

## Should Christians Engage In Doctrinal Debates? - Part 1

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As I have mentioned to my readers a number of times before, it is my personal policy to not engage myself in doctrinal debates. This is not a decision which I just suddenly made one day on a whim. It is in fact a position which I slowly adopted over a period of some forty years, after engaging in countless discussions, covering a wide range of topics, with both Christians and non-Christians alike. In my younger days, when I was perhaps more of an undisciplined firebrand -- and probably more self-righteous as well -- such exchanges would sometimes evolve into heated, but diplomatic, discussions. In my youthful foolishness and zeal, I was so certain that I was right about everything. I had the truth. How about you? Does that describe your life as well? Does the shoe fit?

As I matured in my Christian faith, and slowly grew in both wisdom and experience, I gradually came to realize that not only have I not always been right about everything, but that more often than not, engaging in doctrinal debates is simply an exercise in futility. "Why?" you may ask. Well, because both parties are usually quite entrenched in their doctrinal positions, and are not so much interested in maybe learning something from the other person, as they are in convincing the other individual of their particular views. While you can argue that this is what healthy debate is all about, let me ask you something: Does this kind of proud attitude and competitive spirit have a place in the life of a Christian?

And then there are those people who we can refer to as the "doctrinal correctors". These people -- a number of whom I have encountered over the years on both our Endtime Prophecy Net Messageboard, as well as on our Endtime Discussion Group Exchange (EDGE) mailing list -- go around with an attitude of superiority, and feel that it is their duty to point out how everyone else is wrong, while they alone are right. The goal of such people is not to engage in real conversation with

other members of the community, it is simply to force their views on everyone else. It is a very sickening attitude to have to deal with. I am reminded of Jehovah's Witnesses who rarely ever let you get a word in. When they come to your door, be prepared to do a lot of listening, but very little talking yourself.

Of course, there are also certain people who like to debate for the sake of debate alone. Such people are debate addicts. They delight in exhibiting their mastery of words and their craftiness. They love to argue and they wear their pride like a badge. Then of course, there are the trolls. No matter what the topic of discussion may happen to be, even if they aren't truly interested in the subject, they will find a way to stir up an argument, in order to disrupt the conversation that is in progress. They will jab and poke and flame until someone finally explodes. Their strategy is to sow confusion, and to divide and conquer, and then to make a quick exit to the next conversational battlefield. It is best to just ignore them.

What actually inspired this current article was an online conversation that I had this morning with another Christian friend on one of the mailing lists that I operate. The topic of our discussion turned to Endtime Prophecy. As many of you will already know, the interpretation of Bible Prophecy is a rather hot, controversial and divisive subject. There are as many different interpretations of Bible Prophecy as there are preachers and teachers, and the Internet and Christian bookstores are literally filled with them. While I obviously have my personal views concerning Bible Prophecy, which are clearly outlined in a number of my many articles, I informed my friend that it is not my personal practice to engage in doctrinal debates. He was a bit perplexed by my statement, and pointed me to the following verses, which, in his view, seem to contradict my position:

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."

Acts 18:1-4, KJV

In my view, the previous verses do not justify engaging in doctrinal debates with our fellow Christian brethren, and I will now explain to you why I believe that this is so.

The key points to properly understanding these verses is to recognize where Paul preached, and to whom he preached. We are told that Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath". It goes without saying that if Paul preached in a synagogue, he must have been reasoning with unbelieving Jews, and not debating with his fellow Christian brethren. As I explain in such articles as "Biblical Cafeteria, Or The Whole Course?", this was in fact Paul's usual manner of preaching whenever he entered a new town or city. He would preach on the Sabbath in the synagogue -- because by this time, the Jews were quite scattered around the Mediterranean region. Furthermore, we are told that Paul was reasoning with the Greeks as well.

