

SEARCH AND LOOK

Joe Slater

How do you determine right from wrong? Some religions teach that we common folks cannot understand the Bible, so we must accept and obey what the religious elite say. That idea is as old as it is erroneous! What if the big shots are wrong? As Jesus said, *“If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch”* (Matthew 15:14).

Truly, the religious authorities of Jesus’ day were as blind as some are today. In John 7:32, *“the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him”* (i.e. to arrest Jesus). When the officers returned without Him, the angry authorities demanded an explanation. *“The officers responded, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’”* (John 7:46)

They might as well have touched a match to a case of dynamite! The Pharisees exploded: *“Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed”* (John 7:47, 48).

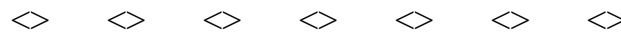
What a pathetic substitute for sound reasoning! First they insulted the officers’ intelligence (if you’re impressed with Jesus, not be the brightest lamp on the stand!). Then they appealed to their own authority rather than truth (since the rulers and Pharisees don’t believe in Jesus, He must not amount to anything). Finally, they cast another insult, this time at the people who favored Jesus – they’re just ignorant dupes under a divine curse!

Bless Nicodemus’ heart! Himself a Pharisee, he nevertheless challenged Jesus’ enemies: *“Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?”* (John 7:51). Now there’s the right standard – gather the evidence and compare it to the Scriptures. The

big shots of Judaism, however, had no interest in that! It was time for more insults: *“Are you also from Galilee?”* (v. 52a). Evidently they felt about the whole region of Galilee as many felt about Jesus’ hometown: *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* (1:46). By insinuating that Nicodemus was from Galilee, they hoped to intimidate him into opposing Jesus.

Their final statement, however, erased all doubt as to the blindness of these religious elitists, not to mention their untrustworthiness. *“Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee”* (7:52b). Even if that had been true, it would have proven nothing about Messiah coming from Galilee. However, a notable prophet had, indeed, come from Galilee! If the Pharisees had taken their own advice (“search and look”), they would have realized that Jonah was from Gath Hopher in Galilee (2 Kings 14:25).

God’s word (not some human religious authority figure) is the standard by which all teaching and conduct must be measured. Self-professed preachers, prophets, priests, popes, pastors, and professors can be (and often are) mistaken. May we have the spirit of the noble Bereans, who *“received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”* (Acts 17:11).



What Concerns You More?

Having your name stamped onto the cover of your Bible?

Or

Having what is in the Bible stamped onto your heart?

Will You Trust Me?

When we hurt, when we are depressed, when circumstances grind us down, or when we face loss, we look upward and cry, "WHY?" This is normal. Read Psalms and look at the number of times that David, a man after God's own heart, cried, "Why?"

Job demanded to face God and be given an answer for all the bad things that happened to him. God's answer was to have Job understand that He is in control and that Job wasn't the equal of God. When you look at the book of Job closer, you see that God could have simply said, "Will you trust Me?"

Paul prayed to God three times that what he called "a thorn in the flesh" would be removed (II Corinthians 12:7-8). The answer that Paul was given was, *“My grace is sufficient for you”* (II Corinthians 12:9a). Again, a reminder to trust God was the answer.

Like Job, we might want our heavenly Father to explain to us why He has allowed bad things to happen to us. After all, He could have prevented and protected us. He could have healed us or our loved ones. Our Father would most likely respond, "Will you trust Me?"

We still demand of God, "Why, if You love me, do bad things happen to me?" We forget that God demonstrated His love through the sacrifice of His beloved Son on the cross. Our Father never promised to keep us from suffering. What He promises is that all will work out for good. Read Romans 8:28-39.

I understand that suffering can help my faith to grow, that it can develop patience, and it can build a great character. Still, when I am suffering, knowing that doesn't always help me accept my situation. All God says is, "Will you trust Me?"

--Ed Wittlif (Denver, CO)