

For Lack Of Knowledge

General Decline in Knowledge

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I had what turned out to be a disturbing phone call this past week. Kristy Collins told me what the caller wanted to know, adding something to the effect that she had trouble getting through to her. I soon found out what she meant.

The caller was a young woman—I guessed that she was in her early twenties, just from the sound of her voice. I found out in the course of our conversation that she was from the south-central region of the United States. She spoke well and clearly, with what seemed to be an adequate vocabulary. She wanted to know about the Passover, which is fine. She wanted to know what it was and what went on in the Passover, but she also wanted to know about how she could reschedule it. I thought, What? She did not really know what the Passover was, and she was already trying to reschedule it? It just did not make a whole lot of sense.

I figured out later that she had found her way to the page on Sabbath.org that displays my 2002 sermonette on the Second Passover, where the abstract reads, “Only [because of] emergency or unavoidable circumstances should one ever seek to reschedule the Passover. Nevertheless, because of its seriousness, God has provided a mechanism for a rescheduling if there is a legitimate need.”

Her main question was, “What is the mechanism for rescheduling the Passover?” I tried to explain from Numbers 9, where God answers the question because of the men who had been defiled by touching a dead body. They came to Moses and said, “How can we keep the Passover if we have been defiled?” And Moses turned to God and said, “What is the answer to this?” And God responds about how to do this. He says that if a person is defiled or sick or on a long journey, it can be postponed for one month, to

the fourteenth day of the second month, and then it is to be kept just as the original Passover (the month before) had been kept. Easy-peasy, right? Pretty straightforward.

No. After all that, she asked, “So what is the mechanism?” I thought that in past 15 minutes or however long it took me to explain that, I had explained it thoroughly. She went on, “A ‘mechanism’ is like a part in a machine, right? What’s the mechanism?”

It finally dawned on me that she knew only the literal meaning of “mechanism.” She thought that God provided some sort of part or machine that allowed us to reschedule the Passover. It was one of those times when you just have to bang your head against the wall. She had no idea that there is a non-literal, metaphorical meaning of the word ‘mechanism.’ If you go to Dictionary.com or MerriamWebster, it is usually second on the list (after the literal meaning): “the agency or means by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished.” I thought that was straightforward, too! But no.

She later revealed in the course of this conversation that she did not know that people used different calendars around the world, or that different peoples used different calendars in history. She did not know Sunday was the first day of the week and that Saturday was the seventh day of the week. She did not know that some Christians kept the Sabbath, not Sunday. She did not know Passover and Communion were similar rites. She did not know that the symbols of both Passover and Communion were bread and wine, and she did not know at all what they symbolized—by any means. She did not know that different denominations take Communion at different intervals. She did not know that there were certain devout Catholics that take Communion every day. She was calling in about Passover and knew absolutely nothing about it. And she wanted a mechanism to reschedule the day.

And there was more. I just named a few things that she didn't know among all the other things she did not know throughout that conversation. I realized after about 20-25 minutes that this young woman knew almost nothing about the Bible. She knew it existed, but really knew nothing about it at all. She knew nothing about Christianity, Judaism, history, and many other matters that we take for granted every day. She did not have a clue.

She was in many ways an empty well. You drop the bucket down the shaft, and when you bring it back up, it's dry. There was nothing there. Perhaps she knew all the latest pop-culture stuff. Maybe she was well-learned in social justice and all that, but she knew nothing about the Bible. Maybe I am overstating it, but from my point of view, I was trying to explain just the rudiments of it—just the basic parts of it, and there were no lights. Nothing going on there. I wondered if she even had enough foundation to begin to understand the truth. I hope so, but if she were to be taught, it would have to begin with the very, very basics of the Bible and Christian doctrine, and then built very, very slowly, one thing after another, just to start giving her some education. To me, her ignorance was astonishing—that she had no basis for understanding any of this! Yet she was calling in, trying to figure out how to reschedule the Passover.

Despite the United States supposedly having the second-best education system in the world, it consistently scores lower than many other countries in math and science benchmarks, and most of the big school systems around the country have lowered standards dramatically in grammar, literature, and history. The 2018 *Business Insider* rankings rated the U.S. as 38th in math scores and 24th in science. Compared to international standards, the nation's education rankings have fallen for the past three decades. Here we are, a wealthy nation with all the resources we need at our disposal, and we are in serious educational decline.

There is no doubt that biblical literacy has plummeted drastically too, especially among younger people. Some or many of the older ones had been 'Christian' or had Christian leanings for much of their lives, so they have sat through a lot of sermons and gone to church and heard a lot, so they know more. The 2019 Barna State of the Bible survey found that about half of Millennials (the youngest surveyed) believe the Bible is oppressive toward the LGBT community, women, and certain races—they do not trust it, so why learn about it? If they have a negative feeling toward it, there is no reason for them to get involved in it at all. Sixty percent of them said that the nation would be about the same (at this low ebb) or *better off* without the Bible. Despite keeping Christmas every year—and you know how people go after Christmas, whether they are 'Christians' or not—just over half of Millennials could correctly name Bethlehem as Jesus' birthplace (20% said Jerusalem, 10% were willing to admit that they had no idea).

George Barna's assessment from several years ago: "The Christian body in America is immersed in a crisis of biblical illiteracy."

God says in Hosea 4:6,

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.
Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from
being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your
God, I also will forget your children [which is a very, very scary
thing to read].

By contrast, one of the foundational conditions of the Millennium—which we hope is just a few years ahead—is that everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34). You see the difference. There will be utopia, as it were, in the Millennium, compared to today's precipitous decline in just about everything. And one of the big factors is a lack of knowledge.

Ignorance is truly a curse, and ignorance of God and His Word will spell disaster for this nation over time. Just think about it: for you and me, now and in the age to come, we have our work cut out for us!