



The Watchmen

A VOICE FROM THE WALL

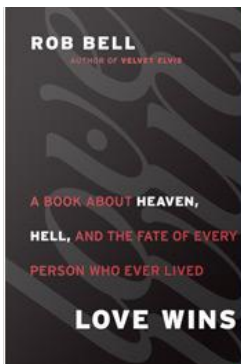
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Love Wins - A Review of Rob Bell's New Book



Questions matter. They can help you to grow deeper in your knowledge of the truth and your love for God—especially when you're dealing with the harder doctrines of the Christian faith.

But questions can also be used to obscure the truth. They can be used to lead *away* just as easily as they can be used to lead *toward*. Ask Eve.

Enter Rob Bell, a man who has spent much of the last seven years asking questions in his sometimes thought-provoking and often frustrating fashion. And when he's done asking, no matter what answers he puts forward, it seems we're only left with more questions. This trend continues in his new book, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived*, where Bell poses what might be his most controversial question yet:

Does a loving God really send people to hell for all eternity?

The questions you probably want answers to as you read this review are these: Is it true that Rob Bell teaches that hell doesn't exist? Is it true that Rob Bell believes no one goes to hell? You'll just need to keep reading because, frankly, the answers aren't that easy to come by.

How he asks the question is just as important as the question itself. "Has God created billions of people over thousands of years only to select a

few to go to heaven and everyone else to suffer forever in hell? Is this acceptable to God? How is this 'good news'?" They say that the person who frames the debate is going to win the debate. That is especially true when the debate is framed in this way, through these particular questions. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. No offense and no pun intended.

The Toxic Subversion of Jesus' Message

Bell begins the book with surprising forthrightness: Jesus' story has been hijacked by a number of different stories that Jesus has no interest in telling. "The plot has been lost, and it's time to reclaim it." (Preface, vi)

"A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better.... This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus' message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy that our world desperately needs to hear." (ibid)

You may want to read that again.

It really says that. And it really means what you think it means. Though it takes time for that to become clear.

Heaven Is A Place On Earth - and We Are Making It

Bell frames much of the book around time and place, around what the Bible means when it speaks of the when and where of heaven and hell. He points to Revelation 21, citing that the



Author Rob Bell

heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, is coming down to the new earth. He also affirms that heaven is a real place where God's will alone is done and that at present, heaven and earth are not yet one (pp. 42-43). These are points that few Christians could seriously question.

His argument progresses to this: Because heaven will eventually come to earth, if we're to take heaven seriously, we must take the suffering that exists in the world seriously now. Therefore, we are called to participate "now in the life of the age to come. That's what happens when the future is dragged into the present" (p. 45). In light of this, humanity's role within creation is redefined so that we are not so much stewards as we are God's partners, "participating in the ongoing creation and joy of the world" (p. 180), and engaging in creating a new social order with Jesus (p. 77). This language of partnering and participating is frequently applied by Bell to causes of social justice.

But what about hell? Is hell a future reality or a present one? Is it an earthly reality or one that exists elsewhere?

Hell appears to be more about what we do to each other than what we've done to God. Bell reads Jesus' warnings of divine punishment as addressing only the temporal, rather than both the temporal and the eternal. These warnings were for the religious leaders of the day, and had very little to do with some other reality or some other time, he argues (pp. 82-83). Instead, hell is "a word that refers to the big, wide, terrible evil that comes from the secrets hidden deep without our hearts all the way to the massive, society-wide collapse and chaos that comes when we fail to live in God's world God's way" (p. 95). There's no fire and no wrath, at least, none that is extrinsic to us.

Does Rob Bell deny the existence of hell? He would say no. We would say yes. He affirms, but only after redefining. And that's just a clever form of denial.

Exegetical Gymnastics

Understanding what Bell truly believes and what he is truly seeking to teach can be a battle. The reader will find himself following many rabbit trails and arriving at several dead ends. It seems that where Bell's arguments begin to break down, he simply walks away instead of pursuing consistency and logic. This book could not stand the rigors of cross-examination. It has little cohesion, little internal strength.

The reader will also find broad statements offered as fact. "At the center of the Christian tradition since the first church has been the insistence that history is not tragic, hell is not forever, and love, in the end, wins." Is that true? It is easy to say, but can it be proven? Again and again Bell turns to the original languages but he quotes no commentaries, points to no sources. He says things like "'forever' is not really a category the biblical writers used." But he offers no proof. Again, it is easy to say, but can it be proven? Can it be proven from a legitimate source?

