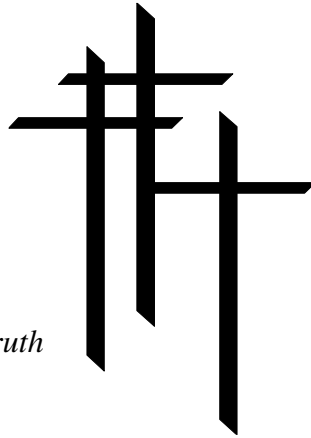


Timely Messenger



*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*

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THE UNKNOWN GOD

by Gregg Bing

The God who created the world and everything in it, the God who reigns in sovereignty over the world He created, the God who gave His only begotten Son that we might have eternal life, the only true God, is, sadly, an unknown God to most people. Many people's lives are centered around themselves; they have no thought for God whatsoever. Of those who seek to worship God, the majority do not really know God. Why is this the case? How can a person truly know

God? The Lord Jesus provided the answer to this question in John 8, when He told the Pharisees: "I am one who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the Father, who sent Me." When these Jewish leaders asked Him, "Where is Your father?" Jesus answered, "You do not know Me or My Father. If you knew Me, you would know My Father also." The Jews claim to worship Jehovah, who certainly is the true God, but Jesus declared that they did not know God the Father since they did

not know Jesus as Lord and Christ. Moslems worship one god, whom they call Allah, but their god cannot be the true God, since they, too, deny the deity of Jesus Christ. Even many who call themselves "Christians," though they belong to some church, go through religious rituals, and partake of ordinances, do not know God either, for they have never truly trusted in the One whom God sent to be their Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What a tremendous need there is for genuine believers to share the truth of this unknown God with a world that "lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19); a world whose minds have been blinded to the truth (2 Cor. 4:4). How do we effectively share the truth of God with those who do not know Him? Paul's ministry to the people of Athens proves to be an excellent example of how to confront unbelievers with the unknown God.

Paul's ministry in Achaia (modern day Greece) began in Thessalonica. Paul ministered there three Sabbaths, but the un-

believing Jews forced him out of the city (Acts 17:1-10). Paul and his companions moved on to Berea, where the Word was received very well by the noble Bereans. However, the same Jews who had run Paul out of Thessalonica, followed him to Berea and stirred up the crowds against him (Acts 17:11-14). From Berea, Paul was to travel on to Athens, but Silas and Timothy remained behind, no doubt to help establish and encourage the believers in these two cities (Acts 17:15).

From a human standpoint, Paul might have been somewhat discouraged at this stage of his ministry. The type of troubles and persecution he had endured would lead many believers to despair, to lose heart, to give up the work of the Lord; but not the Apostle Paul. Paul traveled from Berea to Athens, the center of Greek (heathen) wisdom, philosophy, ideology, and worship—a city “completely given over to idols” (Acts 17:16). How would Paul respond? Any feelings of discouragement he might have felt were

immediately dispelled as “his spirit was provoked within him” (Acts 17:16). The word “provoked” means to be stimulated or sharpened, to have the feelings aroused. Paul’s feelings for the lost of this city were aroused, as well as his feeling of love for the Lord, a love that compelled him to service (2 Cor. 5:14).

Paul continued his ministry of the Word, just as in every other city he visited. First, he went to the Jewish synagogues and reasoned with both Jews and proselytes from the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 17:17 with 17:2). However, Paul also went to the marketplace daily and reasoned with “those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). While it is not likely that Paul persuaded very many, he still was there daily to share the truths of God with those in darkness.

While there in the marketplace, Paul was confronted by two different types of Greek philosophers: the Epicureans, who had abandoned hope and sought pleasure by experience, and the Stoics, who

held to their own self-sufficiency and practiced stern self-repression. Some of these philosophers publicly ridiculed Paul, calling him a “babbler” or literally “a seed picker,” one whose ideas were picked up in bits and scraps from others, in other words a plagiarist. Others were puzzled by the things Paul preached, and they conjectured, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.” They did not understand Paul’s preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. As a result, they brought Paul to the Areopagus (Mars Hill), the highest court of the Greeks, to hear what this strange, new doctrine was that he proclaimed.

