

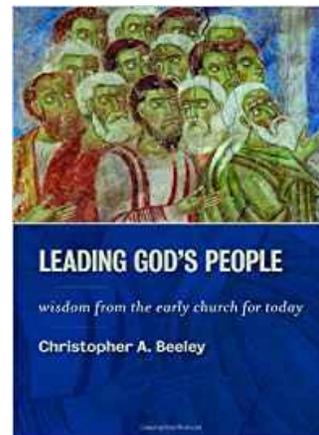
CAPITAL CONNECTIONS

Edition 186C Printed 3/20/2018

MAY 2018

*“Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, **believed in throughout the world**, taken up in glory.” (1 Tim. 3:16 NRSV)*

In Leading God’s People: Wisdom from the Early Church for Today, Christopher Beeley writes, “Surprising as it may sound, the work of ministry is essentially the same whether we are dealing with people who do not yet know Christ or believers who are growing in faith. No matter whom we encounter, our aim is to lead people to God in Christ.” Beeley suggests that the gospel message is for all kinds of people, broadly classifying everyone into two categories: believers and non-believers. It’s an oversimplification of our world and our task, but it’s true. People are either reconciled to God, or they are not.



Jesus Christ is the central figure in human history. His importance cannot be overstated. When Paul says, “believed in throughout the world”, he’s testifying to the effect of the gospel through the mid-1st century, primarily in the Middle East and in Asia Minor. Martyred shortly after mid-1st century, Paul could not have imagined the impact that the gospel would have. I want to explore two aspects of this second-to-last mysterious phrase from 1 Timothy 3:16 this month.

First, the domain of this phrase, i.e. the world; and second, the ongoing contemporaneity of the phrase, i.e. the fact that the message of the gospel is believed by each new generation.

What is the world? The Greek word is transliterated into English, *cosmos*. Additional English derivatives include both *cosmic* and *cosmetic*. Cosmic has to do with the placement of the earth among the planets in our own galaxy, and among the stars and countless other “celestial bodies” in the Universe. Cosmetic has to do with the “appearance” of things, an appearance both familiar and generally acceptable to people dwelling together in the world.

Regarding our place in the cosmos, our faith proclaims that humans are unique and that the place we live was specially created for us by God. The bible says that this “world” has always been the unique focal point of God’s attention. Though we hear about the newest cosmic discoveries and listen with interest to the blossoming theories of the cosmos, we return to the clear and unequivocal message of the bible.

“Thus says the Lord: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool...” (Isa. 66:1 NRSV) Additionally, Christian orthodoxy asserts, “God created the heavens and the earth...” (Gen. 1:1 NRSV)

If the biblical message of creation is foundational to our understanding of the world, redemption serves to narrow the focus. No matter their present condition of brokenness, the people of the world are of paramount importance to God. Jesus affirmed the fact when he said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (John 3:16 NRSV)

In that verse, “world” means more than the earth and its place amid the constellations of the creation. It’s clear that the term refers to the inhabitants of the place; ourselves and every other human being that has ever lived.

We must distinguish between the place God created and what we’ve made it. Redemption is critical because of what we’ve done. By comparison, the “world” stands in sharp contrast to the “glory” into which Christ was received after the resurrection.

It’s an incontrovertible fact that we are responsible for what the world is becoming. The long, slow degradation of the world is directly tied to human activity. This is the statement in Genesis as well. “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.” (Gen. 6:11-12 NRSV)

Human activity continues to corrupt our planet. Hosea spoke to Israel two thousand eight hundred years ago, but his message is applicable to the world today. “There is no faithfulness or loyalty, and no knowledge of God in the land. Swearing, lying, and murder, and stealing and adultery break out; bloodshed follows bloodshed. Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea are perishing.” (Hos. 4:1b-3 NRSV)

Without the knowledge of God people go from bad to worse. The glory of God’s creation is slowly denigrated and dissipated by the corruption of humanity. Christians should lead the way, discussing the negative impact we’re having on the beautiful planet that God created especially for us. At every turn, the human effect on planet earth is clearly negative.