Throughout the book he engages in what can best be described as exegetical gymnastics, particularly in dealing with the Greek word *aion*, a small word that is crucial to his arguments.

While this word is commonly translated as "eternal" or "everlasting," Bell argues that it can also mean "age" or "period of time," or even "intensity of experience." Using this approach, he briefly argues from the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46) that eternal punishment isn't eternal, but rather an intense period of pruning.

Now here's the thing: *aion* and *aionos* definitely can mean "age" or "period of time," they also mean "eternal." The word's context helps us to determine its meaning. So if we assume that these words primarily mean "age" or "period of time," what happens when we apply that

"Bell reads Jesus' warnings of divine punishment as addressing only the temporal, rather than both the temporal and the eternal."

definition to John 3:16 where *aionos* is used?

“For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son so that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have life for a period of time.”

Not as encouraging, is it? While Bell might argue here that “life abundant” might be a better fit (playing on the “intensity of experience” angle and tying it to John 10:10), at the end of the day, we’re left with an approach that gives more credence to living your best life now than it does to worshipping Jesus.

The Good News Is Better Than This

Throughout the book, there are a number of points where we would agree with Bell, particularly when he identifies some of the goofy things that people have concocted to make God’s absolute sovereignty palpable. But his answers are equally unsatisfying. Even his good critiques are simply a bridge to bad conclusions.

As he makes his case, Bell seems to delight in being obtuse, creating caricatures of opposing views that lack logic and compassion. He paints himself as the victim of the hateful, toxic, venomous denizens of certain corners of the Internet that believe “the highest form of allegiance to their God is to attack, defame, and slander others who don’t articulate matters of faith as they do” (p. 185).

Thus, Rob Bell appoints himself a martyr for his cause, and anyone who disagrees with him is preemptively silenced. It’s a useful technique, that, but hardly a fair one. Meanwhile he acts as if those who hold to the belief that, in Bell’s words, “we get this life and only this life to believe in Jesus,” a view passionately held to by the vast majority of Christians throughout history, are blowing smoke rather than dealing honestly with the Scriptures. He subtly redefines the questions and answers, and in doing so, also shifts the battle lines.

As he moves those lines, he moves

closer and closer to outright blasphemy. Turning on 1 Timothy 2 (where Paul states that God desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth) Bell reflects on a traditional (orthodox) view of hell and asks:

“How great is God?

Great enough to achieve what God sets out to do,

or kind of great,

medium great,

great most of the time,

but in this,

the fate of billions of people,

not totally great.

sort of great.

a little great.”

A God who would allow people to go to hell is not a great God, according to Bell, and the traditional belief that He would is “devastating... psychologically crushing... terrifying and traumatizing and unbearable” (pp. 136-7).

God is at best sort of great, a little great - great for saving some, but evil for allowing others to perish. Dangerous words, those. It is a fearful thing to ascribe evil to God.

So what of the gospel? Where is the gospel and what is the gospel? Ultimately, what Bell offers in this book is a gospel with no purpose. In his understanding of the Bible, people are essentially good, although we certainly do sin, and are completely free to choose or not choose to love God on our own terms. Even then he seems to believe that most people, given enough time and opportunity, will turn to God.

In This Is Love

If *Love Wins* accurately represents Bell’s views on heaven and hell (at least if our understanding of the book accurately represents his views on heaven and hell), it reveals him as a proponent of a kind of Christian



“Ultimately, what Bell offers in this book is a gospel with no purpose.”



... If it quacks like a duck...

Universalism. He would deny the label as he tends to deny any label. But if it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, well, you know how it goes.

“As soon as the door is opened to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Baptists from Cleveland, many Christians become very uneasy, saying that then Jesus doesn’t matter anymore, the cross is irrelevant, it doesn’t matter what you believe, and so forth.

Not true.

Absolutely, unequivocally, unalterably not true.

What Jesus does is declare that he, and he alone, is saving everybody.

And then he leaves the door way, way open. Creating all sorts of possibilities. He is as narrow as himself and as wide as the universe.

...

People come to Jesus in all sorts of ways.

...

Sometimes people use his name; other times they don’t.

...

Some people have so much baggage with regard to the name “Jesus” that when they encounter the mystery present in all of creation - grace, peace, love, acceptance, healing, forgiveness - the last thing they are inclined to name it is “Jesus.”

