

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

Established 1953

July/August 2018

Volume 52, Number 4

1953-2018 - Celebrating 65 years of spreading God's word in NE Arkansas and around the world!

HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD

Barry O'Dell

Peter stated of Paul's writings that, "*some things are hard to be understood*" (2 Pet. 3:16). There is no doubt that there are some passages of Scripture that are difficult to understand. Perhaps it is the type of literature employed by the author. Maybe there is a cultural understanding that a 21st century reader might miss. There can be various reasons why a Bible passage is "hard to be understood." Notice what Peter *did not* say - "some things *cannot* be understood." The God who created all things in six days by His word (Ps. 33:6-9) is capable and did, in fact, communicate to His creation in a way that is understandable. For example, Timothy had known the holy Scriptures since he was a child (2 Tim. 3:15-17)! When handled correctly (2 Tim. 2:15) and read (Eph. 3:4), the word of God can be understood. The next few editions of FCGN will address passages of Scripture that are both misused and misunderstood.

JEREMIAH 29:11

The prophet wrote these words of God: "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." This one verse is just a small part of a letter that was sent from Jerusalem by Jeremiah to the Jews who were now the captives of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon (Jer. 29:1). Since the days of Moses God had warned His people of the results of turning away from Him (Deut. 28:49-50). Because of their constant sin and rebellion against God, the Jews were suffering through the fulfillment of those warnings. God's people were also being lied to by false prophets during this time. A man by the name of Hananiah was falsely prophesying that the captivity would be over within two years (Jer. 28:1-4). While this message may have sounded good to the hearers, Jeremiah had already revealed that the captivity in Babylon would last seventy years (Jer. 25:11; 2 Chr. 36:19-21).

God, however, did not leave His people without hope or promise. They would be returned to their Promised Land! Their captivity would come to an end! The Jews would "return to this place" (Jer. 29:10). The return to and reconstruction of Jerusalem happened under the leadership of men like Ezra and Nehemiah. The prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to God's people during that time (Ezra 5:1). God kept His promises!

So, what is so hard to understand about Jeremiah 29:11? How is it misused? It has become a bumper-sticker. It appears on plaques in businesses and in picture frames in homes. It is used to preach the "health and wealth" gospel of

modern day false teachers. Most of the time the New International Version is used in these settings. It reads, "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "*plans to prosper* you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." "*If you donate to our ministry God will give it back to you in the future*" is broadcast all over cable and satellite. The *prospering* is what people want! What has been done to Jeremiah 29:11 has been done to a multitude of Bible verses - it has been taken out of context. When studying the Bible one must always ask several questions. Who was writing? Why was he writing? When was he writing? To whom was he writing? Let's apply these questions to Jeremiah 29:11:

1. Who was writing? God's prophet Jeremiah (29:1).
2. Why was he writing? He was instructing those who were in captivity to "settle in." They needed to prepare to stay for a long time (29:4-7). He also wrote this letter to warn the people against false prophets who were trying to deceive them (29:8-9).
3. When was he writing? The Jews were in captivity from 606 to 536 BC. This writing took place somewhere around 600 BC.
4. To whom was he writing? "...to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon" (29:1).

The historical setting of Jeremiah 29:11 is easy to discover if one simply reads the chapter in its entirety. This verse does not apply to all humans who have started a business or built a new home! It had one audience - the Jews - and one purpose - to encourage them about the future after their captivity.

Some might ask, "*Does it really matter? Doesn't God want to bless us?*" Yes, it does matter and yes, God does want to bless us. It has been said that a text taken out of context becomes a pretext. In other words, passages of the Bible are often misused and misapplied to "prove a point" when they are taken out of their historical context. The people of Jeremiah's day had been brutalized and their city was burned to the ground! They were not framing the words Jeremiah 29:11 and hanging them on a wall in a new house! God is good to all mankind in a general way according to Jesus (Matt. 5:45). However, He has not promised His people wealth and prosperity. He has not promised that they will never get sick or not face any difficulties in life. God's grace is available to all mankind, but that was not Jeremiah's point. When reading any passage of Scripture we must always be mindful of the four questions above. If we do not pay attention to context we may be saying things in God's name that God never said. That is dangerous ground!

*Does it really matter?
Doesn't God want to bless us?*

THE CONTEXT AND MEANING OF ROMANS 10:9-10

Jonathan Burns

Individuals have attempted, ever since the Bible was written, to disapprove its histories, destroy its motives, and misrepresent its values. Skeptics and unbelievers often make the argument that the Bible is filled with errors and contradictions. We need to understand that the Bible was not written so we would use one passage against another. Acts 2:38 states that baptism is for the remission of sins. 1 Peter 3:21 states that baptism saves us. These two passages are not contradictory, but explanatory. Scripture builds upon scripture. The Word is to be a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105) and not a weapon of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). One must remember that no single passage or statement destroys a doctrine that is clearly established by a number of passages. God's Word must be taken as a whole. The psalmist wrote: "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (Ps. 119:160). The essence of this passage is that the whole or sum of God's word is truth. The system of truth will always stand together.

