

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

HARRY BOWERS, EDITOR

7844 GRIMSBY CIRCLE, HARRISBURG, N.C. 28075

FEBRUARY 2016

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Wayne Jackson in *The Silence of Scripture: An Argument For Inspiration* wrote: "J.W. McGarvey (1829-1911) was professor of sacred history in the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky where he taught for forty-six years. He was one of the most skillful defenders of Scriptures of his day. In the summer of 1893, McGarvey delivered a lecture on the 'inspiration of the Scriptures' before the Y.M.C.A. at the University of Missouri. One of McGarvey's points was this: the very brevity of the New Testament narratives is astounding. In connection with some of the most dramatic episodes of the New Testament, where we would expect the writers to satisfy our longing for loads of details, the sacred narrative contains only abbreviated descriptions. In other words, the silence of Scripture in areas where human curiosity clamors for information, is another internal evidence that reflects the heavenly origin of the biblical documents." The truth of McGarvey's premise is seen, not only in the silence of Scripture on "the most dramatic episodes of the N.T.," but also in the silence of the Scriptures on some of the most sacred doctrines held by the church throughout the ages.

Contrary to much fallible interpretation of the Scriptures, having been passed from generation to generation and embraced as truth, it is important that serious students of the Scripture validate everything according to Scripture. Anything outside the Bible is prone to fallibility. There is much that is claimed to be Scriptural but is opposed to what Scripture actually say. The Bible is the only infallible words ever recorded. Peter reminds us: "you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place." (II Peter 1:219). Here are some passages we should take seriously: Duet. 29:29: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." Acts 17:11: "Now these were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." I Cor. 4:6: "Now these things I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos that you might learn not to exceed what is written." I Cor. 2:13: "Things we speak, not in words taught in human wisdom but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words." I Peter 4:11: "Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God." Where the Bible is "silent" we dare not make it a "sound."

The Silence: The Trinity "God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit."

The Sound:

It is the Nicene creed (318 AD), not the Bible establishes the belief in the trinity. Note this description of Jesus from the creed: *Jesus Christ "the son of God, begotten from the Father, only begotten, that is ousia (substance) of the Father. God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, homoousios (same substance) with the Father, through whom all things came into being, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God,*

of very God, begotten, not made." How could such a confusing creed become the basis of Christian belief?

The common defense of the trinity is it cannot be explained or understood, but we are to believe it in spite of this. As Steve Berg stated in *Christianity Today*: "The trinity can't be explained, it is mysterious, it can't be understood, but that doesn't make it untrue." This is a direct contradiction of Deuteronomy 29:29. God's word is a "revelation" and we are commanded many times to know and understand the "mysteries" which have been revealed. We "have received the Spirit from God, that we might know the things freely given us by God" (I Cor. 2:12). If God has revealed Himself through His son, to make it something mysterious, complicated and unable to understood is a contradiction of God's revelation in Scripture. We will examine three well known passages used to try to prove that Jesus is God the Son.

John 1:1-3: *Verse 1*: "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Because the translators capitalize "word" it is assumed that the word is Jesus. Thus the way the passage is usually interpreted and read is: "In the beginning was *Jesus* and *Jesus* was with God and *Jesus* was God," or "in the beginning was the Son and the Son was with God and the Son was God." As all can see the text simply says "In the beginning was the word." It does not say "In the beginning was the Son of God." In fact there is no direct mention of the son of God until we come to verse 14, where "the word (not God) became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as the only begotten (unique son) from the Father, full of grace and truth." The son, Jesus, is what the word became. But what is the "word?" According to *The Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* the standard meaning of "word" is "utterance, promise, command, it is never a personal being, never the 'son of God.' There is wide meaning for 'word,' and 'person' is not one of these meanings." It further states: "The noun *dabar* (word) occurs some 1455 times. The word of the Lord has power because it is an extension of God's knowledge, character and ability."

Verse 2: "He was in the beginning with God." Some versions say "the same (or this One) was in the beginning with God." "He" is a pronoun and can legitimately be translated "it." Many of the early translations before the KJV, beginning with Tyndale's translation, uses the word "it" not "He" or "Him." There are not many scholars today, because of their Trinitarian leanings that would accept this explanation. But it makes sense. Verses 1-5 speaks of God's creative power in the word which was in the beginning and was God, then verses 5-12 is a departure from the subject of the word and relates to God reaching His people through John the Baptist and their rejection of God's efforts. Then in verse 14 he comes back to the subject of the word and here we have the first mention of Jesus: "the word became flesh."

Verse 3: "All things came into being through it (the word) and apart from it nothing came into being that has come into being."

