



DISCOVERING THE BIBLE & OUR BIBLICAL HERITAGES

Learning about the histories of Bibles, beliefs, movements, institutions, events, and leaders of our Judeo-Christian Biblical Heritages.

2013 • NUMBER 7

Divine Blindness, Pre-Birth Sins & Reincarnation?

By Jim Myers

I love reading my Bible today, more than ever before, because the more I learn about the words I read in it, the more I enjoy it. Every time I open my Bible, I expect to learn something new, even though I may have read the account many times before. Since I was ordained as a minister in 1982 and served as chaplain at a law enforcement center, I have been reading my Bible very seriously for a long time. It has been a very important part of my life because of the people that looked to me for accurate biblical answers to very serious personal questions.

However, when I became a minister I read the Bible very differently from how I read it today. I was a fundamentalist minister that had been taught – and believed -- *my King James Version of the Bible was the inerrant and infallible Word of God, that every word in it was to be taken literally, and it contained every answer to every question that could ever be asked. Everything in it came directly from God and there were no errors, contradictions or conflicts between any of the accounts in it.* Back then, I spent a lot of time defending my beliefs **about** the Bible, instead of **seeing what was actually and clearly written** on the pages of my Bible.

This really created a problem for me because I have always been an analytical type of person. I had been a banker and businessman before becoming a minister. I really loved digging into business problems or analyzing financial statements – *and was very good at discovering errors, conflicts and contradictions.* But, even after graduating from a Bible college, being ordained as a minister, and founding a church – *I couldn't simply turn off my analytical mind.*

Anyone that has ever attended a Bible study with me knows that that my favorite sections in the Bible are the Creation accounts in the opening chapters of Genesis. I was taught in Bible College that the two creation accounts were simply two versions of the same event. But, I could plainly see that in the first account God made the man and woman together -- and He made them last after making the animals. But, in the second account, He made the man first, then next He made the animals -- and then He made the woman last. So, as a minister, I found myself defending our doctrines about the Bible -- *instead of allowing the*

differences in the two accounts to reveal the ancient and very valuable wisdom to me. And then there were the two accounts in the Noah story.

You are to bring into the ark **two** of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. **Two** of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. (Genesis 6:19-20)

Take with you **seven pairs** of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and **one pair** of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, and also **seven pairs** of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. (Genesis 7:2-3)

One pair equals two animals. Seven pairs equal fourteen animals. **2 does not equal 14** -- but, according to my belief system, no differences existed. My first grade teacher would have strongly disagreed with my theology professor.

Another example came up with the birth accounts of Jesus. Most people base their view of his birth on what they see in Christmas plays, instead of what they read in their Bibles. In Matthew, wise men come to see baby Jesus, but in Luke shepherds come to see the baby. There are no shepherds in Matthew or wise men in Luke. *They are different accounts and the differences are important.*

Hopefully, this gives you an idea of the inner conflict I experienced in my heart when my religious beliefs and doctrines conflicted with the knowledge and analytical skills in my mind. *I am sure that some of you have experienced the same problem, but wouldn't dare bring it up in church.*

This brings me to the subject of this newsletter – *Does the Bible Teach Divine Blindness, Pre-Birth Sins & Reincarnation?* Many years ago, **Dr. Ike Tennison** and I were working with the Greek text of the *Gospel of John*. Ike, who had also been my professor of Classical Greek at the University of Texas at Arlington, pointed out that the earliest manuscripts of the text were written in letters that were all capitals, in columns, without any chapter, verse, sentence or word breaks. Below is an example of the section we were working on that day. I transliterated it into English to give you an idea of what it was like.

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Fun Exercise: Want to have some fun and get a taste of what it's like to work with an ancient manuscript? Get a pencil and draw lines to separate the text above into words. When you finish, determine which letters should be capitals, where punctuation marks & verse division should go. Then write your translation on a piece of paper. *We will use it a little later, so give it a try.*

Now, let's consider some important facts every reader of the Bible should know about the words they are reading. Let's begin with the fact that **Stephen Cardinal Langton**, Frenchman and professor at the University of Paris who later became archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1228), was the first man to insert chapter divisions in the biblical text and he did it almost 1,200 years after Jesus lived in Israel. The next facts are that it would be over 300 years later, in 1528, when **Santes Pagnino**, O.P. was the first to insert verse divisions in the Old Testament. In 1551, **Robert Stephens** published his Greek edition, with verse divisions inserted in the New Testament.

