

FAMINE OF THE WORD

Today, there is much confusion and bewilderment within both the Jewish and Christian religions as to the exact meaning and intent of much of the Bible. Moreover, there are literally hundreds of opinions on any given subject found within the Bible. This situation makes it extremely difficult for those who are attempting to truly understand God's laws, precepts, and principles to do so. Does a single authority on God and his teachings exist, or are we living in the times spoken of by the prophet Amos in which there is a famine of the word?

The Creator God said through the Prophet Amos:

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. In that day the fair virgins and young men shall faint for thirst" (Amos 8:11-13 KJV).

Many professing Christians believe that Amos' prophecy about a famine of hearing God's word is speaking of the time during the great tribulation just prior to Christ's return. However, this assumption does not take into consideration the fact that the Two Witness noted in the Book of Revelation will be proclaiming God's truth and a warning message to the world with great power for three and a half years before Christ's return. See Rev.11:3-12 and our study The Two Witnesses.

The English word "hearing" in Amos 8 verse 11 is translated from the Hebrew word "shama," a primitive root, which means to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention and obedience). Understanding that the Hebrew word "shama" means more than just hearing sounds is the key to understanding the prophecy of Amos. The scriptures clearly show that God's word will continue to be proclaimed during the great tribulation by the Two Witness and God's people; therefore, the lack of hearing God's word in the context of this prophecy

connotes a barrier that will not allow an understanding of God's word.

Although it is true that the time-frame of Amos' prophecy covers the end of the age, this prophecy also covers many centuries prior to the end of the age. If you are interested in understanding this prophecy and its importance to you. You should pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast, because I will explain when Amos' prophecy came into full force, and when it will come to an end.

The Disappearance of the Apostolic Church

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, there was a dynamic evangelizing church spreading God's truth throughout the world. However, as dynamic as this church was, it virtually disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.. From 70 to 120 A.D., there was very little recorded about the true church of God. When historians began to write about the church again, they wrote of a dramatically different church from the one that embraced the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Today, we find churches that call themselves Christian yet the vast majority do not even faintly resemble the early church.

Christianity is one of the world's largest religions. There are literally thousands of Christian organizations and congregational associations that profess Christianity and claim to worship and serve the God of the Bible. Each professes to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ as expounded in the pages of the Bible and each believes that they have a keen understanding of the Bible and God's will for humanity.

In this age, Christian organizations and congregational associations offer a variety of religious experiences. Whatever one's approach to religion, there is a Christian organization or congregational association that can be found in order to fill one's desire for religious expression.

The choices of Christian churches range from one extreme to another: small personal groups, large crowds, quite scholarly and intellectual organizations, noisy frenzied Pentecostal churches, giant cathedrals or evangelistic tents. There seems no end to the choices a person has when seeking a religious experience.

Most of these Christian organizations and congregational associations are separated by major doctrinal differences about subjects that are extremely important to one's salvation. There are many differing philosophies and concepts about how to worship the God of the Bible, and there is much confusion about what God expects of each person who wants to worship and serve him. These doctrinal differences and certain incompatible attitudes and behaviors between these various Christian organizations and congregational associations should cause anyone who is truly serious about their salvation to seriously question why there are so many different competing Christian churches and philosophies.

It is true that since the advent of the printing press, the Bible has remained the most published and most read book in the world. The Bible has been translated into almost every language and distributed to billions of people. There is virtually no populated place on this planet where one cannot find a copy of the Bible. However, few people understand this book and practice the laws, precepts, and principles contained within its pages. If this were not true there would only be one church teaching one truth.

The simple fact is that we are living in a time when there is very little true understanding of God's word. Although there is not a famine of God's word on the printed page, there is a famine of understanding the word of God. During this age, hundreds of millions of people hear the Bible taught every day, but with virtually no understanding of what the Bible text truly says and means.

Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox Judaism and professing Christians claim conservatorship of the biblical text and each claims that the Creator God has guided and inspired their understanding of the

biblical text. The problem is that each of these religions are divided into many factions with each faction having widely differing views, opinions, and interpretations of what the biblical text says.