Let me point out here that while the Greek word that is used in that verse -- "Hellen" -- is translated as Greeks, it is

possible that the writer -- Luke -- is actually referring to Hellenistic Jews; that is, to Jews who had for a long time adopted the Greek language, dress and culture as their own, and who lived all around the Mediterranean region. After all, it is only Jews who would enter, or who would even be allowed to attend, a synagogue on the Sabbath day, as Gentiles were viewed as being unclean. For example, consider what happened when some of the Jews erroneously assumed that Paul had taken an Ephesian into the temple in Jerusalem:

"Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar."  
Acts 21:26-31, KJV

In the Book of Revelation, we also find these interesting verses:

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."  
Revelation 11:1-2, KJV

Returning to the previous verses that are found in Acts chapter eighteen, the fact that these Jews and "Greeks" were "persuaded" by Paul, further indicates that some of them went from a state of unbelief, to a state of belief in Jesus. That being the case, it becomes quite evident -- at least to me -- that the Apostle Paul was really reasoning with nonbelievers. He was not debating with his own Christian brethren. So to reiterate, those verses are not describing Christian brethren who are engaging in doctrinal debates with other Christians. It is actually the Apostle Paul debating with his own fellow unbelieving Jews, and convincing them to believe in Jesus. My friend also shared the following verse with me:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."  
Jude 1:3, KJV

Personally, I believe that Jude 1:3 -- which I also quote in a number of other articles -- is referring to the same thing. In other words, it is my belief that when Jude tells us to "contend for the faith", he is not saying that we Christians should engage in doctrinal debates with our fellow brethren. Similar to the Apostle Paul, I believe that Jude is actually saying that we should contend for the faith with the outside

unbelieving world, and win them to Christ. As I will explain in a moment, there is already too much infighting within the modern Body of Christ as it is.

In his first Epistle, the Apostle Peter also offers us the following advice:

"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:"  
1 Peter 3:15, KJV

Please notice carefully what Peter is saying. Ask yourself: Would a saved fellow Christian ask you to explain the reason of the hope that is in you? Obviously not, because he already understands it, just as much as you do. Therefore, we can safely conclude that Peter must be referring to responding to unbelievers when they question us about our faith. Similar to the previous verses, this verse has absolutely nothing to do with Christians debating amongst themselves over doctrine.

While it is indeed our Christian duty to preach the Gospel of Salvation to the lost of this world, at the same time, as the Lord admonishes us to do, we need to ask God to give us the wisdom to recognize the difference between sincere seekers of truth, and time-wasting reprobates. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus tells us the following:

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you."  
Matthew 7:6, KJV

As you may already know -- particularly if you are one of my longtime readers -- for many years now, whenever I am asked about a particular Biblical issue, my practice has been to carefully compare Scripture with Scripture, in order that I might arrive at the proper conclusion. I regard this as the safest approach for arriving at the correct exegesis of any Biblical text. Upon doing this, we discover that the idea of Christian brethren arguing with each other over doctrine is totally contrary to the Scriptures. There are in fact a few key verses in the Bible which clearly reveal that sowing dissension and division amongst the brethren -- and doctrinal debates will most certainly do that -- is an abomination to the Lord. Consider the following verses:

"These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."  
Proverbs 6:16-19, KJV

"But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."  
2 Timothy 2:23-26, KJV

"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and

contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain."

Titus 3:9, KJV

"For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

1 Corinthians 1:11-13, KJV

"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."

1 Corinthians 3:3-6, KJV

As I explain in other articles, the reason why the Apostle Paul had to write these things, is not only because some of the Christian brethren were beginning to idolize some of the Early Church leaders -- just as so many Christians idolize certain evangelists and preachers in our own day -- but also because the legalistic Jews purposely used doctrinal debates as a way to divide the Early Church. They argued about which holy days had to be observed. They argued about what food was permissible to eat and drink. They argued about the necessity of circumcision, and on and on it went. Their modus operandi was simply divide and conquer, and such contentious doctrinal debates weakened the Early Church.

Thus, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write the following. He in fact pleaded with the Corinthian brethren to unite against a common foe -- his very own divisive, unbelieving Jewish brethren:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

1 Corinthians 1:10, KJV

Paul warned the Christian brethren over and over again to beware of the false Jewish brethren who crept into their midst, in order to sow dissension, division and discord by involving the brethren in doctrinal disputes. Please consider the following verses:

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

Acts 20:28-30, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them."

