

Living Springs Institute

Where Sound Doctrine Endures.

www.livingspringsinstitute.org

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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Step into the Springs!

Thank You! I would like to take a moment to thank all of you who have subscribed to our newsletter. It is always an encouragement to get a positive response to any new venture, and we are certainly glad for each of you that have chosen to take part in this ministry! Your responses have blessed us greatly!

Now, as promised in our last newsletter, we want to talk about our question and answer ministry. Here at Living Springs Institute, one of our mottos is that we don't just say what we believe, but we teach you why! In an effort to live up to this, we offer the chance for you to submit questions. We understand that much of what we teach can bring up many other issues that you may have questions about. We also know there are questions you may have always wanted to ask a Biblical Teacher. Some of you may have had a chance to ask someone, but didn't feel you got a true Biblical answer, didn't get the chance to discuss it further, or maybe you would simply like to hear what our response would be. You may also want to submit questions and/or arguments about something you have read in this newsletter or on our website! When this is the case, if you would like to point out exactly what section you are referring to, we welcome a discussion on just about any subject! We may also be able to point you to other material we have that will help, or interest you. Whatever reason you may have for your questions, we welcome the opportunity to respond to them!

P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539

(970) 593-9468

Here are the instructions for submitting a question via regular mail: **1.** Please type or print your submission clearly. **2.** It is important that you head your submission “Q&A Submission”! If you leave off this heading, we may not recognize your correspondence as a submission. **3.** Be sure to give us your name and address. A phone number and/or e-mail address is optional but would be helpful in the event we have trouble getting mail to you. **4.** If you have more than just a Q&A submission to send us - like material orders and/or general correspondence - it may be sent in the same envelope, but always put them on separate pages. If any of these items fill more than one page, please staple those pages together. Feel free to use the front and back of each page if you want, but never put one item on the front and another on the back! (ex. Q&A submission on the front and general correspondence on the back.) **5.** Write your question! You do not have to limit your question to one sentence. Feel free to write as much as you deem necessary to explain what you are asking. You may also want to submit an argument and/or question about something you read in this newsletter or on our website. **6.** Mail your submission to Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. To save a stamp, remember you can also ask questions on our website at www.livingspringsinstitute.org!

We want you to feel at ease when you write us, so here is a copy of our Q&A Policies!

1. It is the strict policy of this ministry to never give out personal information!!! We want you to know that when you write us, we will never give your name, address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal information to any other parties. Most submitted questions and their answers will be posted on the Q&A page of the website, but no personal information from the submitter will be used. This means we will not even put a first name or state with the question. For example: we never list a question as, “from Jim in CA.”

2. Questions can be submitted anonymously. However, if the submitter does not give proper information for us to write them back or contact them in any way, it will be up to the submitter to look for their Q&A on the

website. As was aforementioned, most questions and their answers are posted on the Q&A page of the site; but if we feel a question is the same as one already answered, then your specific question will never be posted. If you would like to submit a question anonymously, be sure to look at the Q&A page to see if your question is different from what is discussed there. We take no responsibility for unanswered anonymous questions.

3. If a question is submitted which is similar to one that has already been answered, we will send you that Q&A. If you feel that answer does not fully answer your specific question, then we encourage you to resubmit your question with more detail as to what you feel was not covered! If you need to do this, we ask that you simply forward the last e-mail back to us with the new information added to it. This will help us to remember exactly what has been covered in past correspondence. If you are using regular mail, simply write us back and include the correspondence number from the top of the first page of the last correspondence you received from us. It is our desire to answer each question thoroughly, so don't hesitate to write back!

4. If you ask us a question, we ask for your patience. Depending on what you have asked, it may take time to write an answer! We seek to be thorough and teach people something. It is not our mission to just give the shorthand "religious response." If it looks like it will take longer than ten business days, we will try to send a confirmation, via e-mail, that we have received your submission. If you are not using e-mail, it may be longer before you hear from us. Those using regular mail, who are outside the US, please be aware that mail can take a long time to be delivered, and you may be able to read your answer on the website long before your written response makes it to you! No matter how you submitted your question, if you feel it has been too long and you haven't heard anything, please try to contact us again.