Although all factions of Judaism believe that some kind of oral law is necessary to make the Torah understandable and workable, many factions reject the belief that most of the Talmud dates back to Moses' time and they seem to see the Talmud and the oral law as an evolving system in which successive generations of rabbis have the authority to alter the application of the written law as necessary to fit current circumstances. But, Orthodox Jews feel less free to ignore, modify, or change the oral law.

On the other hand, the vast majority of professing Christians believe that neither the written law nor the oral law apply to them, so they are free to worship God as they please and live their lives without any biblical constraints or fear of punishment.

NO CENTRAL AUTHORITY

Today, no one central authority on earth governs and guides either the followers of Judaism or the thousands of different Christian Churches today in doctrinal unity. If this statement were not true, no organizational disunity or division over doctrine would exist within Judaism or among the various Christian churches who claim to follow the teachings of Christ and the apostles. What we see today within both Judaism and the Christian community is organizational disunity and doctrinal chaos.

After the death of Samson, the system of judges that Moses established seems to have fallen into disuse. At this point in the history of Israel, it is unclear what happened to the tabernacle, the priesthood, and the worship system over which the priesthood were to officiate. However, biblical history shows that the northern ten tribes began to practice worship systems that were in opposition to God. This was a time when no central authority ruled in Israel and every man did what was right in his own eyes (Jdg.17:6).

Similar circumstances exist today as the true followers of the Sovereign God await the advent of the third Elijah who will restore all things. Today, no one central spiritual leadership on earth guides the Sovereign Father's holy nation of kings and priests in doctrinal unity as there was during the days of the early church. Jesus is in heaven, the apostles and elders of the early church are dead, and the true followers of God are scattered throughout the earth as prophesied in Zachariah 13, verse 7 that says:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered."

The reality, is that, regardless of where God's children are located on earth whether individually or in a congregation, all are doing what they think is right in own their own eyes. Because this is the situation that exist today, What does one do about spiritual guidance and doctrine while working out one's own salvation and waiting for the advent of the third Elijah, the Messiah's return, and one's change to an immoral spirit-being in the Father's heavenly family?

A quandary of gigantic proportions faces everyone who truly seeks to understand the Bible in this age, because there seems to be no totally trustworthy human authority from which to gain accurate biblical knowledge. Given the fact that there is much confusion and divergent opinion about the biblical text among the various biblically based religions, the logical conclusion is that we are living in the times of Amos' prophecy—there is a famine of hearing, that is, there is a famine of understanding God's word. If this were not true, it would be an easy task to find a trustworthy source of biblical understanding wherein there is no contradiction or divergent opinion as to the meaning of biblical text.

Three Reasons Understanding Is Withheld

The following are three major reasons why so few people understand God's word during this age.

Wicked or Wise

The prophet Daniel records one of the reason that the understanding of God's word is withheld from most people today: Daniel said:

"And I heard, but I understood not: then I said, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:8-10 KJV).

Much of what is recorded in the Bible is there for the benefit of those who have a need to know certain things, because these things pertain to them and no one else. Therefore, this knowledge is withheld from other people because it will not benefit them. See Rom.15:4; 1.Cor.15:11.

National Israel

The prophet Jeremiah was told, Make this announcement to Judah and to Israel:

"Listen, O foolish, and senseless people—you with the eyes that do not see and the ears that do not listen—have you no respect at all for me?' the Lord God asks. 'How can it be that you don't even tremble in my presence? I set the shorelines of the world by perpetual decrees, so that the oceans, though they toss and roar, can never pass those bounds. Isn't such a God to be feared and worshiped?' "But my people have rebellious hearts; they have turned against me and gone off into idolatry. Though I am the one who gives them rain each year in spring and fall and sends the harvest-times, yet they have no respect or fear for me. And so I have taken away these wondrous blessings from them. This sin has robbed them of all of these good things" (Jer 5:20-25 TLB).