...

What we see Jesus doing again and again—in the midst of constant reminders about the seriousness of following him living like him, and trusting him—is widening the scope and expanse of his saving work.”

That is what we know as universalism. And it is cause for mourning.

Christians do not need more confusion. They need clarity. They need teachers who are willing to deal honestly with what the Bible says, no matter how hard that truth is. And let’s be honest—many truths are very, very hard to swallow.

Love does win, but not the kind of love that Bell talks about in this book. The love he describes is one that is founded solely on the idea that the primary object of God’s love is man; indeed, the whole story, he writes, can be summed up in these words: “For God so loved the world.” But this doesn’t hold a candle to the altogether amazing love of God as actually shown in the Bible. The God who “shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8), who acts on our behalf not so much because His love for us is great, but because He is great (Isaiah 48:9, Ezekiel 20:9,14,22,44, 36:22; John 17:1-5).

That’s the kind of love that wins. That’s the kind of love that motivates us to love our neighbors enough to compel them to flee from the wrath to come. And our love for people means nothing if we do not first and foremost love God enough to be honest about Him.

- Tim Challies

This review was co-written with my friend Aaron Armstrong who writes at Blogging Theologically. All quotes are taken from an Advance Reading Copy of the manuscript that was provided specifically for review purposes; they will be verified against a final bound copy of Love Wins following the book’s release.



John 14:6



Tim Challies is a follower of Jesus Christ, a husband to Aileen and a father to three young children. A native of

Oakville, Ontario, He has authored "The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment" and "Sexual Detox" along with the forthcoming "The Next Story" (April 2011). He blogs every day at www.challies.com; worships and serves at *Grace Fellowship Church*; edit *Discerning Reader* and am a co-founder of *Cruciform Press*.

He is Risen Indeed !

Dr. Simon Greenleaf, the Royal Professor of Law at Harvard University (1833-1848), was one of the greatest legal minds that ever lived. He wrote the famous legal volume entitled, '*A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*', considered by many to be the greatest legal volume ever written and it remained a standard textbook in American law throughout the nineteenth century.

Dr. Greenleaf's career played an important role in the development of legal or juridical apologetics. This school of thought is typified by legally trained scholars applying the canons of proof and argument to the defense of Christian belief. That's right, you've guessed it - Dr. Greenleaf was a Christian. But this, of course, wasn't always so.

In the beginning, Dr. Simon Greenleaf believed the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was a hoax, a made up story, and was to be considered as nothing more than a myth of history. This mindset was what prompted him on a quest to once-and-for-all expose the "myth" of the Resurrection. Painstakingly, using all the tools at the disposal of a Law Professor and thoroughly examining the evidence for the Resurrection, Dr. Greenleaf came to the exact opposite conclusion! He wrote a book entitled, '*An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence Administered in the Courts of Justice*'. In this book he emphatically stated:

*"It was **impossible** that the apostles could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had **not Jesus Christ actually risen from the dead...**"*
(pg 29) [emphasis mine]

Dr. Greenleaf concluded that, in

accordance with the guidelines of legal evidence, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the best supported event in all of history. The evidence was so convincing Dr. Greenleaf committed his life to Christ as a result.

What caused him to Change his Mind?

What evidence could Dr. Greenleaf have discovered that would cause him completely turn him around on the issue? What facts did he discover that his legal mind, on its search for truth, could not rationally ignore?

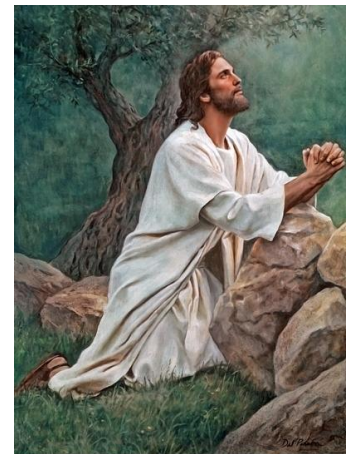
To answer this question we need to look at the same evidence that he found. We need to go back to the story of the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the events immediately following. More importantly, we need to examine the lives and response of those 11 men that were considered to be Christ's closest followers. We need to look at the life of the Disciples (minus Judas) surrounding that first Resurrection (Easter) Weekend.