Romans 10:9-10 is a selection of verses that is popular in the religious world for false teaching of salvation. Many will say that this passage explicitly says that all a person needs to do is to confess that Jesus is the Lord and believe for the blessing of salvation. Let us examine these verses and see what the word of God says about the matter.

THE CONTEXT

This chapter starts out by discussing the new covenant God made with His people. He had promised to do this (Jer. 31:31-34). Paul was concerned about his flesh and blood to the point that he called them an "ignorant" people concerning the righteousness of God. They were very religious and zealous toward God, but lacked obedience to the gospel of Christ. Paul is writing to tell his readers that the law's goal was Christ (Rom. 10:4). Many say: "I know what the Bible says, but I cannot believe God would condemn someone who loves Him." The Jews were religious, but substituted their personal idea for God's word. The first eight verses point to the fact the Gospel saves those who find it and obey it. Romans 10:9-12 describes the fact that righteousness is a straight gate. Many believe that any effort on their part will be respected by God. Romans 10:13-17 teaches that God has called mankind. This section of scripture proves unto us the value of gospel preaching. It is not story

time. It is not joke time. It is not personal time. It is the gospel that must shine forth in preaching. No, this writer is not condemning the use of a personal application, but one must ask why this story is being told. Why is this joking antidote being told? What application to the text is being made during the preaching? The occupation of preaching is a blessing, but preaching is serious business. In connection to this, some believe that a testimony builds faith, but Paul wrote that the gospel builds faith (Rom. 10:17). Romans 10:18-21 describes that we have no excuse in this life. Many try to blame God, but God is not to blame for our problems. The Jews became angry and destroyed the prophets and put to death Christ. Paul teaches in Romans 10:20-21 that no human being is without excuse in the presence of the Almighty God (Acts 17:30, 2 The. 1:7-9).

THE PASSAGE

Now, to look at Romans 10:9-10 you must keep the context of the chapter in mind. Simply put God has extended His love, mercy, and grace unto mankind in the form of His Word to save mankind. Man is not going to Heaven by his own plan.

Paul wrote these words: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10). Paul wanted the Jews to know that if they were going to be saved then they needed to go through Jesus Christ. Confession had to be made by the mouth (Acts 8:37, Matt. 10:32-33; 1 Tim. 6:12). This confession hinges on the fact the Jesus Christ arose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:1-4). By combining these statements in scripture, one can understand that lip-service is not recognized by the Lord (Jas. 2:17-24). Faith and confession are stated here in order. It is impossible for one to come to confession without faith. But is that all one must do to become a child of God?

If Romans 10:9-10 is saying that a person only needs to confess and believe to be saved, does that mean we can avoid repentance? Luke 13:3 says that if we do not repent we will perish. If Romans 10:9-10 is saying that a person only needs to confess and believe to be saved does that mean we can avoid baptism? Acts 2:38 and many other passages command baptism

for salvation. Scripture must be taken together. If Romans 10:9-10 is saying that a person only needs to confess and believe to be saved, does that mean we can avoid living a faithful life? James 1:12 and 1 Peter 5:4 teach us that we must live faithfully until the very end of life. If you are looking at Romans 10:9-10 you must consider the context of the verses, the chapters, and the entire book. Romans 6:3-4 teaches us that we are baptized into Jesus Christ to be raised up from the life of sin to walk in newness of life. What a blessing it is to be a child of God.

If we are willing to open our minds on any subject it will lead only to the truth. Immersion in water is an essential component in God's plan of salvation for humanity (1 Pet. 3:21). Confession of Christ is an essential part of God's plan (Rom. 10:9-10). Repentance is an essential part of God's plan (Acts 2:38). Belief is an essential part of God's plan (Heb. 11:6). Hearing the Word is an essential part of God's plan (Rom. 10:17). May we listen to God and hear His entire Word.

*Jonathan preaches for the East Hill church of Christ
in Pulaski, TN*

FCGN Now Available on DVD

65 years of material on various subjects from God's word! 13 Editors, Nearly 500 Authors, and Over 2,000 Articles! \$10 each. All funds go to the distribution of FCGN.



WHY DIDN'T JESUS SAY "HE THAT BELIEVETH NOT AND IS NOT BAPTIZED SHALL BE DAMNED?"

B.J. Clarke - FCGN 1996

Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). This truth is "ungetaroundable" for those who would deny the essentiality of water baptism. Just as $2+2 = 4$, so likewise does belief + baptism = salvation. It is not just he that believeth who shall be saved (Mk. 16:16). Furthermore, it is not just he that is baptized who shall be saved, but rather he that *believeth* and is baptized who shall be saved (Mk. 16:16).