Well, that about wraps it up. We hope you will take the opportunity to write, and we hope you enjoy the rest of this newsletter!

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

When we look at the story of the Bible, in the light that Christian theologians do, we find that they break the story down into dispensations. These are sections of time separated by major events such as: the fall of man and the death of Christ. They will tell you that man started in a dispensation of innocence. This being before Adam and Eve took of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then they will tell you that we moved into a dispensation of conscience. They will go on to tell you that when God established the nation of Israel, He put us in a dispensation of law. Finally, they will say that at the time of Jesus, we entered a dispensation of grace. Now, these terms are not altogether wrong, but they are misleading for many people. One of the biggest problems with this terminology is the fact that many are looking at the story of salvation all wrong! To many, the titles given to these dispensations are descriptive of how men were to go about finding God and salvation for their souls.

We start with the dispensation of innocence. Why is it called that? Because, in the garden, man did not yet have the knowledge of good and evil. Like a child, we were not responsible for that knowledge; therefore, we could not fall short of the glory of God; (Rom. 3:23, James 4:17) therefore, we did not need a Saviour. When we chose to take of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, we became responsible; we fell short of God's glory, and therefore, needed a Saviour! The following dispensations were also titled to reflect what many see as how God worked with us during specific time periods. Based on that idea, many go on to believe that in the dispensation of conscience, it was up to men to simply figure out, all by themselves, how to live before God. Only people like Noah, somehow figured it out, and pleased God. It really is to believe that God was looking at who could learn how to be a "good person." This may be the worst of the ideas. Noah's righteousness, no matter how great it was, was still as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) It was Noah's faith that pleased God, and faith is why Noah was willing to build an ark!

As we move on to the dispensation of law, I have to say there are large

groups of people who believe, teach, and write their doctrine around wrong ideas about this one! Many believe that during the dispensation of law, people were saved by following the law. They believe the only people accepted by God were those who followed the law. Mainly, those of the Jewish race, and the few who came in to be a part of the Jewish nation! Many churches teach that until the time of Jesus, all Gentiles who did not come and practice the Law of Moses, died in their sin and were lost for eternity. They teach that Jesus came to open salvation to all the world, free from having to follow the law! These ideas are simply untrue, and these untruths cause many false doctrines to arise!

These things are why there is so much confusion about saying, we live in a dispensation of grace at our present time! People have a hard time understanding why people just on the other side of Christ needed to sacrifice animals for salvation, and now we simply ask for it! People can go to church all their lives and never understand this teaching, and there is a good reason - it's wrong! I know many believe the animal sacrifices did not save people, but they do feel as though these sacrifices sort of swept the sin under the rug until Jesus could come and perform a lasting, perfect sacrifice. We need to understand that faith without works is dead; (James 2:17) but salvation never has come through our actions! It comes by the shed blood of Jesus Christ! The thing we must come to understand is, since the fall until now, salvation has always been through faith! (Eph. 2:8) Faith, not in our ability to "be good," or in our ability to follow a law, (Rom. 3:20) but always in the fact that God Himself would provide a Lamb. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, the only real difference in the basis of salvation, is that we believe God Himself has provided a Lamb, in the man Jesus Christ!

The Garden of Eden was not just a dispensation of innocence; it was a time of perfection. God had a perfect plan, and He put that plan into motion during creation. If you want the most basic description of sin, it is, disobedience to God. Sin is disobedience to the plan that God had for us from the beginning. Man was given a free will, and he was given a choice. Eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was a choice they could make, but one that God had instructed them - not to do! Why? Because, once man had this knowledge, he would be responsible for it. God knew if they became responsible, they would fall short of His perfection. This would cause separation from God; and

because God is a loving God, He would remove man from the Tree of Life. (Gen. 3:24) Remember, He warned them this would happen. (Gen. 2:17) This left them in a situation where they could not stay on this earth, but they did not have the power to build a place where they could go after the death of their physical form. The end result is that man needs someone who can save him from this predicament! God, being a God of love, also was not willing that any should perish but that all would come to a place of repentance! (II Pet. 3:9) So, God put into place a plan that would be able to save everyone from Adam and Eve to the very last child to ever be conceived. Then, He again simply gave man the choice, follow God or go his own way. Jesus said, there would be few that would choose to follow God. (Matt 7:14) This is the foundation of the story.