The scene the night before the Resurrection opens onto the Garden of Gethsemane. The silence of the night is interrupted when a boisterous mob approaches. Judas seals the betrayal with a kiss, and the mob leads Christ away to stand trial before Pilate. After some deliberations Pilate eventually has Christ sentenced to death by crucifixion. Not only was it the most brutal and shameful form of capital punishment ever devised, but the few hours leading up to the event saw Christ beaten, whipped, mocked and spat upon.

The Bible says in Galatians 3:13,

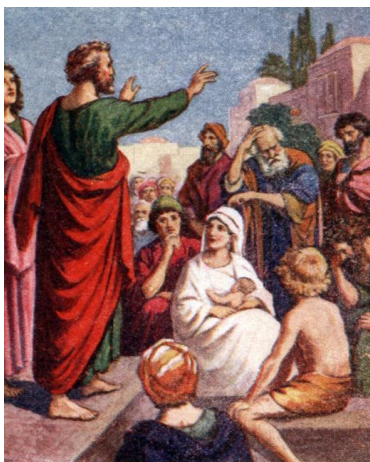
"Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree".

"The evidence was so convincing Dr. Greenleaf committed his life to Christ as a result."



Prayer at Gethsemane by Del Parson

“Might I suggest that through the events of that weekend, there stood eleven very confused and defeated men.”



Peter addresses Jerusalem

The apostles looked on in horror and confusion during the events that night and the next day. Here was the man they believed to be the Messiah. Here was the man that they referred to as the Christ - the God-man, the Savior; the one who Isaiah said would set up a government – a kingdom – that would never end. (cf. Isaiah 9:6-7) Now here was their Christ. Here before them was a man, beaten, disfigured, and put to death as a common criminal. For three years this man performed miracles in their midst. This man Jesus convinced them all (save maybe Judas) that He was indeed the Son of God.

“Did he not walk on water and calm the seas?”

“Did he not heal the sick and raise people from the dead?”

“And it all comes down to this?!?”

In their eyes, the man in whom they put so much faith, trust and adoration, died in complete disgrace and humiliation. Might I suggest that through the events of that weekend, there stood eleven very confused and defeated men?

Mark tells us, *“And they all forsook him, and fled.”*

Even the disciple whom Christ called ‘Rock’ denied him three times before the rooster crowed on the night of His arrest. (cf. Matt 16:18; Mark 14:67-72)

“I know not this man of whom ye speak” – Mark 14:71

Peter was undoubtedly afraid and confused. Like the others, all that he had believed in seemed to be unraveling before his eyes.

But Something Happened

The same city that witnessed the eleven disciples forsake Christ, was the first to witness those same men back in the streets mere weeks later, this time boldly proclaiming

that Jesus Christ was alive! The very one who denied Him three times addressed the city.

*“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof **we all are witnesses**” – Acts 2:22-23,32 [emphasis mine]*

The result of that speech and the surrounding dialog saw some 3000 souls saved that very day – and this was only the beginning.

Early in Acts 4 we see another 5000 souls saved when Peter and John enter the temple. Ultimately Peter and John are detained by the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees. The next day they appeared before the rulers, elders, scribes, the High Priest, and many others of importance in the temple. During their line of questioning Peter makes it very clear:

*“For we cannot but speak the things which **we have seen and heard**.” – Acts 4:20 [emphasis mine]*

These men were eyewitnesses to something that changed their lives and now they were boldly proclaiming what they had seen.

What was it that changed their mind? What was it that changed these once fearful, confused and broken men into bold lions, fiercely proclaiming the Gospel?

You guessed it.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was the only thing that could have made the change. The resurrection had to be true because the knowledge of what they had seen changed those men's lives forever.

Even the priests and Pharisees remembered what Christ had said about *'After three days, I will rise'*. They were so worried about this that they requested Pilate to put guards at the tomb to make sure that no one *'stole His body away'*. (cf. Matt 27:63). Pilate indicated, *"You have your watch"*, which many have suggested were the soldiers of the garrison who were appointed to guard the temple. If these guards were from the garrison, they weren't simply the commissionaires or night watchmen of today. These were most likely Roman Legionary soldiers. Men who were fierce in countenance and who faced death should they shirk or be found negligent in their duty. These were they in whom the priests, the Pharisees and Pilate put their trust – and rightfully so.

