

### More About “Accepted Misinformation”

Last week’s effort about generally accepted misinformation was not one of my better productions. Having nothing more profitable prepared, I sent it out anyway. To my surprise several of you responded to it. What I offer here now will not be another essay but a few drippings from the former one because of two of those notes I received.

In regard to my statement that no Scripture reference reveals that Jesus was a carpenter, David Bean, of Houston recognized my misinformation. I knew David’s family in Beaumont, Texas nearly sixty years ago when he was too young to be noticed by a young single fellow like me. David pointed out that Mark 6:3 says, “*Isn’t this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon... ?*” (RSV).

There went my credibility as a scholar! What a let-down right there in front of all of you! I taught you error which, according to our misinformed definition of the term, makes me a false teacher. I would repent in sackcloth and ashes, but having never needed sackcloth before, I do not have any on hand, and Target does not stock it. Also, I would probably get the environmentalists on my case if I were to try to make some ashes in the back yard. Besides, I would have to research to learn how much ash is required to be counted as ashes.

In reporting the same incident, Mark recorded that the people asked if Jesus was “*the carpenter*” and Matthew says they asked if he was not “*the carpenter’s son*” (Matt. 13:55). So, I suppose we must rightly conclude that, if Joseph was a carpenter, so was Jesus.

Granting all that, I die hard. Joseph and Jesus were each a “*tekton*” which is a general word for a craftsman without being specific as to which craft. That is like our word “*technician*” which is derived from “*tekton*”. The word does not denote any specific field of expertise, yet it was commonly used in reference to carpentry and woodworking..

The other note, in the same friendly attitude, is from a local friend, Jerry Barnett It is jotted as an informal note which I shall copy:

“All good points, Cecil. Isn’t it also true that in the Bible, the term ‘Word of God’ is never used in reference to itself. So, to ‘study’ the Word of God, to ‘read’ the Word of God, or to ‘get back to the Word of God’ is a misapplication of the term ‘Word’?”

“If the Word is Christ, or teachings / sayings of Christ, then the Bible ‘contains’ them. It is not THE Word.

“The term ‘scriptures’ is used in the Bible to refer to the Old Testament, not the new. Is Paul saying to Timothy that ‘his’ writings are all ‘God breathed’?” (End of note.)

Let us question further. Are the Psalms of David words of God? If you are “into the Psalms”, are you “into the Word”? David wrote, “*Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a*

*light to my path.*” Was he meaning that his own Psalms which are a part of the Bible were that word which was a lamp and light to him? When David wrote, *“I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee,”* (Psalms 119:105; 119:11) can we assume that he might have been referring to the census of Israel in the book of Numbers which is in the Bible? Certainly not. David was not indicating that everything in a book called the Bible was the word of God. In fact, there was no such completed book, or set of scrolls, at the time. The contexts of those two passages reveal that he was speaking of specific utterances of God which he defined as “thy righteous ordinances”, “statutes”, “testimonies”, and “precepts”.

Peter implies that the letters Paul had written at that time were “scripture” being twisted by some *“as they do the other scriptures”* (2 Peter 3:14-17). We cannot properly infer that Peter was saying Paul’s letters were a part of a book called the New Testament because the writings relating to the new covenant/testament were not all written at that time nor was there a collected canon referred to as the scriptures.

According to a term invented and widely used by this generation, the Bereans were “into the Word” because they were *“examining the scriptures daily”* (Acts 17:11). That would imply that the scrolls of scriptures relating to the old covenant were the Word of God. Some of the information in those sacred scrolls reveals words of God (*“Thus says the Lord”*) but some of the scrolls also contain words of men, even evil men.

Due to the misinformation in which many of us were nurtured, it has been difficult for us to comprehend that Paul was referring to the writings of the old covenant period when he wrote these words to the young evangelist, Timothy: *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work”* (2 Tim. 3:14-17). None of the writings of the apostles were in existence when Timothy was a child.

At this point we will look again at our old proof-text demanding that we study the Bible. To Timothy, Paul exhorted, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15 KJV). A more accurate rendering of that passage puts it in a different light: *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth (RSV).* Paul was not speaking of “Bible study”!

Thanks to David and Jerry for their input, to others for your encouragement, and to all who continue to read this column.

(Cecil Hook; April 2003). []