

## Pitfalls Of Scholarship

Scholarship's Missing Dimension

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I correspond on occasion with a minister in one of the "Christian" churches of this world. I don't know if he's a Methodist, or Presbyterian, or what. He's never told me his affiliation. But I do know that he's a minister because he signs everything "Rev." and then his name. He's taken me to task on certain things. I think what he did was find our Internet sight. He might even have listened to parts of some sermons or read some articles. He's told me certain things that we are "wrong" about.

It all started around Christmas time, because he really thought we were doing a terrible injustice to God by not keeping Christmas. That this was the greatest thing that had ever happened on the planet Earth—that Jesus Christ had come as a baby. And I tried to explain to him that the other end of His life was probably more important, but He had to get his start somewhere.

Anyway, he's talked to me a lot about our lack of ***scholarship***. He groups us in with all fundamentalists. He knows that we keep the Sabbath, and he calls us "Fundamentalist Christians." And he says that the thing about Fundamentalist Christians is that they don't take into account the scholarship of this world. They don't take into account the things that men have learned in the intervening time (from about 100 A.D. and now).

And [according to him] if we were smart, we would get our doctorates and our PhD's in theology, or whatnot. We'd study the Greek and the Latin and the Hebrew. We'd study deeply into archeology, history, the cultures of the ancient Middle East—so that we could get a broad base of understanding about what actually was going on at the time, what these people were thinking; and then, through that "lens" we could interpret what's in the Bible.

This was pretty much the entire last e-mail that he sent me. It was a harangue against our "non-scholarly approach" to religion. And he said that, if we would just start doing this, then he could see us start developing very nicely. Some of our doctrines are "right on," but a lot of them need work—according to him.

Lately, I've tried to tell him that the reason that we don't keep Christmas (among other things) was that God gave us holidays to keep. These are the ones that are found in Leviticus 23. But all the ones that he wanted me to keep are not found anywhere in the Bible—at least, to the point where God says, "You shall keep this occasion as a

memorial." All those occasions that He tells us to **keep** are written there very plainly. And all the ones that this minister wants us to keep are the ones that God says nothing about.

So we got into it quite a bit, back and forth, on this. And he said, "Don't you know that the Feast of Tabernacles is just an outgrowth of a pagan fall harvest festival? And whether it was a Canaanite festival, or an Ammonite festival, or an Egyptian festival, or whatever culture they happened to be closest to at the time—the Jews just borrowed it and honored Yahweh with it."

So, eventually, I just told this guy, "Don't write me back any more. We are so far apart in our understanding and the way that we treat the Bible, that we can't even agree on this." I said, "Sure. Other people have had harvest festivals in the fall; but God gave this one, and it has nothing to do with paganism. Go back to your books, and don't write me again." I was through with it, because it was demeaning after a while—to be spoken to like this. That is, like I didn't have a brain in my head and I needed to be taught everything. I had no grasp of the reality of things, according to him.

Because of this frustration, out pops this sermon. It's going to be about biblical scholarship. I've entitled it "PITFALLS OF SCHOLARSHIP." I want you to know right away that I am not against scholarship. But there are things that we need to understand about the scholarship of this world—things that we need to be very careful about.

Let's turn back to Genesis 1. This is where Mr. Armstrong always went. So it's a good place for us to start too. We need to have a proper balance on this subject; and I think this is probably the best place to start—at the beginning.

**Genesis 1:26-27** ' Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." 27 So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

This is fundamental principle number one. This is the first point I think we need to understand. God created man in His own image and in His own likeness. And, as Mr. Armstrong often taught us, this was the first step that He took in reproducing Himself. It says very clearly that He created the animals after animal-kind. (Cattle after the cattle-kind, bird after the bird-kind, and creeping things after the creeping thing-kind.)

But what did He made man of? Man was made after the God-kind. Man is different than the animals, by quite a leap. We are not close to the animals like the evolutionists think. We are very far removed from the animals. All that we really have in common with the animals is the stuff we are made of, but we are made after the God-kind. We have a form like His. We see in Revelation 1, when Jesus Christ is described, He is described with the parts like a man. (A head, shoulders, chest, arms, and legs.) We resemble Him in our form and our shape.

But most importantly, we have a **mind** like His. It's not up to the par of His, but we do have a mind that can become like His. We have **personality** and **attitudes** that resemble God's. We can think. We can speak. We can reason. We can solve problems. We can build. We can plan. We can imagine things that don't even exist. And, like God, we have the ability to create things. Not life, necessarily; but we have the ability to take an idea and create something from it—like God does. It was a wonderful thing that He made when He made man! He gave him so much of what He is. He put man at the very pinnacle of His creation.