Matthew 28 documents that when the Resurrection happened, those guards, *"shook for fear of him[Christ], and became like dead men"*. Later these fearful guards (both of what they had seen, and the consequence of the tomb being opened) went before the chief priests to tell them all that had happened. The result? The priests bought their silence with a bribe and gave them strict instructions to *"Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept'"*

This lie has been propagated to this very day and is subsequently held by many of the secular views of our time.

I ask the reader to remember that this was in fact a similar stance that Dr. Simon Greenleaf once held - the Resurrection was nothing more than

a myth. It was a man made story concocted to justify and ratify a religion called Christianity.

And yet, back in history, this body was never found. And you'd better believe that if the body of Jesus Christ was available, the Roman authorities would have paraded His body for all to see. Christianity was spreading like wild fire and nothing could have quenched that flame quicker than the body of Jesus Christ.

And yet no body was found.

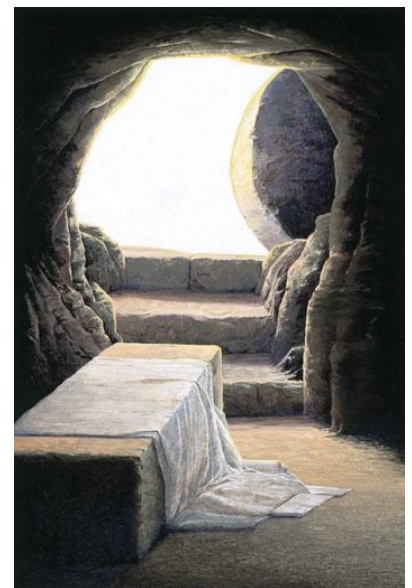
Some people have suggested that the Resurrection was all a preplanned ruse, suggesting that Jesus was drugged[the sponge] to appear dead.

Michael Baigent, author of the book titled "The Jesus Papers" (which came out about the time that 'The Da Vinci Code' hit the movie theatres in 2006), stated in the London Sunday Times, *"the church has tried to cover up evidence that Pilate made a secret deal to save Jesus' life. It was rigged. It was a fraud," he said. "I think the crucifixion was set up to remove a particular political problem which both Pilate and Jesus found themselves in."*

He went on to argue that Pilate needed to appease the mob which was calling for Jesus' death. But Jesus had urged his followers to pay their taxes, so Pilate had an incentive to let him live. He then goes on to suggest that Jesus recuperated in secret and then he and *his wife* travelled to Upper Egypt and taught mystical lore.

Hogwash. The suggestion is complete and utter nonsense with no historical evidence to support it whatsoever.

You see, Dr. Greenleaf came to realize it was foolishness to suggest the Resurrection was a fabrication planned by Jesus, his



"We know therefore that there were at least 500 or so people that were eyewitnesses to the risen Christ."

disciples and/or Pilate. It was illogical, and it could be proven to be so through judicial methods.

Why? Because, if the resurrection of Jesus Christ was not true — there were 11 men who knew it! And not only knew it, but boldly proclaimed in the face of terrible persecution.

These men were *eye witnesses*. These men had the physical and tangible evidence of their own senses to bear witness of these first-hand accounts.

*"Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were **eyewitnesses**..." Luke 1:2 [emphasis mine]*

*"That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**, which we have **seen with our eyes**, which we have **looked upon**, and our **hands have handled**..." 1 John 1:1 [emphasis mine]*

*"For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were **eyewitnesses** of his majesty." 2 Peter 1:16 [emphasis mine]*

So 'what is the big deal?' you might ask. Well in the judicial system an eyewitness is an important piece of evidence. Once we have ascertained that the eyewitness accounts are true or can be corroborated, there is no other conclusion but to accept their testimony as truth.

What Dr. Greenleaf found from the eyewitness testimonies, documented throughout the New Testament, was that these men truly believed that Jesus Christ was not only God, but that he also *rose from the dead*. These men were so sure of their belief that they sealed their testimony with their own blood!

History documents that 10 out of 11 of the original disciples died horrible martyrs' deaths!

Not to mention the many other documented eyewitnesses who died similarly as a consequences for their beliefs. Paul appealed to his audience's knowledge of the fact that Christ had been seen by more than 500 people at one time. (cf. 1 Cor. 15:6) We know therefore that there were at least 500 or so people that were *eyewitnesses* to the risen Christ. One of these people was undoubtedly Stephen whom the Bible documents as the first Christian martyr in Acts 7.