Most of the Patriarch Israel's descendants (including the Jews) worship false gods and have departed from their covenant relationship with the true God. Therefore, many of the blessings that they were promised for obedience (including an

understanding of God's truth) has been withheld from them until they repent of violating God's law:

Jesus and His Parables

Many believe the reason that Jesus spoke in parables was to make his meaning clear; however, this was not what he said. He said that he spoke in parables to conceal information that could lead people to salvation.

One day after Jesus had been speaking to a group of people, his twelve disciples asked him why he spoke to the people in parables?

Jesus told them, "To you has been given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God. But to these outside, all things are being given in parables: that seeing they may see and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest they should be converted, and sins be forgiven them" (Mk.4:10-12 Para.). See also Isa.6:8-10; Matt.13:10-15; Lk.8:10; Jn.12:37-40; Acts 28:25-27.

The word "mystery" in this passage is translated from the Greek word "mysterion", which means "mystery" or "secret". Jesus clearly said that those outside of his group were not permitted to understand the secret plan of God that would lead them to salvation.

The apostle Paul spoke to the Colossians about this same mystery and he told them that it was only revealed to the saints, he said:

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf, and I fill up in my flesh the things lacking of the afflictions of Christ, on behalf of his body, which is the church; of which I became a minister, according to the administration of God given to me for you to fulfill the word of God, the mystery having been hidden from the ages, and from the generations, but is now revealed to his saints [the elect of God]; to whom God desired to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:24-27 Para.). See Rom.16:25-26; Eph.1:8-9; 1.Tim.3:9.

Why the Secrecy?

But why would this information that leads a person to salvation be kept secret and why is it only revealed to the Sovereign Father's earthly children?

Although the mystery of salvation has been preached since the time of Adam, but only a very few have been allowed to understand it. God the Father and Jesus Christ love their human creation much more than most people can begin to comprehend. It is this love and concern for each individual that prevents God the Father from offering salvation to all of humanity before the establishment of his kingdom on earth.

God the Father and Jesus Christ want everyone to become a part of the God family; they want everyone to obtain salvation.

Paul told Timothy that it was God's purpose for all people to be saved from eternal death and to come to the knowledge of his truth.

The apostle Peter said much the same thing in his second letter, he said:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2.Pet.3:9 KJV). See also Psalms 136:1-16.

This love and concern is the reason that God the Father and Jesus Christ have formulated a plan that will afford each individual the optimum opportunity for success. The Father knows the potential and character of each individual and in which phase of his plan to offer them the opportunity for salvation. In order for each person to have the best possible conditions for success in obtaining salvation, they must be allowed to live in a time and environment in which they can succeed if they desire. Therefore, a true understanding of God's word is withheld until this time arrives for each individual.

Jesus said to the Jews who believed in him, "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

While questioning Jesus, Pontius Pilate asked him, Are you a king? Jesus answered, You said it, I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to *the truth*. Every one that is of the truth hears my voice. To this Pilate replied, What is truth?

What is truth is a question that has been asked people in regard to many things. Today, many people are searching for the truth concerning what the Bible actually says on many subjects. The problem is that one can find hundreds of different and confusing opinions and beliefs about what the Bible says.

Because there seems to no unity of thought concerning what biblical truth is and is not, does it really matter if you know what biblical truth is? The answer is yes, That is, if you are interested in having eternal life as an immortal spirit-being in the Family and Kingdom of God, otherwise, it does not matter if you know what is biblical truth is or not?

Today, Conservative, Reform, and Orthodox Judaism and professing Christians claim conservatorship of the biblical text and each claims that the Creator God has guided and inspired their their understanding of the biblical text.

The problem is that each of these religions are divided into many factions with each faction having widely differing views, opinions, and interpretations of what the Bible actually says. So, who do you believe? The answer is, believe no one, do not believe what anyone tells you about the Bible unless you can prove it from the pages of the Bible or from credible historical sources.

The simple fact, is that, many people would like to know what the Bible actually says, but most people are too lazy to study the Bible for themselves and would rather have someone else tell them what they should believe the Bible says. Therefore, most people, including most people who teach the Bible

do not truly understand it.

Jesus said that there are two distinct paths that a person can follow during one's life, but there is only one path that will lead to eternal and immortal life.