Now, let's go to the other end of the Book—to I JOHN. Here's a memory scripture for you.

**I John 3:2** ' Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

This is the other end of creation. Back there in Genesis 1:26, it was the *beginning* of the creation—of man into the children of God. Here, John is showing us what it will be like when God *finishes* the creation of man, into His children—until we become like Him. When we enter the Kingdom of God, we will be more than just in His form, in His shape, in His image in the sense of just resembling Them. By that time, we will **have** Them in Their fullness!

That means that our human limits of perception [will be removed]. Remember it says, "We shall see Him as He is." Right now, we can't see Him as He is. We can't really perceive what God is truly like. Moses couldn't even look on God's face. He had to look on His back, in that one time when he asked to see God's glory. But, by that time, our limits of our perception of God will be taken off.

The limits of our knowledge—of God's knowledge—will be removed. It is a certainty that most of us do not use our intelligence to its fullest potential—in fact, we tend to be very

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lazy when it comes to applying our smarts and increasing our knowledge. Those sorts of limits will be "taken off" at this point. Our understanding of God, and what He is doing, and how He has worked everything out will be much more complete. Maybe as complete as it ever needs to be, by that point.

So the blinders will be taken off. We will see God in His beauty, in His intellect, in His might, in His glory and in His wisdom—as He really is, and not through the very simple explanation that we get through the revelation of God in the Bible. That means that at that time—once the blinders have been removed, once these limitations are gone—we will **be** just like Him. We will see Him for what He really is. We will be able to truly think like He thinks all the time—and thus act as He acts, without fail.

These are the two extremes. Genesis 1:26 is man at his best human (physical) state—as He created him. By the time we get to I John 3:2, we are talking about man in his state of being God (the children of God). There's a long distance—a great breach—between the two. A large chasm that must be crossed, before the one becomes the other.

Let's go to I Corinthians 2, and we'll see that what has happened in the meantime is where we are—you and me.

**I Corinthians 2:11a** ' For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?

That's where things are in Genesis 1:26-27. God put a "spirit" in man, as it says in JOB; and it gives him the ability to understand the things of men. That is, physical things.

**I Corinthians 2:11b** - Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

This is where you and I come in. We've been called; and God has given us His Spirit—after we've obeyed Him, and been baptized, and repented. And so He's granted us His Spirit to allow us to understand the things of God. And you really can't understand the things of God unless the Spirit of God is in you.

**I Corinthians 2:12** - Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

So we see that converted Christians are somewhere in between these two points of Genesis 1:26 and I John 3:2. God has given us His Spirit, as Mr. Armstrong said, to complement our human spirit. We use to make the joke that those without God's Spirit are "not all there." There is something missing; and that's the Spirit of God—which allows a man to understand godly things and to have a relationship with God, and thus to grow and overcome toward salvation. We have something extra that unconverted people do not. God's Spirit gives us the ability to know and to understand godly things.

**I Corinthians 2:16a** - For "what has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?"

I think it's kind of interesting that Paul sticks this in here, because we haven't come to that point yet ourselves. Are we on par with God, that we could instruct Him? The answer would have to be, "No." But notice what he says next.

**I Corinthians 2:16b** ' But we have the mind of Christ.

Isn't that interesting? We aren't yet to the point where we can instruct God on the way that things should be, but what we do have are the makings for the same mind that our Savior has and used throughout His life. What Paul is saying here is *"Yes, we have not quite come to the point where we are like God in a perfect way. But what we have been given, by His Spirit, is the ability to think on that level."* Not perfectly yet, because we are still struggling against human nature—our flesh and this world. But we don't have an excuse now, like the people of this world do; because we have the Spirit of God, which has given us the kernel of God's mind.

So we should be using it to come to the place where we know all of God's things—or, as much as we can possibly know. We have the rudiments of the mind of Christ, and we must use them. As we grow, as we are further converted, we have to make those rudiments become large chunks—until, by the time our time is done, we are (as much as we can) thinking just like God. Just like Christ, and doing the things that He did as an example for us. Doesn't it say that we are to follow in His steps?

So we are kind of **between** these two extremes. We haven't fully reached all that we can achieve by the grace of God, and yet we're not back in our natural state either. We are right between these two "extremes," we might say.

Let's ask some questions. How many scholars of this world—who write books, and papers, and whatnot on their areas of expertise (books that we can study, papers that we can peruse, things that we can check out)...how many of these are converted? How many of these men and women are at the point that we are? Even though we are not 'perfect' yet ourselves, according to God we are at a higher mental state than they are—because He has given us an ingredient **from Himself** that they don't have. So, to answer that question, very few of those men and women have been, or are, converted. And there's a reason for that, which we'll get into later—just a little bit.