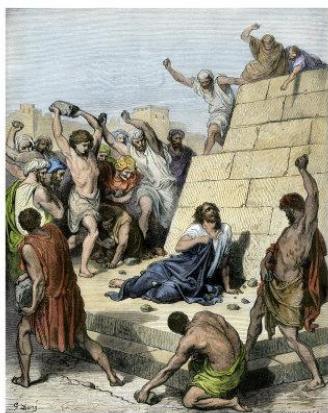
So the question is, "Would a normal and rational person die for a lie?" The answer could be "Yes" if perchance they were unknowingly following a lie. However, would they die for the lie, if they *knew it was a lie*? Not likely! In fact to do so would be considered lunacy. If the resurrection was a fabrication, as some might say, then these early martyrs died knowing that what they were dying for was a hoax.

Perhaps one person in eleven could be crazy enough to knowingly die for a lie. But something convinced ALL of the disciples and the early believers that undeniably - Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. To suggest otherwise is to claim that these men and women died for a lie and that they knew it was a lie. No rational human being is going to do that. And this was the evidence that Dr. Greenleaf could not ignore.

You cannot find a group of 11 men in the history of this universe who forsook all, were beaten, jailed and even went so far as die for a lie — knowing it was a lie!

The idea is inconceivable.

You could imprison them, flog them, kill them, but you could not make them deny their conviction that on the third day Christ rose again.



An artist's depiction of the stoning of Stephen

Dr. Greenleaf wrote, "It was **impossible** that the apostles could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated, had not Jesus Christ actually risen from the dead!"

The evidence is clear that these men died for what they believed to be true, not for what they knew was a lie.

And what of the man named Saul from Tarsus?

The Conversion of an Apostle

The Bible documents for us that Saul of Tarsus was a member of the Pharisees. Whether or not he was part of the Sanhedrin is not really stated, however his familiarity with the council in Acts 23 and the fact that he refers to them as 'Brothers' (vs. 1-6) may imply he had been a member.

Saul was a zealous man who persecuted the early church like none other.

Paul was there when Stephen was martyred by stoning (cf Acts 7:58) and other places document his persecution of the early church.

*"Now Saul was **consenting to his death**. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles." – Acts 8:1[emphasis mine]*

*"As for Saul, **he made havoc of the church**, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison." - Acts 8:3 [emphasis mine]*

*"Then Saul, **still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord**, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of*

Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." - Acts 9:1-2 [emphasis mine]

The language I emphasized in the passages above is quite severe. Saul's hatred of the early church was up till now unequalled in his time. And yet, as the chapter 9 passages in Acts unfold we learn that something happened to this man Saul. Something happened to him that was so life changing he went from being one of the greatest enemies of Jesus Christ, to being one of His most devoted followers ever recorded in human history. Some have even referred to him as the *greatest Christian who ever lived*.

There can be only one explanation for this change in Saul of Tarsus – Saul was an eyewitness to the *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Not that he was present when it happened, but that he saw the living Christ.

Jesus made himself known on that road to Damascus. Jesus met Saul face to face and the meeting transformed him into a new creature. It transformed him into a man who now dedicated his life to the spreading of the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*. So much so, that he was eventually beheaded for it sometime around 67 A.D. The Gospel message must have been true. Or *Saul of Tarsus* would never have come to be known as *Paul the Apostle*.

The Resurrection must be True

What do the experts say?

"We, as Christians, are asked to take a very great deal on trust; the teachings, for example, and the miracles of Jesus. If we had to take all on trust, I for one, should be skeptical. The crux of the problem of whether Jesus was, or

"The evidence is clear that these men died for what they believed to be true, not for what they knew was a lie."



Saul meets the Lord on the Damascus Road

“...no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true.”

was not, what He proclaimed Himself to be, must surely depend upon the truth or otherwise of the resurrection. On that greatest point we are not merely asked to have faith. In its favour as living truth there exists such an overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that **no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true**” - Lord Darling, former Chief Justice of England

*“I have been used for many years to study the histories of other times, and to examine and weigh the evidence of those who have written about them, and I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is **proved by better and fuller evidence** of every sort, than the great sign which God has given us that Christ died and rose again from the dead.”* - Professor Thomas Arnold, former chair of history at Oxford, and author of the famous volumes, *History of Rome*.

*“I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such **evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet.**”* - John Singleton Copley - recognized as one of the greatest legal minds in British history. He was Solicitor General of the British government, Attorney General of Great Britain, three times the High Chancellor of England and elected High Steward of the University of Cambridge.

