HEBREWS

**“EARTH TO DARTH …”**

George Lukas, creator of the trilogy (*not* the Trinity!) dreads what may happen when he dies. Perhaps, he said, he’ll come face to face with God and hear, "You had your chance, and you blew it. Get out."

Chuck Colson said, *“There’s no greater cosmic drama than…God's dealing with humanity* (through) *His Son Jesus Christ--a story which, as C. S. Lewis points out, has the advantage of being true.”*

**JESUS -- TRUTH OR BUNK?**

Alan Scholes wrote, *“I had often heard my religious friends say, ‘Jesus died for our sins’ or ‘Jesus died to save the world.’…it was inconceivable to me that anything done by one man nearly 2,000 years ago could have a direct effect on how we live in the 20th century. I certainly couldn't see how Jesus' death, no matter how noble or unselfish, could make up for all the evil in the world.”* (www.leaderu.com/isot/docs/dodger/chapter3.htm)

Skeptics gag at the notion of God becoming man (as Jesus did) so that we might live with God. Often they cite the hypocritical, even destructive conduct of some who call themselves Christians.

To this, Seattle attorney Skip Li said in a Spokane address last week, *“If you must judge (Jesus) by others, judge Him, as the Italian writer Umberto Eco has said, by the conduct of saints, not fools.”*

… saints like Mother Teresa;

… like William Wilberforce whose life was rewarded when slavery was abolished in the British Colonies;

… like the Clapham sect, Wilberforce’s friends, who helped abolish child labor, reform prisons and build hospitals for the poor;

… like those who founded Harvard, Yale, Princeton and others because they believed knowing God should involve scholarship;

… like Cassie Bernall, the valiant Columbine H.S. student who took a fatal bullet because she openly admitted her faith in God.

Said Skip Li, *“To judge Christ by the conduct of fools is like saying you don’t like Mozart because the kid next door practicing his sonatas makes mistakes all the time. Better to judge Mozart by listening to Vladimir Horowitz.”*

# THE BIBLE ON FAST FORWARD

The Bible is divided into the Old (OT) and New (NT) Testaments, spanning 1,600 years of writing time. Forty or so authors, inspired by God, wrote it, using three languages. Let’s roll the highlights!

In Genesis the Bible’s first 11 chapters deal with all mankind. In chapter 12 God appoints a man named Abram, living in what’s now Iraq, to become father of the Jews, God’s special people, Israel.

From Genesis 12 through all 39 books of the OT, on through the first four NT books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), the Jewish people are the Bible’s key cast of characters.

In the fifth book of the NT, Acts, a major shift occurs after God’s only Son, Jesus Christ, returns to heaven, having lived on earth for 33 years, then crucified like a thug, and rising from the dead.

In Acts Christ’s mentees spread the news that Jesus was indeed the Jews’ long-awaited Messiah. Then God chooses Paul to take His message of forgiveness to the *non*-Jewish world.

In his 13 NT “letters” Paul says God equally loves all of us -- Jew/Gentile, male/female, rich/poor, and He sent His Son Jesus to earth to die to buy our ticket into God’s forever family called “the church,” or “the body of Christ.” Paul’s *not* referring to any one church but to *all* who come to Jesus in repentance and faith, accepting His free gift of forgiveness, opting to live for Him.

The “church” (Christ’s “body” on earth now) will be here ‘til Jesus returns to take with Him all, living and dead, who’ve come to Him in faith. This “Rapture” will be too quick for CNN’s “breaking news.”

Next, the 7-year “Tribulation.” Here, says Daniel in the OT, God will resume dealing with the nation Israel instead of with “the church.”

At the end of these seven epic years, during which Antichrist is outed, comes Armageddon --*not* just special effects; it’s the real deal war-to-end-all-wars. Christ returns to earth, wins that war and establishes His earthly kingdom for the next 1,000 years. Following this “Millennium” is His *eternal* kingdom.

David Letterman asked Larry King, “If you could interview any person from history, who’d it be?” King, that great theologian, replied, “Jesus Christ. … my first question would be ‘Were you really born of a virgin?’ The answer would define history.” King nailed it. If God became man, that would be the supreme act of all time.

If God had *not* become man, died and resurrected, then there’s *nothing* to live for. Death’s a dead end, with no hope of eternal life. Either Christ is “the *Hope* of humanity or the *Hoax* of humanity.”

**“HE *BREWS*” IS NOT THE JEOPARDY ANSWER FOR**

**“WHO IS ADOLPH COORS?”**

Hebrews is about FAITH. Some say, “I just don’t have faith.” Yet when we hit the brakes or flip the light switch, we have faith that a positive result will happen. *Having faith* is what we *do*!

In making *Big Business*, the producer arranged to film at a house slated for demolition. Laurel and Hardy totalled it. Later the homeowner arrived. Woops, they should’ve been *next door*! The director had *faith* in his decision, but his faith wasn’t Truth-based.

Theologians, archaeologists, historians, linguists and countless experts present convincing evidence that the Bible’s true. But ‘*believing* is seeing!’ Hebrews’ key verse is 11:1 -- *“Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*

The late Ray Stedman, said, “Faith is not a matter of being sure of all the factual, logical, footnoted, photographed, notarized evidence our senses can confirm. It’s being certain of what we do *not* see! … As we act on our little bit of belief, as we grow in our experience of God’s reality in our lives, His Word sounds a bell in our hearts. It rings true. Our experience aligns with the truth of God’s Word.”