Romans 16:17, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve

through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him . . . For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works."  
2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15, KJV

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."  
Galatians 1:6-9, KJV

"And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage:"  
Galatians 2:4, KJV

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."  
Philippians 3:2, KJV

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself."  
1 Timothy 6:3-5, KJV

"But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself."  
Titus 3:9-11, KJV

In the following verses, Paul again warns the brethren to watch out for the false, heretical doctrines which were introduced by these vile, shrewd, deceptive snakes:

"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:"  
Ephesians 4:14-15, KJV

"Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein."  
Hebrews 13:9, KJV

"As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do."

1 Timothy 1:3-4, KJV

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;"

1 Timothy 4:1, KJV

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;"

2 Timothy 4:3, KJV

As I mention in other articles, the Apostle Paul eventually grew so tired of debating with his hard-hearted, unbelieving Jewish brethren, that he finally turned to the Gentiles, as we see by the following verse that is found in the Book of Acts:

"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

Acts 13:46, KJV

The Apostle John likewise had this to say regarding false brethren and their false doctrines:

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

2 John 1:9-11, KJV

All of the previous verses paint a very clear warning for us, and that is this: Unless kept in check, doctrinal debates can very easily get out of hand, and lead to confusion, division, discord and offense.

Upon reading the previous paragraphs, some of my readers may possibly arrive at the erroneous conclusion that I am saying that we Christians should never discuss doctrines amongst ourselves. Some of you may even wonder "Well, what about Acts chapter fifteen where the Church Elders in Jerusalem and Paul and some of his companions got together in order to establish certain doctrinal guidelines for the Jewish and the Gentile brethren? Doesn't that contradict what you seem to be saying in this article?"

Actually, no it doesn't; because there is a huge difference between what they were doing, what the false Jewish brethren were doing, and what a lot of Christians are doing today as well. In other words, there is a distinct difference between establishing Church doctrine in the company of Church Elders, and the many divisive doctrinal arguments and debates which occur between so many regular brethren today, some of which tend to become very mean-spirited. There is a big difference between constructive discussion and divisive doctrinal debate.

Let's be honest here. Doctrinal discussions may start out innocently enough, but sooner or later, something goes wrong. Perhaps a participant takes offense at something that's been said. Maybe they simply took something too personal, or maybe they just misunderstood something that was said. We all know how arguments can sometimes start over the silliest things. How often does this happen on the Internet where we are not always able to speak face-to-face? Sometimes confused signals are sent because we cannot see a person's hand gesticulations or hear the tone of their voice; and thus we have a hard time interpreting their true meaning or intentions. Let's face it; smileys don't always make the grade.

Regardless of the reasons, once someone is offended, pride rears its ugly head; and once someone's pride is wounded, it isn't long before the defensive walls go up, and name-calling begins. Before you know it, because of wounded pride, as well as inflated egos, what was supposed to have been just a calm, tempered discussion regarding some particular doctrine, all of a sudden evolves -- or devolves -- into a major mess and a verbal battlefield. Eventually, each participant stomps off in their pride and self-righteous indignation, convinced that they are right, and everyone else is wrong. Such is often the danger of becoming involved in doctrinal debates. It seems that some Christians simply lack the spiritual maturity to exchange viewpoints without a verbal Armageddon developing.

If you still don't recognize the serious danger of engaging in doctrinal debates, then I urge you to take a good, hard look at the Christian world today. Satan has certainly had his field day over the past two thousand years. There are now so many different churches, denominations, organizations, sects, etc., each with their own particular set of doctrines, that it will require an absolute miracle of God in order to bring us all into spiritual and doctrinal unity again. Unity is indeed God's ultimate goal and desire, as we can determine by the following verses:

". . . Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"  
Psalms 133:1, KJV

"Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."  
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, KJV

"And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."  
John 17:11, 21-23, KJV

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there

shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

John 10:16, KJV

"That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Romans 15:6, KJV

"Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

2 Corinthians 13:11, KJV

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . . That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

Ephesians 4:1-3, 14-16, KJV

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

Philippians 1:27, KJV

"Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Philippians 2:2, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>