“All that Christianity asks of men...is, that they would be consistent with themselves; that they would treat its evidences as they treat the evidence of other things; and that they would try and judge its actors and witnesses, as they deal with their fellow men, when testifying to human affairs and actions, in human tribunals. Let the witnesses [to the Resurrection] be compared with themselves, with each other, and with

*surrounding facts and circumstances; and let their testimony be sifted, as if it were given in a court of justice, on the side of the adverse party, the witness being subjected to a rigorous cross-examination. **The result, it is confidently believed, will be an undoubting conviction of their integrity, ability and truth.**”* - Dr. Simon Greenleaf, *Testimony of the Evangelists Examined by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice*

[Emphasis mine in all quotes above]

Our Conclusion

The jury is in, and the verdict delivered. Committed skeptics and those who are expertly trained to pour over evidence have declared, on the basis of the evidence, that the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a historical fact. Those who would ignore the evidence do so at their own peril.

*“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the **wrath of God abides on him.**”* – John 3:36

I trust and pray that the evidences presented in this article were encouraging to you. I hope it has helped build more confidence in our savior and the Resurrection story. In this day and age we have so many attacks on *the truth* that it is encouraging to have sound apologetics to stand on. I trust that as the season of the Resurrection (Easter) approaches that we, with renewed vigor and joy, will respond to each declaration of ‘*Jesus Lives!*’ with an emphatic and now more confident...

“He has Risen Indeed!”

Serving the King,

- J.R. Hall



News Bites

Global food chain stretched to the limit

Jan 14, 2011 – msnbc.com

Strained by rising demand and battered by bad weather, the global food supply chain is stretched to the limit, sending prices soaring and sparking concerns about a repeat of food riots last seen three years ago.

Signs of the strain can be found from Australia to Argentina, Canada to Russia.

On Friday, Tunisia's president fled the country after trying to quell deadly riots in the North African country by slashing prices on food staples.

"We are entering a danger territory," Abdolreza Abbassian, chief economist

at the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said last week.

The U.N.'s fear is that the latest run-up in food prices could spark a repeat of the deadly food riots that broke out in 2008 in Haiti, Kenya and Somalia. That price spike was relatively short-lived. But Abbassian said the latest surge in food stuffs may be more sustained.

...

Prices rose again this week after the U.S. Department of Agriculture cut back its already-tight estimate of grain inventories. Estimated reserves of corn were cut to about half the level in storage at the start of the 2010

harvest; soybean reserves are at the lowest levels in three decades, the USDA estimates, in part because of heavy buying by China. The ratio of stocks to demand is expected to fall later this year to "levels unseen since the mid-1970s," the agency said.

Full Article at: http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41062817/ns/business-consumer_news

Editor's Note:

This isn't the first time the discussion of a worldwide food shortage has crossed my desk. When I hear of such reports I simply praise God for His provision in my life, and I think forward to the promises of famine documented in the book of Revelation 6:5-6. You can almost hear the footfalls of the four horsemen.



India activists protest the government's price hikes of essential commodities

EU Calendar Omits Christian Holidays, While Noting Jewish, Muslim Celebrations

January 17, 2011 – FoxNews.com

The European Union has published a school calendar that omits Christian holidays, like Christmas and Easter, while noting significant Jewish and Muslim celebrations.

Three million copies have reportedly been printed of the calendar, which will be given out freely to students who request it from the union's 27 member countries.

The Catholic News Agency reports that former French politician and government minister Christine Boutin noted the omission of Christian holidays in a Jan. 11 blog post, saying the calendar slights "the religion practiced or recognized as forming the cultural assembly of our 'old' continent."

She wrote that Christianity has "fallen into the limbo of

collective ignorance."

The European Union, meanwhile, calls the omission of Christian holidays on a calendar distributed to millions of students an error.

The book was designed to act as an educational calendar for students, allowing them to write their homework and activities. At the bottom of each page, are printed inspirational quotes, information or comments for reflection.

While Christian holidays are missing, Sikh Baisakhi-Day, Yom Kippur, and the Muslim holiday Aid-el-Kebir remain listed.

"At the bottom of each page of this 'class journal' are small quotes or information devoted to various subjects and perhaps less known to European students. Some of them sometimes refer to cultural events, historical and

religious...This approach led, without any deliberate intent, in the absence of references to events and important religious festivals that are very much a part of European heritage, particularly...Christmas and its importance in the Christian religion."