Jesus said:

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the path that leads to destruction, and many will enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the path that leads to life, and only a few will find it. (Para.)

How important is to understand what is truth and what is not truth? It is very important, because Jesus said: "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven."

In order to do the Father's will, one must first know what the Father's will is. And one cannot know what his will is unless one searches the scriptures where his will for us is written.

As Jesus revealed God's truth and the way to eternal and immortal life, he continually showed that if a person was to enter the Kingdom of God, that, that person must come into conformity with God's law and way of life.

Jesus said: Many will say to me in that day (the day of judgement), Lord, Lord, didn't we prophecy in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works?

And then will I say to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

Today, many who profess to teach biblical concepts and principles teach that there is no need to comply with God's law. But, if there is no need to comply with God's law, why did Jesus foretell that those who are lawless will be denied access to the Kingdom of God?

Is it possible that most of what was taught as truth after the disappearance of the apostolic church was not truth? And is it possible that what is being

taught today by most who profess to teach biblical truth is not God's truth, but is a clever deception? Look at the results of these teachings. Are the results of centuries of these teachings the results that God promised to those who follow the way of truth? You be the judge.

Jesus gave the following promise to his disciples concerning the spirit of truth, he said: "I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of itself; but whatever it shall hear, that shall it speak: and it will show you things to come." (Jn. 16:12-13 KJV).

If the spirit of truth was to be sent to guide the disciples into all truth, did this happen? If it did happen. Why are there so many different opinions as to what truth is and is not among those who profess to follow the teaching of the Bible?

There are five logical answers to this dilemma:

1. Jesus could not fulfil his promise.
2. The spirit of truth has not yet come.
3. The spirit of truth came and taught the early church all truth, but the early church failed to pass this truth on to the next generation of believers.
4. The vast majority who teach the Bible today are teaching a counterfeit truth.
5. Those who truly understand the truth of the Bible are not believed, because the truth of the Bible is not what people want to hear or believe.

You be the judge, as to which one of these five answers seems more logical.

CAN ONE WORSHIP THE GOD OF TRUTH WITH LIES?

There are many sincere and dedicated people who sincerely believe that they are worshipping God in

truth. However, most have been misled by false prophets and teachers who teach a counterfeit of God's truth and way of life. If this were not true there would only be one truth being taught and only one unified body teaching this one truth.

What we see today, are many opposing doctrines and practices being taught as biblical truth. But, only truth is truth! Sincerity and dedication do not equal truth! Sincerity only shows the attitude with which people do what they do. It is apparent that many people are truly dedicated to their religious precepts, but this does not mean that they understand the truth of God.

There is a vast difference between worshipping God the Father in spirit and truth and zealously doing what is thought to be truth by professing Christianity today. Only God determines what truth is and is not. The Bible teaches that "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Pro.14:12 KJV).

Would God the Father who is a God of love and truth, and whose holy spirit is called "the Spirit of Truth" and whom of Jesus said, must be worshiped in spirit and in truth" ever accept a satanic counterfeit and a lie as a means of worshipping him? Never!

In the Book of Revelation the apostle John records the following concerning the practice of the truth contained in God's commandments verses the results of following a counterfeit of the truth.

John records:

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie. Rev 22:14-15

There are literally hundreds of thousands who preach against the truth of God by not teaching the truth about obedience to God's laws and the awesome beneficial truths contained in these laws.

Jesus said:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. You shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them." Matt 7:15-20

Jesus said to beware of false prophets and that you shall know those who teach a counterfeit truth by the results of what they teach.

One only has to review the a few of the thousands of different ideas and opinions that people have about the gospel message that Jesus brought and the early church taught, to understand that there is something very wrong with what most people believe teach and understand about the Bible.