So what we have is that these people write down their knowledge and their wisdom, because they do have a certain amount of wisdom. But they write that down, and they come to us without the benefit of God's Spirit being in them. If they'd had this Spirit, they would have understood godly things; and they probably would write something different. But, at least, they have written down what they know and what they've studied—in their narrow areas of expertise.

Does this make what they say *invalid*? No, not necessarily. On the other hand, just because they are an expert in their field, does that mean that they are *right*? No. We need to get a balance on this. We can't condemn them for what they know, nor can we necessarily praise them for what they know. Why? well, back to GENESIS. The answers are almost always in GENESIS—or, at least, the beginnings of them. This is something that Mr. Armstrong said earlier.

**Genesis 2:15-17** ' Then the LOORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 16 And the LOORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Now, how long did that command hold up?

**Genesis 3:6-8** ' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were open, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. 8 And they heard the sound of the LOORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LOORD God among the trees of the garden.

What does the human mind, unconstrained by God's Spirit, produce when it attempts to know godly things? What does Genesis 2:16 say? It's very plain. The human mind, when it tries to understand anything, produces **a mixture of good and evil**. That's why God didn't want them to take it! He didn't want them to have anything to do with evil. He wanted them to eventually take the tree of life—which was all "good," all the things of God.

The tree of life would have given them the same thing that we have been given ourselves—God's Spirit. And that would have opened their minds in a different way—in a much better way—to what is really true. And then they could have done just as we are attempting to do now. That is, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ultimately, for salvation and entrance into God's Kingdom!

That's what the tree of life would have done. But they, in a sense, rejected the tree of life by not picking it, by not taking of it. And they took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which gave them wide open eyes—not just to "good," but also to evil. And it immediately produced shame in them, and they hid themselves from God. Now, that's interesting. What did this mixture of good and evil produce immediately? **Separation from God!**

Scholars, then, get some things right; and they get some things wrong—because they are working from the same standpoint of Adam and Eve (after this point). That is, a mixture of good and evil. Some truth they can find. A lot of error they also find. And it just gets perpetuated—generation after generation after generation. One scholar in one age produces the next age of scholars, and historical error just gets passed down to the next generation.

With all unconverted human beings—scholarly or unscholarly—the problem is that they have no way to judge truly what is "right" and what is "wrong." They don't have that extra ingredient that the converted have, that gives them the ability to discern good from evil and to choose the good. Mr. Armstrong often used those phrases. We have the ability now to determine what is right and what is wrong—and to **choose** the right. That's what *character* is. That's what God is trying to build in us.

Thus, the wisest among men—like Adam and Eve—know that they are naked before God; and so they hide themselves from Him. (We'll see this a little bit later.) Whenever God approaches into their lives, these people hide themselves and run from God. They run in the other direction. Remember that I am talking about the wisest among them.

They realize that they know nothing for sure, because they have no ability to discern it.

And so when God comes—in all His authority, in all His dogmatism, in all of His righteous "rightness," His holiness—they can't stand it. So they run from it. And this is shown in what they produce.

Let's go to Romans 1. What we see immediately is that Paul is describing the way in which truth is suppressed in this world. It's suppressed. It's hindered. It's stifled. And, just so you understand this as we read through, verses 18 and 19 are a summary of what he's going to say in the rest of what we read. So we can get the gist of it just from verses 18 and 19, but verses 20-25 add the details that are very helpful.

**Romans 1:18-19** ' For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

That was the summary. Now Paul will add some details.

**Romans 1:20** - For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made [That's us.], even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

We can see God's eternal power and His divine nature by what's in creation. It doesn't take a real genius to look up into the sky and say "*That couldn't have just become. It had to have been made. Things don't just work 'like clockwork' because. So there must have been a Being of some sort—greater than us—who can handle the energies, the laws, and all those things that make things go. And, thus, this Being must be divine. Certainly greater than us; and the next step from us is the world of spirit.*" So there's something there. God hasn't hidden that sort of thing from anyone. Open your eyes and you'll see, basically, how it works.

**Romans 1:21a** - Because, although they knew God...

Now, that's interesting. They knew of God—or (as it says back in verse 19) what may be known of God. God didn't completely hide Himself from man. There are plenty things out there that are knowable about God. So, as it says here in verse 20, they were without

excuse.

**Romans 1:21** - Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful [meaning that they didn't worship Him properly. Nor did they have any gratitude for all the blessings and the providence that He gave them.], but became futile [vain, foolish] in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

We are seeing a process here. God says that they saw, just by opening their eyes, that there must be a God of great and almighty power, of a divine nature. So right away, they were without excuse. But, because they did not worship Him—they didn't glorify Him for what He had done, even just in creation. Nor were they thankful for what He had done to them up to this point, and would do for them. This decision on their part, of already rejecting God, sent them down the path to degeneracy in their minds.