Take a moment to think about how chapter and verse divisions affect how you read your Bible. Chapter divisions act like stop signs and verse divisions are like yield signs. They interrupt the flow of the text as we read. They also establish the contexts we use to understand what we are reading. Numerous scholars have commented on how the insertions of chapter and verse divisions were frequently so haphazard, they resulted in meaningless or erroneous interpretations of the text. Many people schedule their daily Bible readings based on chapter divisions, so what they read is often disconnected from its original context. Below are a couple of examples.

Examples of this are found the creation accounts of Genesis. In the first creation account found in Genesis, days one through six are recorded in chapter one. But for some unknown reason, Langton placed the seventh day in chapter two and separates it from its original context.

When verse division were added, they made the second creation account begin in the middle of verse four. The decisions the men made to insert chapter and verse markers in those places not only destroyed the context of the first two accounts of the Bible, they also created a great deal of confusion in the minds of readers. This was more than a literary problem for those who base their salvation of their doctrines about their Bible.

Now let's consider another example, which is the section that includes divine blindness, pre-birth sins, and reincarnation. It is the section you translated above and it is found in John 9:1-5. Get your translation and compare it to the two translations below. Notice how the decisions translators made, especially concerning punctuation, dramatically affected the meaning of the account.

Option 1	Option 2
<p>¹ Now as <i>Jesus</i> passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth.</p> <p>² And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"</p> <p>³ Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.</p> <p>⁴ I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; <i>the</i> night is coming when no one can work.</p> <p>⁵ As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."</p>	<p>Now as <i>Jesus</i> passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth and His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"</p> <p>Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned!"</p> <p>"But that the works of God should be revealed in him I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; <i>the</i> night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."</p>

In option #1, the disciples believed that the man had been born blind because either the man or his parents sinned. This raises an interesting question that usually goes unnoticed: How could the man have sinned before he was born? Did the disciples believe in reincarnation? Jesus responds by telling the disciples that the man's blindness was unrelated to sin. God made the man blind from birth so Jesus could come by and heal him on that day to prove who he was.

In option #2, the disciples ask the same question, but the response of Jesus is very different. He begins by Jesus responds by telling the disciples that the man's blindness was unrelated to sin. But what he says next is very different. Why the man is blind is of no importance. What is important is that the man be healed, so Jesus must work the works of God so he will be able to see, while Jesus is still there to heal him, because at some point in the future Jesus will no longer be there to help him. The questions raised by the above accounts are important:

- *Does God make people blind from birth so they can be healed later?*
- *What kind of sin could someone commit before their birth?*
- *Had the man lived before and was later reincarnated?*
- *Should we consider the options Bible translators had in our studies?*
- *Are belief in God and beliefs about our Bibles the same thing?*
- *Can beliefs about the Bible keep someone from understanding its words?*
- *Which is the most important – the Bible or institutional doctrines?*

I believe the Creator gave us a heart and a mind for a reason – *and to grow and mature spiritually, we must use both*. Some of my greatest discoveries have come from letting the Bible tell its own stories. What do you think? **BHC**

July Memorials

In Loving Memory

**MARJORIE
NEELLEY
PITNER**

**December 30, 1914
July 17, 2007**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

In Their Remembrance

In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to seek those
qualities of mind and heart which they
shared when we walked life's journey
together.*

*May we help to bring closer to fulfillment
their highest ideals and noblest strivings.
May their memories deepen our loyalty to
those things which we valued and shared --
faith, love, peace and devotion.*

*As long as we live, they too will live; for
they are now a part of us, as we remember
them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor
Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer
Book Press)

In Loving Memory

**FANNIE EDNA
GRAHAM
WARD**

**July 15, 1891
July 10, 1982**

*May you dwell under His
wings in complete
SHALOM forever!*

Helping You Remember Them

Helping you remember your loved ones is a very important part of the Biblical Heritage Center's mission *ó and it is a privilege*. BHC offers you two ways to remember:

Memorial in this newsletter (like those above).

Memorial in the BHC Memorial Gardens on the BHC website at <http://www.biblicalheritage.org>

If you would like to have your loved one remembered in a newsletter memorial or in the BHC Memorial Gardens, email or mail their information to us. There is no charge, but donations are accepted. Donations from individuals who care about BHC's work make it possible for our work, our newsletters to be published, and for our website to be online.

Email your information to jim@biblicalheritage.org or mail it to the address below.

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on the BHC Home Page.**

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members of Blog & Google Group to receive notices of new postings.

We want to help you!

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the donations of people who understand
the importance of our work & that we cannot do them without funds.**

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please contribute today --**

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