What God would do, after the fall of man, would not be to change His plan of salvation over and over again; but He would work amongst men in an attempt to get them to see and accept this plan of salvation! There are no changing dispensations of how man must come to God, only a continuing building of things that would help man find that one and only way to God. This is the explanation of the scripture that says, “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Romans 5:20 As sinful man fell further and further away from God’s saving plan, God continued to implement things that would give all men the chance to find Him. The destructive force of sin would never be able to cut man off from the love of God. (Rom. 8:38-39) As long as man lived on this planet, he would always have the chance and the ability to turn from his own way and give his life to God. (Matt. 10:39) God would not force man or violate man’s free will! However, God would always be reaching out in the hope that man would take His hand, and come back to that perfect plan God created, “In the beginning”!

Now, what we are talking about is pretty deep stuff, and I know we can’t understand it all in one short article; but that is why we must go through the Bible. We must take all scripture together, putting each piece in its proper place and realizing there is a place for each piece. No contradictions, just the story of God’s love in action! So, live in God’s love, and I’ll see you next time!

Knowing the Tree!

By Philip E. Busby

Just a while back, I heard a preacher talking about the idea of what the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil really was. He was propagating the idea that the Tree did not actually have any kind of miraculous properties to it, but that the Tree was simply a normal tree in which God pointed to specifically and told them not to eat of. This philosophy says that the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil taught Adam and Eve the difference between good and evil, in that, good was to leave the Tree alone; and evil was to disobey God by eating from it. It is to say that the Tree was God's way of teaching them right from wrong. Therefore, the first sin changed nothing more than the fact that for the first time, man had disobeyed God. This brings up so many issues that I hardly know where to start!

If there was nothing particularly special about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, then one has to ask why Adam and Eve, after taking of the Tree, suddenly understood that they were naked? Not only did they realize they were naked, they realized they needed to do something about it, and were compelled to sew fig leaves together in an attempt to cover themselves. Are we to believe that simple guilt caused them to begin to realize things like this?

If we are going to believe this Tree was nothing more than an object lesson, then shouldn't we believe that the Tree of Life had no special power as well? Is it called the Tree of Life because God arbitrarily decided to call it that? And if that is the case, then why did God go to such lengths to keep man from eating from it after the fall? (Gen. 3:22-24)

When you say the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was just a tree, you are saying that God was not really giving man a chance to change his world and go at it for himself: a chance to reach out and take something more than he had been given at creation. God gave man a free will, and a chance to exercise that will. He gave us the choice between an innocent life of growing as he taught us, or the chance to obtain the knowledge and see what we could do ourselves. God did not just pick a tree and say not to eat of it because He

decided to put that particular stipulation on us. He said not to eat of it because He knew that we could not handle the responsibility that would come with the knowledge! Because man could not handle this knowledge, he would be separated from God and His free gift to them - The Tree of Life!

Simply stated, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil was called that because it had the power to instill exactly that: knowledge of what is right and what is wrong. It gave them not only the simple knowledge that things like killing and stealing are wrong, but a sense of responsibility to do something about the things in their lives that might affect others. They realized they were naked, and that might cause others to fall into temptation. "Because I was naked," is why they told God they hid from Him. God points out to them that the fact they are bothered by their nudity is a sign they had been given this knowledge from somewhere, and there was only one source for that kind of knowledge, the Tree He had told them not to eat of! (Gen. 3:10-11)

Once again, we have an example of another philosophy raised by men who are so carnal minded, (Rom. 8:1-8) they can't believe in anything spiritual. These men are always trying to boil things down to tell us the Bible is nothing more than physical events that can be explained by carnal thoughts. To many, this is very comforting! The idea that there is a simple physical explanation for every miraculous event in the Bible. Beware of these teachers, who come to you and say they are of God; one day they have you believing that there was nothing special about the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; and the next, they have you believing that there was nothing special about the shed blood of Jesus Christ! As you think on this, remember another scripture which says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits."! Matthew 7:16

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