So, the “world” is both the place that God has made and the people that God has made to dwell here. As it now stands, both are in bad shape. This is clearly not “good news.” In fact, the condition of the world and the challenges with which we’re confronted are almost overwhelming. The gospel, however, turns the focus to what has happened for nearly two thousand years and is still happening today. The human response to the message of Christ affects the circumstances of the world, one person at a time.

Last month I wrote, “The Church has no higher priority than proclaiming Jesus Christ.” The words of Paul come to mind. “But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?” (Rom. 10:14 NRSV)

When we embrace our responsibility to proclaim Christ, there is an impact in the lives of the people around us. Each of us is a believer because of someone like us who came and told us what they believed about God, about the bible, about Jesus Christ and about repentance from sin and personal faith. Their proclamation to us has changed us and helped us to find our way out of the destruction by which we’re surrounded. We’ve become those that Paul mentioned when he said, “...believed in throughout the world.”

This leads to the second part of the discussion this month. Faith has been the response of countless individuals for twenty centuries. Jesus Christ is the object of faith today as he has been the object of faith ever since his ascension into heaven. Within the structure of our denomination, we’re continually reminded of our duty to the gospel, i.e. to take responsibility for our witness to the faith we’ve embraced. No doubt, our evangelistic efforts are important.

Do we need verification? We find it in the hierarchy of offices in the church. Paul said, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers...” (Eph. 4:11 NRSV) Nestled at the center of the list of church offices is the evangelist.

Philip, the evangelist comes to mind. Fulfilling his call to proclaim the risen Lord Jesus Christ, he was led by the Spirit of God to speak to an official from the Court of the Candace of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian had

been prepared to receive instruction in the things of God. The scriptures were opened. The Ethiopian's heart was open as well. Seeking to understand our evangelistic responsibility, this story is the clearest in our minds.

The question that each of us must first ask is, *"Have I believed?"* It's a question asked by Søren Kierkegaard in the middle of the 19th century.

While I carry the burden in my heart for the spiritual well-being of my neighbor, Kierkegaard reminds me that it's important to be continually attentive to my own spiritual well-being. Jesus said the same thing. "Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye." (Matt. 7:4-6 NRSV)

There's a sense in which the Lord Jesus is saying to me, "Mind your own business." Yet, how often have I left off attending the relationship that God desires for me, sticking my nose in the business of others? Tending my relationship with God is difficult. This is what Kierkegaard wants believers to understand. I must do that first.

The mystery, *"believed in throughout the world,"* is most true in us who have believed. It's not a question of my security to ask myself, "Have I believed in him?" It's a matter of maturity. Faith is a process that lasts an entire lifetime. Yesterday's faith is the foundation for today's challenges.

When I focus upon my relationship with God, through my faith in Jesus Christ the effectiveness of my witness is enhanced. This appears to be the historical focus of the Church in its evangelistic effort. Paul said, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed." (2 Co. 13:4-6 NRSV)

Blessings in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Pastor John



In the eighth grade, I took a Constitution class, geometry, sewing, cooking and music. I'm sure I took an English class and I don't know what else.

I remember sewing, cooking and music because we all (girls?) took each of these classes for one third of the year. I also remember that Miss Pleasant taught one, while Miss Boring taught another. My friends and I used to say, about these two, that "Miss Pleasant is boring, and Miss Boring is pleasant."

Mr. Jesse Jensen was the history teacher, who taught the Constitution class. We knew from the first day that we would have to take a major test at the end of the year, which would determine whether or not we graduated from the eighth grade. In that test we would be required to do these things: (1) fill in the states and their capitals on an outline of the United States, (2) identify the Supreme Court justices, (3) identify the states' senators and representatives in Washington, D.C., (4) Be able to identify the

amendments to the Constitution ... and I can't remember the other things. (It HAS been a very long time!)

Mr. Jensen ended up being one of my all-time favorite teachers, but early in the semester I didn't know that would happen. The first day of class he instructed us as to how we were to introduce ourselves: we were to stand beside our desks and give our full and complete names – no nicknames.

