

Accepted Misinformation

All intelligent people want to know the truth, we assume, though some search more diligently and open-mindedly for it than others. All of us are aware that there is much misinformation spread deliberately by the media, politicians, and most everybody who has an agenda -- even preachers! So it is not easy to find the truth. Added to all this is the fact that we generally accept much misinformation that we actually already know is error. Some of these areas may be of little concern while others may bear more weight. We will offer a few examples, and you may be able to add many others to the list.

Four of the twelve months of the year are wrongly named! September, October, November, and December were named after the numbers seven, eight, nine, and ten, but as our calendar developed they became nine, ten, eleven, and twelve in the sequence.

We commonly think in terms of the rotation of the earth as a 24-hour day and 365 of those days making a year, yet we know that is inaccurate. The earth rotates in 23 hours, 56 minutes, and slightly more than 4 seconds. The earth rotates around the sun in 1 year, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 48 seconds. The weather man still tells us when the sun will rise and set for the next day as though it actually rises and sets.

Looking at a flat map, most of us conclude that Colorado and Wyoming are rectangular. However, observation on a globe will necessarily show their northern borders as shorter than their southern borders and no borders form a ninety degree angle.

By use of a carpenter's or surveyor's level, we think to make a slab or plot of land level. However, holding a carpenter's level against a globe would illustrate how inaccurate that would be for the lines would extend into space. A straight line that is level would circle the globe, and perfectly calm oceans making the seas level would indicate level to be spherical.

My cup of coffee each morning is enhanced by Half-and-Half which presumably is half cream and half milk. But no such deceptive claim is made for that on the carton. The fine print of analysis reveals that it is 10.5% fat. And now you have the choice of non-fat Half-and-Half!

We generally think our nation is a true democracy, but it is a republic ruled by a representative democracy. Each issue is not decided by a majority vote of the citizens. A majority vote elects representatives who make decisions for us. But, enough of the secular illustrations. Let's look at some relating to religion.

From kindergarten through adult classes and from the pulpit our people are taught that the Bible is composed of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Those portions of the Scriptures are not the testaments. A testament is a covenant. The covenants/testaments

God has made with man are revealed in the Bible. The first part of the Bible is Scriptures which relate to the first/old covenant(s) and the second part is writings which relate more to the new covenant God made with man.

Preachers will hold up a copy of the writings relating to the new covenant and declare that it is the gospel from cover to cover. Not so! It is true that those writings reveal the good news -- the gospel -- of salvation through Christ but they also reveal the teachings / doctrines written by inspired men. There is a great difference in the gospel and the apostolic teachings. The gospel brings us to Christ; the teachings direct our lives after we have obeyed the gospel. The gospel which brings us to Christ was preached long before an epistle was written.

Most of our people make no distinction between a minister, preacher, and evangelist, and many would add a pastor to the list also. The thinking that these terms are all synonyms is so ingrained that we may never be successful in correcting the misinformation. A minister is a servant, one who ministers. That includes every disciple for we all serve God and one another. The term minister, however, is generally erroneously applied to a professional who is hired to serve a congregation. Such a capacity is absent in Scripture except to apply to an elder (1 Tim. 5:17-18). A pastor is a shepherd. Elders are pastors. But in our misdirection, we hire men as surrogate pastors, shepherds, elders. The minister is not necessarily a preacher! A preacher is an evangelist, a person who heralds the good news of the gospel. There is no precedent in Scripture of the preaching / evangelizing of the gospel in the assembly. You cannot evangelize those who are already disciples. Disciples are to be taught and edified, and this may be a part of ministering and shepherding.

Notice how often our people speak of the "New Testament church." By that, they mean the church produced by the scriptures which they call the New Testament. The church was produced through the proclamation of the gospel and it operated decades before most of the writings relating to the new covenant were written. It is actually more accurate to say the church produced the writings than the writings produced the church. Even the term "new covenant church" is rather redundant. Have you ever known of anyone promoting an "old covenant church"?

A common slogan among us is that "We speak where the Bible speaks and are silent where the Bible is silent, we do Bible things in Bible ways, and we call Bible things by Bible names." Sounds great! Who could question such an aspiration? But the word "Bible" is not in the Bible!! Did I just hear a deflating fizz?

In seeking to identify the "true" church, we have heard it commonly taught that the community of believers should wear the "scriptural name" Church of Christ. But our word "church" should not be in the Bible. It is not translated from any word in the original text. It is a mistranslation of the Greek word "ekklesia" which should be rendered with the connotation of "assembly" or "congregation." So, how could a mistranslated word be a part of a "scriptural" name?

The universally honored and revered symbol of Christianity is the wooden cross. The cross is mentioned prominently in the Scriptures. Yet there is no noun for “cross” in the Greek text! The word used in the Greek text is “stauros” which means “stake.” Check it out for yourself.

Although everybody knows that Jesus was a carpenter, no one has pointed to a Scripture reference that indicates it. Joseph, his father was a “tekton” which denotes a craftsman which could be carpentry, woodwork, or any other craft. It is the root word from which we get our word “technician.” An older rendering is “artificer.” Even if Joseph was a carpenter it is presumptuous to conclude that Jesus followed that trade.

Poor Mary Magdalene! From early history and through the centuries until this time, it is declared matter-of-factly that Mary Magdalene was formerly a prostitute. That is unfounded gossip still being repeated! No one can point to any evidence of its truth in the Scriptures. On a preaching tour Jesus was accompanied by the apostles and some women “who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out ...” and other women notable enough to have been mentioned by name (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus was courageous in breaking traditions, but it is beyond belief that he would have compromised his influence by traveling about with former prostitutes on his preaching tour!

No doubt, you can add other illustrations of generally accepted concepts that are in error, and you may correct some of my scientific observations. It is not contended here that any of these misunderstandings will bar one from the kingdom of God though some are confusing. My hope here is to cause us to realize that we may be misinformed on many of the things we readily accept and confidently proclaim. This realization should temper dogmatism and make us less judgmental of those who differ from us on points of interpretation and understanding. The higher purpose is to lead us to true honesty and greater dedication to the learning of God’s will.

(Cecil Hook; April 2003) []