Here was an open door, an opportunity for Paul to minister the Word of God to these people. While they might have been given over to idols, the Athenians and the other foreigners dwelling in Athens “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). They were willing to listen to what Paul had to say. The question was, How could Paul most ef-

fectively reach these people with the gospel of Jesus Christ? We are taught in Colossians 4:5-6 to:

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Col. 4:5-6)

As Paul stood to speak, no doubt he prayed for such wisdom from God to know how to answer these who were outside of Christ.

Next month we will look at how Paul was used of God to declare to them “The Unknown God.”

(Continued Next Month)

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.



Youth Retreat

December 28-30, 2006

This year's Winter Youth Retreat will be held December 28-30 at Three Mountain Retreat in Clifton, Texas. This retreat is for young people, ages 13 through college age.

There will be Bible studies, discussions, workshops, singing, and good fellowship.

Recreational activities include horseback riding, a hayless hayride, hiking, indoor and outdoor games, and the big night game.

A registration form will be included in the next two issues of the *Timely Messenger* which will include more detailed information about the retreat and how to register for it.

TIMELY MESSENGER

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Gregg Bing — Editor

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Thanks for your help!

THE MAN OF GOD

By Gregg Bing

“But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” (1 Tim. 6:11-12)

M*an of God*—what a meaningful title! We find many titles in the Scriptures: prophet, priest, king, judge, pastor, elder, deacon. These titles designate an office or function performed by one who is a servant of the Lord. The title “man of God” is more personal in nature, denoting a close relationship with God and the godly character that results from such a relationship.

While this expression is found only twice in the New Testament Scriptures,

it is used of several important Old Testament figures. A brief look at these men will help us better understand the significance of the title, “man of God.”

Moses

Moses is repeatedly called “the man of God” (Deut. 33:1, Josh. 14:6, Ps. 90:1) for he truly was God’s man. When Moses was born, his parents saw that he was “the beautiful child” (Heb. 11:23), a child that was special, “well pleasing to God” (Acts 7:20), therefore they hid him to protect him from Pharaoh’s edict. God spent the next eighty years preparing Moses to lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage. His call came as God spoke to him from the burning bush. God showed His great power through Moses in amazing ways: power to bring the plagues upon Egypt, power to part the Red Sea, power to

bring water from a rock and manna from heaven.

Moses was a prophet of God, but whereas God spoke to other prophets through dreams and visions, He spoke to Moses in a different manner—“face to face” (Num. 12:6-8). What a special relationship Moses had with the Lord, a relationship that significantly affected Moses’ character.

Though a man of great power and privilege, the Scriptures testify of Moses that he “was very humble (meek), more than all men who were on the face of the earth” (Num. 12:3). Moses endured much tribulation at the hands of the people of Israel, who continually grumbled and complained whenever anything did not go their way, yet Moses humbly took each situation to the Lord in prayer, seeking His help. Moses was forbearing and forgiving to those who murmured against him, often interceding to God on their behalf. Moses was a man of faith: faith in God and faithfulness to God (Heb. 11:23-29); thus he was known as “the man of God.”

David

David is also referred to several times as “the man of God” (2 Chron. 8:14, Neh. 12:24, 36). David is best remembered for his victory over the Philistine giant, Goliath. This event does give us one indication of why David is called “the man of God.” Consider David’s words as he stood before Goliath:

“You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is

the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.” (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

Here are the words of a young man who trusted in God and the deliverance He alone can give, all for the purpose of giving glory and honor to Him.

David was God’s choice to be king over Israel. When Israel’s first king, Saul, disobeyed God, the Lord raised up David to be their king, a man the Lord described as: “a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” (Acts 13:22). What a beautiful description of a “man of God”—a man after God’s own heart. David sought to know and do God’s will in God’s time. Even after being anointed king by Samuel the prophet, David patiently waited for God to give him the kingdom. Though King Saul doggedly pursued David and sought to kill him, David, even when given clear opportunity to kill Saul, refused to take the life of the Lord’s anointed.

Like Moses, David was also a prophet of God, writ-

ing many of the psalms. As a young man caring for his father’s sheep, David must have spent many hours communing with the Lord. As we read the beautiful psalms (songs) God gave through David, we see the heart of one who was truly “God’s man.”