Jews began to revolt against Rome in AD 66. Four years later Titus’ Roman army, 30,000 strong, arrived in Jerusalem to face 24,000 Jewish soldiers. Five months later the Italians razed the walls, torched its Temple and leveled the city. Moving south, the Romans killed a million Jews, taking 95,000 captive. In AD 326 Jerusalem’s integrity was restored under Constantine, the Roman Empire’s first Christian emperor. In AD 637 it fell to Mohammedans and until 1917, except for 100 years during the Crusades, remained Muslim.

As the only NT book whose authorship remains a mystery, Hebrews was written about 66 AD to Jews who’d turned from Judaism to Christ. But their faith in Christ was teetering in the face of fierce persecution. And they mourned that by accepting Christ, they’d given up their Jewishness. Hebrews pleads with them to not slip back into Judaism’s legalistic thickets.

The author produces big-name witnesses to prove that Christ is greater than anyone the Jewish Christians had considered more important than Jesus -- including Moses, angels, prophets et al.

Chapters 1 and 2 refer to Christ as our great High Priest -- fully God, fully man. Because He lived as a man, He understands our weaknesses and temptations. He lived here without sin, becoming the perfect Sacrifice who gave His life so that you and I wouldn’t have to spend eternity in a hibachi the Bible calls hell.

Let’s read chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 4 describes the dynamic power of the Bible, God’s love letter to man -- the divine X-ray that searches the hidden places of our hearts and lives, unveiling our real motives, measuring them by the straightedge of God’s Truth.

We see here Christ’s role as our great High Priest. What does that mean? In *What The Bible Is All About* Henrietta Mears writes:

“We are taught very plainly in the Word that sin has cut people off from God. No sinner can approach God. The way has been closed. In the Old Testament a representative, the High Priest whom God appointed, could come into God’s presence only once a year after sacrifice for the people’s sins had been made. He had to offer the blood of calves and goats not only for the sins of the people but for his own sins, for he too was a sinner. He then would go into the Holy Place, then on beyond the veil into the Most Holy Place where the Ark of the Covenant rested. Here was the mercy seat, and here God met man through the mediator, the High Priest.

*“How can we approach God today? Christ has made that possible. He’s our High Priest, our representative before the Father. He entered into the heavenly sanctuary, God’s presence, bearing the blood of His own sacrifice to cleanse us from our sins and to give to us eternal salvation. His blood had to be shed, for* without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (9:22). But Christ gave Himself to God for our sins as one sacrifice for all time, and then sat down in the place of highest honor at God’s right hand.

“It is finished, *He said on the cross. All His work of redemption had been completed; hence we see Him sitting. …. Our High Priest is at the right hand of the Father at this minute, making intercession for you and for me. He has gone* to appear now before God as our Friend (9:24). *This is why we can boldly enter God’s presence through the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way (10:19-20).”*

Let’s read ch. 9.

In Chs. 10-13 the author explains how we’re to live while having faith in Christ. The secret is seeing Christ as our Source and Reason for living. Faith isn’t brain surgery; it’s simply trusting God, believing what He says in the Bible, then acting on it. God, through our faith, gives us right standing before Him -- and power for living.

Especially since Woodstock, it’s been cool to doubt the existence of God -- except when we as a nation “need” Him after a high school massacre. God wants us to trust Him *all* the time. FAITH, someone said, is an acronym for **F**orsaking **A**ll, **I** **T**ake **H**im.

In Ch. 10 we see that OT sacrifices were “reminders of sin,” but Christ’s sacrifice “removes our sin,” “once for all time,” forever settling the sin question! Let’s read ch. 10.

Ch. 11 is the Bible’s Cooperstown, listing a group of greats who simply took God at His word. Let’s read this legendary chapter.

# NOW THAT I’M ON JESUS’ TEAM, WHAT DO I DO?

During the 7+ years of these lunches some of you have decided to accept God’s free gift of forgiveness for your sins. That’s the *best decision* you’ll *ever* make!

Each of us who chooses to put Christ in the driver’s seat of our lives needs to learn more about Him. Here are a few ways to do that:

* Many great Bible teachers do audio cassettes. One of my all-time picks is Tom Shrader in Phoenix. As you commute, gulp down those valuable, spiritual vitamins.
* You can read the Bible by yourself; then, if you like, you and I can get together to talk about what you’ve read.
* If you don’t already, you could begin attending a Christ-centered church where the Bible is faithfully taught. WARNING: there are as many churches that *don’t* do that as churches that *do*. If you’ll trust me, I’ll try to come up with a list of good ones near you.
* There are some really good, small Bible study groups around town with whom you can meet weekly, monthly, etc.

If this makes sense to you, if you have questions, or you just need some help you to push off from the dock, let’s talk. And …..

If you *haven’t* gotten enough info to help you make your decision about Jesus, I’m here to help you get it….whenever you’re ready. But remember, life is *not* the NBA; usually you can’t afford to wait for the 2-minute warning to make your decision.

His Deal

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