But what about the latter part of the passage where Jesus says, "but he that believeth not shall be damned?" Opponents of the necessity of baptism will sometimes say, "If baptism is so important to our salvation, then why didn't Jesus say, 'He that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned?'" They would argue that since Jesus only mentioned not believing as a condition of being damned, that believing is the only condition of salvation. The answer to such a quibble is seen in both a scriptural and practical way. In John 3:18 Jesus said, "He who does not believe is condemned already." Hence, if a man is an unbeliever, he is lost. Jesus didn't waste words. In all of the time that I have been preaching, I have never yet heard someone say, "I don't believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Would you baptize me?" Jesus didn't say, "he that believeth not and is baptized not shall be damned" for the simple reason that if a man doesn't believe, he will never desire to be baptized. His unbelief is sufficient all by itself to damn his soul. For example, Jesus didn't say, "he that believeth not and repenteth not shall be damned," because if a man doesn't first believe, he will never be led to repentance. If I say, "He that eateth and digesteth shall live, but he that eateth not shall die," it is not necessary for me to mention digestion in the latter part of the statement, because if a man doesn't do the first thing (eating), he will never do the second thing (digesting). Likewise, Jesus knew that if a man didn't do the first thing (believe), he would never do the second thing (be baptized). In short, the teaching of Mark 16:16 shows us that it takes one condition to damn our soul, but there are at least two conditions (belief + baptism) necessary to the saving of it.

B.J. Clarke serves as the Director of Memphis School of Preaching in Memphis, TN

July/August 2018 Contributors

Churches of Christ

Pilot (Mammoth Spring, AR)	\$700.00
Crossroads (Gepp, AR)	\$200.00
Bakersfield (Bakersfield, MO)	\$200.00
Souder (Wasola, MO)	\$200.00
Clarkridge (Clarkridge, AR)	\$150.00
Lowell (Springdale, AR)	\$100.00
Dellhalf (Myrtle, MO)	\$100.00
Eastside (Lexington, OK)	\$100.00
Pritchett (Big Sandy, TX)	\$100.00
Agnos (Agnos, AR)	\$100.00
Elizabeth (Elizabeth, AR)	\$100.00

Moody (Moody, MO)	\$100.00
Viola (Viola, AR)	\$50.00
Winona (Winona, MO)	\$30.00
<u>Individuals</u>	
Gordon Barnett (Salem, AR)	\$105.00
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Cozort (O'Fallon, IL)	\$100.00
Mary Williams (Franklin, AR)	\$50.00
Joe Kaderabek (Benton, AR)	\$40.00
Mona Martin (Winona, MO)	\$30.00
Gail Weaver (Franklin, AR)	\$25.00
FCGN CD Purchases	\$40.00

Fulton County Gospel News

USPS Publication #211780

...is a periodical publication issued bimonthly by the church of Christ at Third & Bethel (PO Box 251), Mammoth Spring, AR 72554-0251.

POSTMASTER: Please mail all changes of address to the above address.

FCGN is mailed free of charge to any who care to receive it. If you send in a name we must have a complete address, including number and street name, or RR, or HCR number, plus box number, or a PO Box number and the **NINE DIGIT ZIP CODE**.

This paper is supported by voluntary contributions for which we are grateful. Financial information will be furnished upon request.

Mail address corrections to:

Fulton County Gospel News

PO Box 251

Mammoth Spring, AR 72554

Editor - Barry O'Dell

Phone - (870) 625-3217

Mammoth Spring church of Christ

FCGN website - www.fultoncountygospelnews.org

New Email - bodell1979@gmail.com

Learn more about us - www.mammothspringchurchofchrist.com
"Like" us on Facebook - Church of Christ at Mammoth Spring

Biblical Worship

- Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-24)
 - Prayer (Acts 12:5; Phil. 4:6-7)
- Vocal music only (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 13:15)
 - Giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:7-8)
 - Preaching (Acts 2:42; 20:7)

The Churches of Christ

- Bible only (Rom. 1:16; 2 Pet. 1:3)
 - Name (Rom. 16:16)
- Began in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Acts 2:1-4)
 - Established by Jesus (Matt. 16:18)
 - Purchased with Jesus' blood (Acts 20:28)
 - Established in the 1st century (Acts 2:47)
- Body of Christ and Christ alone is the Head and Savior (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23)
- Added to the church today just as in the 1st century (Acts 2:41, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13)

Salvation

- Belief and baptism (Mk. 16:16)
- Repentance and baptism (Acts 2:37-38)
- Belief, confession, and baptism (Acts 8:37-38)
 - Hear, belief, baptism (Acts 18:8)
 - Faith and baptism (Gal. 3:26-27)
 - Baptism does save us (1 Pet. 3:21)