Elijah and Elisha

Elijah and Elisha are both referred to as “the man of God” (1 Kings 17:18, 2 Kings 4:7). Both men were powerful prophets who spoke boldly for God during times of great wickedness in Israel. Elijah lived during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, two of the most wicked rulers in Israel’s history. Elijah prayed to God that it not rain in Israel, and for three and half years it didn’t. Elijah confronted Ahab and challenged his prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel to demonstrate to the people of Israel there was only one true God. The prophets of Baal shouted and called upon their god throughout the day, but there was no answer. Elijah calmly prayed to God, who an-

swered his humble prayer and by fire consumed the offering Elijah had prepared. What a tremendous impact this faithful man of God had upon God's people. Elijah performed many other miracles. He provided for the needs of the widow and her son, even raising the boy from the dead. When Elijah's time on earth was finished, God caught this "man of God" up to heaven in a whirlwind.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven, Elisha received his mantle, both literally and figuratively, for he took Elijah's place as the prophet of God. Elisha asked God for a double portion of Elijah's spirit. Knowing that Elijah had been used of God in a mighty way, Elisha wanted to do so and more, not for his own glory, but for the Lord's. God granted his humble request and worked many powerful miracles through the hand of Elisha, a faithful "man of God."

Holy Men of God

God has always had His spokesmen in every

dispensation, men who were called of God to proclaim His Word. In the Old Testament these men were primarily prophets, though others were judges, kings, or priests. Peter referred to the Old Testament prophets in 2 Peter 1:21 as "holy men of God." These faithful men were called by God and spoke His Word as they were "moved by the Holy Spirit;" this is what made them "men of God."

During the times covered by the New Testament Scriptures, God continued to speak through prophets, such as John the Baptist, but He also worked through apostles, men sent out by God to proclaim His Word. Some apostles and prophets, such as the Twelve, spoke to God's earthly people, Israel. Paul and his fellow workers, were called to be apostles and prophets to the Gentiles and to make known God's plan and purpose for His Church, the Body of Christ. These were all, no doubt, "men of God" as well.

In Ephesians 4:11-12, we read of God's gifts to

the Church, His Body. This list included the offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher. With the setting aside of national Israel and the completion of God's Word, the need for apostles and prophets no longer exists today, however, God is still using evangelists, pastors and teachers, not to give His Word by direct revelation, but to proclaim His completed Word through preaching and teaching.

Timothy

The young man, Timothy, served as an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, and a pastor and teacher. He faithfully labored together with the Apostle Paul in the ministry of the gospel. Paul, in the first of two letters to Timothy, addressed him with the title, "man of God" (1 Tim. 6:11-12). What a testimony to the character of this young man! In his letter to the saints at Philippi, Paul made special mention of Timothy's godly character.

“For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.” (Phil. 2:20-22)

This “proven character” resulted from Timothy’s love and devotion to Jesus Christ. This is why Timothy is linked with faithful, godly men such as Moses and David as a “man of God.”

Pastors

Paul’s letters to Timothy are part of a group called the Pastoral Epistles, being written to those serving as pastors. Since this passage in 1 Timothy 6:11-12 is addressed to Timothy as a pastor, it can and should be applied to all who serve as pastors or teachers (elders, bishops) in local churches. A person entrusted with the responsibility of teaching and preaching the Word of God is to be a “man of God.”

This can be readily seen by reviewing the requirements for this office as outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

All Believers

The only other New Testament occurrence of the expression “man of God” is also found in a letter to Timothy, however it is not used specifically of Timothy.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

The “man of God” here is not limited to pastors, but extends to all believers, both men and women. The word “man” is from a Greek word that refers not just to males, but to mankind, that is all human beings. These verses stress that God’s Word is profitable for all believers, that each of us may be a “man of God,” complete and

thoroughly equipped and prepared for every good work God has called us to do. We are to be God’s men, serving Him in this world as “ambassadors for Christ” (2 Cor. 5:21). For this designation, “man of God,” to be true of us, we must have an intimate relationship with the Lord, a relationship that is evident by the character exhibited in our daily lives. What about you? Does your life give evidence that you are truly “a man of God”?

Next month we will begin looking at three traits that characterize the “man of God.”

(Continued Next Month)

That you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

—Colossians 1:9-10

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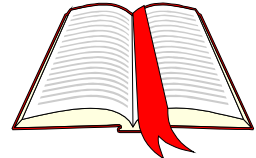
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