:29**).

Debunking the Moses and Elijah from Heaven

Matthew 17:6-9- “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces in extreme terror. But Jesus came *and* touched them, and said, “Arise, and do not be terrified.”

And when they looked up, they saw *no one* except Jesus alone. Now as they were descending from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, “Tell the vision to no one until the Son of man has risen from *the* dead.” What they witnessed was a vision. One of the definitions of vision is the ability to see or plan the future. A vision in this case was not a physical reality; it was a spiritual act seen in the "mind's eye." Christ was demonstrating His Divine Power to remove their weak faith and give them a sign of Who He truly is.

They did not see the physical body of Moses and Elijah brought back to life.

Moses was dead and buried as is Elijah. **Deut. 34:5-6**- “And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth Peor. But no man knows of his grave to this day.”

Elijah was supposedly whisked off to Heaven in a fiery chariot. “Then it came to pass as they went on and talked, behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire *came*, and they separated between them both. And Elijah went up in a tempest into heaven.”- **2 Kings 2:11**. Heaven in this case is sky, not the Third Heaven where the Throne of God and Jesus are. If Elijah went to the Third Heaven that would make Jesus a liar in His statement in **John 3:13**. Here a little, there a little. Also, Elijah sends Jehoram a letter in **2 Chronicles 21:12**- “And a letter came to him *from* Elijah the prophet, saying, “Thus says the LORD God of David your father, ‘Because you have not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat your father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah,’ Now, I may not be privy to the US Postal Service but I believe with certainty Elijah didn’t send correspondence from the Great Beyond! I couldn’t begin to guess the amount of the postage!

This clearly shows how much we miss by not reading God’s Word in its entirety. So then, the three disciples witnessing this vision saw Moses and Elijah in their glorified state after their resurrection which has not yet occurred. The vision was for a future event. We will all see them at the Second Coming of our Savior Jesus Christ; “In an instant, in *the* twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for *the* trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be

changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal must put on immortality.”- **1 Cor. 15:52-53 (1 Thess. 4:13-17)**.

Hearing What we Want to Hear

"When people talk, listen completely. Most people never listen.”- *Ernest*

Hemingway

One of the reasons so many are deceived into a “go to heaven” doctrine is it is what they want to hear. It’s a much easier pill to swallow to “float off to heaven” than “rot back into dust in the grave.” We don’t want to listen to the truth. As a whole, humans are poor listeners.

To exemplify this, I’ll share a story we may have read a few years back from a CGG Weekly article titled “Listen Carefully (Part One) (Nov. 1, 2013) by Clyde Finklea.

“A man challenged his wife to see if she was a good listener. He asked his wife a riddle, "Suppose you're the engineer of a train. There are 36 people on board. At the first stop, ten get off and two get on. At the next stop, no one gets off, but five get on. At the third stop, four get off and two get on. Now for the question: What is the name of the engineer?" "How should I know?" snapped the wife. "See, you never listen! Right at the start I said, ‘You are the engineer of a train.'" This little

story shows how we often fail to listen carefully. Just as we fail to listen carefully to other people, so we frequently fail to listen carefully to the Lord and His Word. The misinformed populate our planet and the deceived fill the pews every Sunday. We'd rather send in our money for some miracle spring water and get checks in the mail than pay attention to the real message and receive eternal life in God's Kingdom. Have you ever wondered why we have two ears and only one mouth? We are to listen twice as much as we speak.

Isn't it true that a key to life and *good* relationships is effective communication? We used to have a saying in SWAT, "the lack of communications is the mother of all screw ups" (toned down of course). For effective communication we need to be effective listeners. This is a major reason we must take the Bible study very seriously. We need to learn and remember that we are here to listen to God through His Word share with each other His Truth.

The following stats are from the same article by Clyde Finklea. "Forms of "hear" are found 687 times, and many of these have to do with hearing God's Word. Forms of "listen" are found 149 times, and again, the majority of these passages in some way deal with listening to God."

- The specific command to "hear the word(s) of the LORD [or *Lord*]" occurs 34 times in the New King James Version (NKJV).

- The words "hear [or *listen*], O Israel" are found seven times in the NKJV. A number of similar expressions like "incline your ear," "give ear," or "pay [or *give*] attention" call God's people to listen intently to Him.
- In the New Testament, Jesus advises, "Take heed *what* you hear" (Mark 4:24, and "Therefore take heed *how* you hear" (Luke 8:18). The New International Version renders His command as we should "consider carefully" what and how we "listen."
- In Mark 4:9, 23 and Luke 8:8, the Lord warns, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"
- The phrase, "Today, if you will hear His voice," is found three times in Hebrews (Hebrews 3:7, 15; 4:7) and once in Psalm 95:7.
- Seven times, once in each of the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, the resurrected Christ urges His people, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

There is no doubt that a large part of our Christian duty is to listen. We have been baptized into God's Family and received the anointing of His Holy Spirit. We are now equipped with "ears to hear." We can now understand the deep things of God. "But according as it is written, "The eye has not seen, nor *the* ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed *them* to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit

searches all things—even the deep things of God. For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God.”- **1 Cor. 2:9-11.**

In returning to the transfiguration, God Himself tells the disciples in **Matthew 17:5**- “While he was speaking, a bright cloud suddenly overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I delight. ***Listen to Him!***”

Like a preview of God's command in the transfiguration, Moses writes in **Deuteronomy 18:15**, "The LORD your God will raise up unto you a Prophet from the midst of you, of your brethren, One like me. To Him ***you shall hearken,***"
Ultimately, the words that we hear from Christ enable us to have eternal life, as He says in **John 6:63**, "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life."

The rewards for listening to God’s Word and living them are listed throughout His Bible. We must take every word He speaks and live by them. Our future in His Kingdom is dependent on ability to listen and obey.

Rev. 3:11-13- “Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown. The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in

the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

We're here for a little but there for eternity. Amen.

BL-6/23/24