Should Christians Engage In Doctrinal Debates? - Part 2

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Purpose Of My Articles, The More We Learn The Less We Know, The Profundity Of God And His Word, Puffed Up By Knowledge, Spiritual Blindness Of The Scribes And Pharisees, Study The Scriptures And Ask For Wisdom Of The Holy Spirit, Doctrinal Debates: Time-Consuming Inefficient And Ineffective, Redeem The Time, Parable Of The Sower: Mass Distribution, Writing For Posterity, Not Everyone Will Agree, Evolving Theology, Being Adaptable, Ensuring Our Beliefs Align With God's Word, Be Fully Persuaded In Your Own Mind, Stand Firm, Conclusion

With this article, I have now provided you with a Scriptural basis which clearly explains why I personally have chosen to refrain from engaging in doctrinal disputes and debates. For years now, rather than become involved in online doctrinal debates, I have strived to share my beliefs in the hundreds of articles which I have written. In each article or series, I have done my best to support my views with the Scriptures, so that my readers can see why I believe the things that I do. My articles are a reflection of me, and who I am. Thus we can say that to read my articles is really to know me.

This is why when communicating with people via email, on our Endtime Prophecy Net Messageboard, or perhaps on one of the social networks in which I participate, such as Facebook, I will frequently refer them to my articles. It isn't so much self-promotion as some people may be inclined to think, but rather, it is an invitation to get to know me better and in a more in-depth manner. More importantly, it is an opportunity to come to know and understand God and His Word in a more profound way. My articles represent many years of personal Biblical research, and I hope that you will avail yourself of them, so that you can be spiritually enriched by the many things which I have discovered and learned.

As I explain on our site's home page, I do not claim to know everything, or to understand everything that is contained in the Bible. In fact, I have often said that the more I learn from God's Word, the more I come to realize how little I do understand. You might say that the more we learn, the less we know; that is to say, we come to recognize how very little we actually do know. The Bible is just that profound. Consider the following verses:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Isaiah 55:8-9, KJV

"Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number."

Job 9:10, KJV

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Romans 11:33, KJV

On the other hand, as the Apostle Paul informs us, problems arise when immature Christians boast, and erroneously assume that they know more than they actually do know. Consider the following verses which expose this vanity:

". . . we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1 Corinthians 8:1b-2, KJV

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

1 Corinthians 13:2, KJV

"Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness . . . Therefore let no man glory in men . . . And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"  
1 Corinthians 3:18-19, 21a, 4:6-7, KJV

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."  
Hebrews 5:12-14, KJV

The Scribes and the Pharisees of old were certainly puffed up with knowledge and the letter of the Law; but as Jesus so pointedly informed them, they were so spiritually blind that they were not even able to recognize their very own Messiah, as we see by these verses:

"Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."  
Matthew 15:12-14, KJV

"Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! . . . Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."  
Matthew 23:24, KJV

"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other."  
Mark 3:5, KJV

"And he spake a parable unto them, Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?"  
Luke 6:39, KJV

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in."  
Romans 11:25, KJV

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."  
1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:"

Ephesians 4:18, KJV

So as we can see, one can be wise in his own eyes, and even in his knowledge of the Scriptures, and still be as blind as a bat, just like the self-righteous Scribes and Pharisees.

As I explained in part one, quite often, it is this false assumption of thinking that we know more than we actually do, as well as wounded pride and inflated egos, which leads to divisive doctrinal debates. Due to our pride and vanity, we just feel that we have to impress other people, and prove to them that we know more than everyone else, when maybe we really don't. What immaturity. We all need to be honest with ourselves, and recognize our limitations. As I point out in the article "Study, Work And Don't Be Ashamed", in the areas where we are lacking knowledge, we simply need to devote more time to studying the Scriptures, and ask God for His Wisdom through the Holy Spirit. As the Apostle James writes:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

James 1:5, KJV

There is one other important reason why I choose to refrain from engaging in doctrinal debates as much as possible. The simple truth of the matter is that once debates start, they seem to acquire a life of their own, and they can easily become quite time-consuming. As I'm sure you can understand, my time is very important to me, and the older I become, the more important my time becomes to me. I still have a lot to accomplish for the Lord in my life, so it is important that I use my time as wisely and as efficiently as possible. As I explain in the article "Are You Redeeming The Time", the Apostle Paul admonishes us with the following words:

"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."