The EU says the Christian holidays will be put back on the calendar for future printings.

From: <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/01/17/eu-calendar-omits-christian-holidays-noting-jewish-muslim-celebrations/>

Editor's Note: *Accidental or not, the EU is poised to be the revived Roman Empire [10 toes of Daniel 2:43]. And we know that the man called antichrist will one day, "He shall... persecute the saints of the Most High, And shall intend to change times [sacred festivals or season] and law." It is interesting to me to see this persecution beginning in our lifetimes.*



An educational calendar produced by the European Union for school children in its 27 member countries omits major Christian holidays while including Jewish and Muslim holidays, which the EU calls an inadvertent error.



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*"...Now these [Bereans] were more noble... in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."
- Acts 17:10-11*

Berean Watchmen Ministries is a non-profit charitable corporation registered under the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada

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See us at:

www.bereanwatchmen.com

Letter's from our Readers

Q: Are there events or signs that must take place before the rapture can occur?

- Grant C.

A: This question gets asked a lot actually. In fact it was asked of me last week in a class of Grade 12's at the Saskatoon Christian School as well. It is a good question.

The quick answer is 'No, there are no more prophecies that must be fulfilled before the Rapture will occur'. I will say however that while my answer may be true, we have to be careful because it is slightly misleading in that it implies that there were some prophecies that had to take place before the Rapture *could* occur.

The Bible teaches that the Rapture is sign-less and imminent. At least from our viewpoint (human) there is nothing - no sign that will signal the Rapture is about to occur. It will occur in a moment in the twinkling of an eye and at a time where we least expect it "like a thief in the night".

"Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." - Mat 24:44

None of the key rapture passages in the New Testament mention any signs that must occur prior to the Rapture. All that is

required for Jesus to come... is that He simply comes.

What this means is that the Early Church, even in the times of the Apostles, were waiting for the Lord to return. A common greeting within the church at that time was "Maranatha". It is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 16:22 and it means "O Lord Come" or "the Lord Come".

It would seem to be a strange declaration if they were expecting something else to occur prior to them seeing Christ again.

Now I will admit that there are a lot of signs and prophecies in Scripture that have not yet been fulfilled: in the books of Daniel, Matthew, Revelation, Jeremiah for instance. However, they all point to the Second Coming of Christ to earth, not the Rapture. This is a very important distinction.

However, we can estimate, or with good reason conclude, that the Rapture may be happening soon, because we recognize signs or things that must be in place for the Second Coming to occur; and if they are already occurring (meaning perhaps the Second Coming is close)

then the Rapture (which must happen at least seven years earlier) must be even closer.

Kind of like when you see people hanging Christmas lights on their house. You're not sure when the first snowfall will occur, but you know we always have snow before Christmas. As they are decorating for Christmas, then the snow is imminent in coming. We are not sure of the exact day, but we know it is close.

Now I will also say that there are some prophecies that COULD take place prior to the Rapture. There are many discussions surrounding the timing of the Gog-Magog war of Ezekiel 38 for instance. And more recently among the scholars of eschatology is the examination of Psalm 83 and the confederation of Arab nations that come against Israel in what we are calling the "Psalm 83" war. Either of these may or may not occur prior to the Rapture. And there are a couple other prophecies like them.

Most importantly though, is to recognize that nothing NEEDS to happen before the Rapture can occur.

- J.R. Hall

Overheard

"After I set out to refute Christianity intellectually and couldn't, I came to the conclusion the Bible was true and Jesus Christ was God's Son"

- Josh McDowell

Upcoming Events...

Mid-America Prophecy Conference, Tulsa, OK.
(April 28-30, 2011)

This is one of the best conferences that can be found anywhere. I encourage all our readers to attend.

Speakers this year are: Dr.

David Reagan, Terry James, Daymond Duck, Dr. Thomas Sharp and Dr. Paul Wilkinson.

Check out :
<http://midamericaprophecy.com/> for more information

Lamb & Lion Bible Conference – "Christianity Under Attack", Dallas, TX.
(June 24-25, 2011)

Speakers include: Kerby Anderson, Ron Rhodes, Dr. John Morris, James Walker, Frank Wright, and Dr. David Reagan.

http://www.lamblion.com/events/events_1lconf5.php