An End to the Prophecy of Amos

Only the restoration of God's laws, precepts, and principles to their original physical and spiritual meaning and intent will bring an end to the prophecy of Amos concerning the famine of the understanding of God's word. The promise to bring an end to Amos' prophecy concerning the lack of understanding of God's word and circumstances surrounding the ending of this prophecy are mentioned many times in both the Old and the New Testaments. The following two prophecies concerning the third Elijah show when Amos' prophecy will begin to end and when God's laws, precepts, and principles will begin to be understood in their entirety:

The Creator God said through the prophet Malachi:

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter

destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

Jesus told his disciples, "Elijah truly will come first and restore all things" (Matt.17:11 Para.).

Within these two prophecies are the keys to understanding the ministry of Elijah during the end of the age and exactly what will be restored. Notice that he will prepare the way before Christ's return, and that he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers.

Why do the hearts of the fathers need to be turned to the sons and the sons to the fathers and what is it that needs to be restored? Restoration is only necessary when something has not been maintained in its original form. God's written law has not changed since it was given to Moses and recorded in the books of the law—God's law does not need to be restored because it is eternal. What has degraded and is in need of restoration is the understanding, teaching, and application of God's laws, precepts, and principles that have either been lost or perverted through the centuries.

The biblical record is replete with God's admonitions for Israel to return to his law and way of life. During the time of Jesus, the understanding, teaching, and application of God's original laws, precepts, and principles had been so perverted that they were almost unrecognizable (See Matt.23:1-4). Understanding that the perversion of God's laws, precepts, and principles would continue until his return, Jesus asks in Luke chapter 18, verse 8 if he will find the faith on the earth when he returns?

After the death of the apostle John and the disappearance of the early church as an organized entity with a central governing authority, the teachings of Jesus and the apostles concerning God's laws, precepts, and principles were perverted to the point that very little is truly understood today about the written law and its physical and spiritual intent and meaning. Therefore, in order for the confusion about what the Sovereign Father and Jesus Christ expect of each individual to be resolved, a true understanding of God's law and his worship system must be restored.

The prophetic reference by Jesus of the restoration of all things surely includes a restoration of God's worship system that has been perverted since it was given at Mount Sinai many centuries ago. The restoration of God's worship system also includes a restoration of God's law, precepts, and principles that are necessary for a person to live a totally righteous lifestyle. Only the restoration of God's laws, precepts, and principles to their original physical and spiritual meaning and intent will bring an end to Amos' prophecy concerning people's serious lack of understanding God's word.

The message of the third Elijah is centered around the restoration of the truth of God. Therefore, we should expect the third Elijah to restore an understanding of how the worship system that God instituted at Mount Sinai and the worship system that Jesus Christ instituted at Jerusalem work together for the salvation of anyone who will believe and worship God the Father in truth.

When these two aspects of the Father's worship system are restored and understood in the light of his plan for the salvation of humanity and believed by those whom he calls to salvation, it can truly be said that the hearts of the fathers are turned to the sons and the sons to the fathers. Belief in and adherence to God's true worship system results in a return to a harmonious relationship between the fathers who taught righteousness (that is, the Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, the Apostles, and others) and the sons (that is, those who are taught righteousness and believe).

There is much confusion and bewilderment within both the Jewish and Christian religions as to the exact meaning and intent of much of the Bible, and there are literally hundreds of opinions on any given subject found within the Bible.

If you are attempting to truly understand God's laws, precepts, and principles, where can you find a book, a teacher, or a group of people who truly understand God and his teachings? Are we living in the times spoken of by the Prophet Amos? Yes, we are living in the times of Amos' prophecy of a famine of God's word. However, for those whom the Sovereign Father is calling to salvation, there is

no need to remain ignorant. Moreover, you who are being called can eat and drink of God's word if you will seize the moment and come to the table of the Lord.

The prophet Isaiah, say to you:

"Seek you the Lord while he may be found, call you upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa.55:6-7 KJV).

The fulfillment of prophecy is a major proof that the Sovereign God exists and that he has the power and authority to control the destiny of humanity. Moreover, the fulfillment of Amos' prophecy concerning a famine of the understanding of God's word tells us that God's plan for humanity is right on schedule and we are very close to the return of the Messiah.

I see that my time is up, but if you want to know more about the prophecies concerning the end of this age, about true Christianity, or more about the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org.

File CB35 7/08