I especially remember Buddy Gillespie's dilemma. Buddy's real name was Wayland, but none of us had known that, and he preferred it that way. I can almost see him, as he stood beside his desk and announced his name: Wayland Charles Gillespie. I heard some snickers (I'm sure I wasn't one of the offenders), but they were quickly quieted under Mr. Jensen's glare.

That was day one.

Sometime later, probably just a couple of weeks, I was holding my pencil above my shoulder, thinking of a problem I was working on when the student behind me grabbed my pencil. I turned around to retrieve it, and Mr. Jensen instantly reprimanded me, with instructions to see him after school. I (!) had detention.

I remember sitting in his classroom crying, because I was so humiliated at having to stay after school and because he was apparently upset with my behavior. As I recall, he did nothing...nothing to apologize, nothing to make me feel better, nothing to say he knew he was wrong to have given me detention.

As time went on, I began to enjoy his class more and more and to appreciate him and his firm teaching method. When he offered a special medal to the student who got the best grade on the Constitution test at the end of the year, I was determined: I would win that medal.

And I did! (Why did I trash that medal some years ago? It would be so cool to include a picture of it here.) My score: 99½. When he returned the tests, Mr. Jensen explained why he had taken ½ off my score: "No one can have a perfect score," he said.

Do you ever remember hearing someone say they '*only*' had an 8th grade education? They were likely much better educated than we assume. The following is a sampling of the 1895 8th grade final exam in Salina, Kansas (excerpt from original document, Smokey Valley Genealogical Society and Library).

That 1895 test had 5 sections: Grammar, Arithmetic, U.S. History, Orthography, and Geography. Students were given five hours to complete it (1 hour per section).

Grammar

1. Give 9 rules for the use of capital letters.
2. Name the parts of speech and define those that have no modifications.
3. Define verse, stanza, paragraph.
4. Define case, illustrate each case.
5. What are the principal parts of a verb? Give principal parts of do, lie, lay, run.
6. Write a composition of 150 words and show therein that you understand the practical use of the rules of grammar.

Arithmetic

1. Name and define the fundamental rules of arithmetic.
2. A wagon box is 2 ft. deep, 10 ft. long, and 3 ft. wide. How many bushels of wheat will it hold?
3. If a load of wheat weighs 3942 lbs., what is it worth at 50 cents per bushel, deducting 1050 lbs. for tare?
4. Find the interest of \$512.60 for 8 months and 18 days at 7 percent.
5. What is the cost of a square farm at \$15 per acre, with a distance round of 640 rods?

U.S. History

1. Give the epochs into which U.S. History is divided.
2. Relate the cause and results of the Revolutionary War.
3. Show the territorial growth of the U.S.
4. Who are the following: Morse, Whitney, Fulton, Bell, Lincoln, Penn and Howe?
5. Name events connected with the following dates: 1607, 1620, 1800, 1849, 1865
6. Describe the 3 most prominent battles of the Rebellion.

Orthography

1. What are the elementary sounds? How are they classified?
2. What are the following, and give examples of each: Trigraph, sub-vocals, diphthong, cognate letters, lingual?
3. Define the following prefixes and use in connection with a word: bi, dis, mis, pre, semi, post, non, inter, mono, super.
4. Mark diacritically and divide into syllables the following, naming the sign that indicates the sound: card, ball, mercy, sir, odd, cell, rise, blood, fare, last.
5. Write 10 words frequently mispronounced and indicate pronunciation using diacritical marks and syllabication.

Geography

1. What is climate? Upon what does climate depend?
2. How do you account for extremes of climate in Kansas?
3. Describe the mountains of North America.
4. Name all European Republics and give their capitals.
5. Describe movements of the earth. Give inclination of the earth.

There were 10 questions in each section, so this is about half the test; the questions listed above represent both the hardest and easiest questions. From this sampling, how do you think you would have fared on the test in its entirety?

I would appreciate it if you would share your responses with us. Let me know how you would have done on the test, or how this test compares with what you learned in the 8th grade by emailing your thoughts and comments to eeckersey@me.com.