

Commitment

Joe Slater

It's political campaign season again! I'm reminded of the candidate who was asked to state his position on a certain issue. "Well, I've got friends who are for it," he replied, "and I've got friends who are against it. And I always stick with my friends!"

Shift gears to spiritual matters. Does God exist, or not? Is the Bible God's word, or not? Do you believe it, or not? Will you obey it, or not?

Ancient Israel became caught up in Baal-worship while still paying lip-service to the Lord. Elijah asked, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21). You can't misunderstand that! Yet the people wouldn't commit themselves. Even the spectacular display of fire from God, consuming not only Elijah's sacrifice but the very stones of the altar, brought only the most superficial and temporary allegiance to the true God.

Hybrid religion has never pleased God, nor will it ever do so! When someone says, "I believe in God, but maybe not the God of the Bible," let us say gently but plainly, they don't believe in God, they believe in a god. When someone says, "I believe in the Bible, but I also believe some other books are from God," let us say gently but plainly, they don't believe the Bible. The Bible claims to be exclusive (2 Timothy 3:16-17). One who believes it isn't exclusive doesn't believe the Bible.

Someone else says, "I believe some parts of the Bible, but not other parts." Again, we want to be kind but plain: they don't believe the Bible. God's word must not be treated like a cafeteria – take what you like, leave the rest. That fails the test just like hybrid religion.

Make up your mind! Make a commitment!

Jesus' Weather Forecast

There have been a lot of weather forecasts that we probably didn't like. What would you think if Jesus was the weather forecaster? He, after all, can control the winds and the sea. He knows all. He is the one who created all things. There is an old statement, "Red sky at night, sailor's delight. "Red sky in morning, sailor's warning." Jesus would likely concur with that statement based on what He told the Pharisees in Matthew 16:3-10.

In this passage the Jews want a sign from heaven. I don't know what exactly they were expecting. Jesus tells them that they were able to determine weather patterns, but they can't determine who He is. Are we like this today, looking for some special sign from heaven? Some folks today have certain events happen in their lives and will state, "It is a sign!"

Do we want a sign from heaven about what we should be doing in our lives? We already have everything we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). The information we need is in the book God has given. God speaks to us today by His son (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Special signs and miracles were given in the New Testament times to produce belief and confirm the spoken word. (John 20:30, 31; Mark. 16:20). We have the word today. We are no longer in need of special signs.

Do we want a sign from heaven that God hears us? Some might want some special sign as proof that God answers prayer. The Bible tells us that his ears are open to the prayers of the righteous (1 Peter 3:12). The answer to prayer comes at God's choosing, not ours. Sometimes his answer is yes. Sometimes He answers NO. When Paul prayed that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, God's answer was "**my grace is sufficient**" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Sometimes God answers "wait a while." But God will answer the prayers of His children according to His will (1 John 5:14).

--Bill Brandstatter (via *Bulletin Gold*)

Scarecrows

"Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field" (Jeremiah 10:5)

Those of us who grew up on farms are familiar with scarecrows. They were made to look like real people, standing in the fields to scare away the crows and other birds that might destroy the crops. Jeremiah compared the idols of his day to scarecrows. They were impotent, yet men bowed before them in fear.

Their idols were made by men, cut from trees, hammered into place, and decorated by the goldsmith. Isaiah added his commentary, "*They lift it upon their shoulders, they carry it, they set it in its place, and it stands there; it cannot move...*" (Isaiah 46:7). It doesn't speak or walk. It does no evil or good, because it has no more life than a scarecrow in a cucumber field.

All the idols of men perish. Where are the gods of the ancient world? Apollo, Jupiter, Neptune, Juno, Nisroch, Chemosh, Dagon, Zeus, or Tammuz? Although men swarmed their temples and observed their ceremonies, they are gone forever. But the living God remains. He abides forever. He has no beginning, or end. He is not a dead block of wood. He is the Creator. We are created in His image.

Anything man-made will perish. Even churches and temples erected by men will perish. Modern man is little different from our ancestors who believed they could invent their own gods or temples of worship. When Christ promised to build His church, he promised that the gates of hades would not destroy it. It is eternal. It is indestructible. Daniel said it would stand "forever." The reason? It is of God's doing.

--Al Behel (via *Bulletin Gold*)