Isaiah 44:24: "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, and the *One* who formed you in the womb, I the Lord am the *maker of all things*, stretching out the heavens by *Myself*, and spreading out the earth *all alone*." Isaiah 45:12, 48: "It is I (singular, one person) who made the earth and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with my hands...for thus says the Lord who created the heavens, He is The God who formed the earth and made it. He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited, I the Lord and there is *none else*." God *alone* and *none else* created. In light of these verses from Isaiah we should examine Colossians 1:16, 17, favorite verses used to try to prove that Jesus was actually the creator not only of the world, but the creator of all things: "For in him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him, and he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." Without considering the context these verses would lead us to believe that Jesus, not God, was the creator of all things, however, the context of Christ being the creator of all things is not concerning the physical creation of the universe, but the post-resurrection, glorification, exaltation and empowerment of Christ. The phrase "all things" occurs before and after the things that were said to be created and therefore defines them. The "all things" here are the things for the church, not the "things" of the original creation. Connect these verses with the parallel passage in Ephesians 1:20-23: "He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but in the one to come. And he put *all things* in subjection under his feet, and gave him as head over *all things* to the church which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."

John 8:58: "Jesus said to them 'truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.'" "I am" is capitalized in most versions equating Jesus with the "I AM" of the Old Testament. To the Trinitarians this means that Jesus existed before Abraham and existed as the great "I AM" which is God Almighty. However, Jesus is speaking in the context of his being the Messiah. He said "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad." He rejoiced because he believed the promise God made to him which included Christ: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed, He does not say 'And to seeds' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'and to your seed,' that is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). God revealed to Abraham that the Messiah would some day come. This day was in the mind of God before Abraham was born. Just as Christ was "the lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8 KJV and in the margin of NASV), so he was the Christ, the Messiah before Abraham was born.

When Jesus said "Before Abraham was I AM" (capitalized) he was not applying to himself the name of God given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The I AM in Exodus 3 is introduced as I AM WHAT I AM. Jesus did not say this. He did not say "Before Abraham I was." And Jesus did not say "Before Abraham was, I AM WHAT I AM." Why did the translators capitalize I AM (*ego eimi*) here in John 8:58 and did not capitalize the same phrase in the other places it is used? John 4:25, 26: "The woman said unto him, I know that Messiah comes, which is called Christ; when he is come he will tell us all things, Jesus said unto her, I that speak unto you am *he*" (*ego eimi*). John 8:24: "For if

you believe not that I am he (*ego eimi*) you shall die in your sins." John 8:28: "When you have lifted up the son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*" (*ego eimi*). John 9:9: concerning the blind man Jesus healed: "Some said this is he, others said, he is like him, but he said I am *he*" (*ego eimi*). In all these passages "*he*" is in italics because it is not in the original language and is supplied by the translators. What Jesus said was "Before Abraham was born. I am *he*" (*ego eimi*). Why didn't the translators put "*he*" in italics here as they did in the other passages? And why did they capitalize it? This shows the translators' personal bias.

John 20:28: "Thomas answered and said to him, 'My Lord and my God!'" Thomas is using language typical of Old Testament concepts and traditions. This expression is grounded in O. T. examples showing that the word "God" can refer to one who represents God. Here are some examples: Exodus 3: "God" appears to Moses in the bush and identifies Himself as "I AM" and talks with Moses. Notice, however verse 2: "*the angel* of the Lord appeared to him in a burning fire from the midst of the bush." And Stephen (full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom) said it was "*an angel*" that appeared to Moses (Acts 7:30-33). The angel represented God and the conversation says "God says etc..." Exodus 7:1; 4:16 God told Moses he would be as "God" to Pharaoh. Genesis 32:28-30 Jacob wrestles with "a man" (ver. 24). Verse 28 states "you have striven with "God" and with men and have prevailed." Verse 30 "I have seen God face to face." Hosea 12:4 says Jacob wrestled with an "*angel*." The "man" (angel) represented God. Judges 6:11-13: "The *angel* of the Lord came...ver, 14 "the Lord" looked at him and said to him..." Ver. 22, 23 the "Lord said to him..." The angel that appeared to Gideon represented God and is referred to as "the Lord." The word "God" can refer to a man or angel that represents God. Thomas was a Jew, grounded deeply in O.T. history...faith that God is One, Jehovah, and that the Messiah is also called God in a relative and royal sense.

The Silence: We go to heaven when we die and live in a city beyond the blue.

The Sound: When giving suffering Christians comfort Paul asserts: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but because of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now" (Rom. 8:18-22). Not only did the sin of Adam bring a curse upon the whole human race, but the earth suffered a curse as well. Now the children of God are waiting eagerly for the redemption of their bodies (ver. 23) and the creation itself is also waiting to be redeemed (ver. 21, 22). Far from being destroyed the world is going to be redeemed when the curse is taken away. Just as we receive a new body at resurrection (Eph. 1:14; I Cor. 15:38-44) so we will inherit a renewed earth on which to dwell in that body. Not only is man redeemed from sin and death, the earth will be redeemed from the curse. It is in this redeemed earth, not in a city in the sky, that we will dwell for all eternity.

(Continued next month)