Ephesians 5:16, KJV

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time."

Colossians 4:5, KJV

While some people may not realize it, this online ministry keeps me extremely busy. It is a lot for one man alone to manage. In fact, I am always behind in my work, and there are some articles and series which have been waiting for literally months or years to be updated or completed.

When I permit people to drag me into one-on-one doctrinal debates, it robs me of valuable time which could be better invested working on articles which will eventually help and spiritually nourish many more people. Writing email messages to one individual which will more than likely never be read by anyone else, or posting comments on a messageboard which will someday go offline -- here today gone tomorrow is the nature of the Internet -- or debating doctrine in an online chatroom where comments eventually disappear, is simply not as efficient, effective or permanent as writing an article which may be read by many thousands in the long term.

That is how I prioritize things in my life. I am interested in mass distribution, just as Jesus instructed us to do in

the Parable of the Sower. I believe in liberally spreading abroad the Word of God, and widely scattering the seed, and becoming trapped in lengthy doctrinal debates prevents me from doing that. In fact, while it may seem odd to some people, I sometimes get the sense that I am not writing for now; rather, I am writing for the future. I am writing for posterity. While I may have a very small online audience at this current time, who knows what may happen in the future as the world continues to grow spiritually darker and more sinful. Is it possible that some day, long after I am gone from this Earth, some hungry sheep who is desperate to find the truth will discover my work for the Lord and be blessed by it? God knows.

As I said, by choosing to spend the bulk of my time writing articles, I am creating a more permanent record. Stop and think about this: For decades after Jesus returned to His Father in Heaven, the Apostles and Disciples continued to preach the Gospel until they likewise went to their Heavenly Rewards. Who knows how many countless sermons were preached to live audiences by the likes of Peter, Paul and all of the rest, as they traveled throughout Israel, into Asia, across North Africa and around the Mediterranean region. Yet, the only record we have today are the things which they took the time to write down. That is why my writing work is important to me. Long after I am gone, hopefully, it will still speak to others.

Concerning the contents of my articles, let me say this. Obviously, regardless of how much I may be convinced of my views, I realize and recognize that not everyone will agree with me, no matter how many Scriptures I share with them in my articles, and no matter how powerful of an argument I may present. In fact, as I briefly explain on our EPN home page, even I continually question and examine some of my beliefs. I embrace what I like to refer to as an "evolving theology". What this means is that as my understanding of God's Word continues to expand as a result of a diligent study of the Scriptures, the doctrines and beliefs which I embrace must also be able to adapt to any new truths which the Lord may choose to reveal to me. In fact, all of us must be fluid and adaptable in this sense, as otherwise, we will stop growing spiritually. I discuss this same topic in the article "Are You Just A Baby Huey?".

Whether or not someone agrees with my point of view is their choice. As I have often said, I don't mind if someone doesn't agree with me; just don't expect me to engage in a debate if you don't. What I have written, I have written. It does not upset me or offend me in the least when people don't accept what I have written, although some people seem to prefer to believe otherwise. The main consideration should be whether or not our beliefs are in alignment with God's Word. So if you happen to disagree with me on a particular issue, that's alright; just be careful that you don't contradict the Bible. If you disagree with me but can't validate your own position with God's Word, then I would begin to worry.

When all is said and done, each one of us must choose to live and believe according to our own personal faith, as we are convinced in our own minds and hearts by God's Word. As the Apostle Paul advised the Disciples in Rome:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Romans 14:5, KJV

While Paul was obviously discussing the debates which were occurring between the brethren regarding which holy days had to be observed, his overall advice applies to us all. In the end, we will each be judged by God as individuals; and we'll each be required to give an account for ourselves. As such, it is imperative that we establish our beliefs in our own minds and hearts, and then stand firm no matter what. Just watch out for time-consuming doctrinal debates which only lead to envy and strife. Allow me to again remind you of the following verses:

"If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,"

1 Timothy 6:3, 4, KJV

Please don't allow yourself to get caught up in that divisive net. With these verses I will bring another article to its conclusion. I trust that it has been a blessing in your life.

Written by the WordWeaver

webmaster@endtimeprophecy.net  
<http://www.endtimeprophecy.net>