First of all, as it says here, they became futile in their thoughts. One commentator that I saw said that this could mean that their speculations became foolish. Meaning that what they thought about God was absolutely stupid and ridiculous, because we are talking about God here. They didn't take God for what He was, but they speculated on what He might be. And they don't have the capacity (no man does) to truly understand God—especially without God's Spirit.

So what this did was lead them down a path, with these foolish speculations, to the point that they were so far removed that they were totally in the dark. Their foolish hearts became darkened—meaning their minds. By their own speculation and believing their own speculation (not based on the truth), they put themselves totally in the dark when it came to God.

**Romans 1:22** - Professing to be wise, they became fools.

That's just the long and the short of it. Paul's very blunt. Another person that I read said that he felt this was a punch in the nose to all the **philosophers** in the Greek world. One of the words in here is a word that the philosophers used about themselves—the wise. "Lovers of wisdom"—"*philo-sophists*." And hadn't he had quite an argument with those men on Mars Hill? And they laughed at him for saying that his Savior had been resurrected (or something along that line).

**Romans 1:23** - And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image

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made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Notice what happens here. He shows another process of degeneration. First of all, they exchanged God in all His incorruption. Men are corrupt—not just in the mental state, but also in the physical state. What does it say about Christ? That God didn't leave Him in the grave long enough to see corruption, decay. But in a mental or spiritual sense, there's another idea to corruption as well—that of perversion, degeneration. So Paul is using kind of a double-entendre here. That not did they exchange the eternal perfect God for a finite imperfect man... They exchanged two things. They exchanged the eternal for the momentary, and they exchanged the perfect for the corrupt.

Then, where did it go from there? It says that at first it was man that they exchanged for God; but then it went to birds. And then it went to four-footed beasts, and finally you get to the creeping crawly things—like reptiles, snakes, amphibians, bugs, spiders, and other icky things. We've gone all the way down the chain. From God, to man, to birds (which are often thought of as wise and powerful, because they can fly), then to animals (lions and such), and then to creeping things. So you see the path to degeneration. That's what man's mind, without God's Spirit, does.

The evolutionists have the whole thing backwards. They think "onward and upward." That man is getting better. The Bible says that man gets worse. The second law of thermodynamics says that, if you don't keep something up, it tends to become a mess—which is the mind of man. (I put that in layman's terms, obviously.) Things tend to degenerate is the basic idea to the second law of thermodynamics. They go towards disorder and chaos. This is what Paul was saying. It happens mentally and spiritually as well. But there's a conclusion here:

**Romans 1:24-25** - Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

So what did God do once He saw the regression of man—once He saw what men would do left to themselves? It's very simple. He abandoned them. That's basically what that word means. He gave them up. He let them go. He said, "*Sayonara. I'll just let you see how all this ends up when you go your own way.*"

So, what did Paul say happened? God gave them up. He let them go. And they fell into uncleanness, impurity, ghastly things, vile and evil practices. Then, in verse 25, he summarizes "They exchanged the truth of God for the lie," which is what we saw in Genesis 3. God gave them the truth (symbolized by the tree of life), and what did they do? They exchanged that for **the lie**—the lie that they could take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and live forever, and be just like God.

It's the same thing, over and over, over and over, in every individual that has ever walked this earth—including you and me, until we were called. In many people it hasn't sunk to this point, where it was totally perverse as Paul was talking about here (with the vile passions, and whatnot). But, at some point of this process, all of us took. And at some point of this process, God called us; and we stepped off and started going in the other direction.

So when we read the things which the scholars have written, we have to think, "*Where in this process are they?*" Just because they are talking about biblical things, does that make them spiritual? Does that mean that they haven't fallen into some of the more gross sins? Not at all!

I don't know if any of you have studied the life of Martin Luther, but he was a very bad man. However, his commentaries are still widely read. There's a whole church out there—a denomination—that holds that man up. He was no "saint." He had one of the most vile tempers that there ever was in a man. He hated the Jews with a passion. And some of his writing inspired *Mein Kampf* and other anti-Semitic writings. Most of Germany is Lutheran, if they are not Catholic. And so the ideas of Luther fit right into the anti-Semitism of the Third Reich.

Do you think just because he was a "priest" makes him a good man? Just because he wrote scholarly things that people are still following, that it's something that we should follow too—just because he wrote *about* the Bible? I don't think so. We need to think about the person behind the writing.

Isn't that what Jesus did? He backed up His Word with His life! Not just what He **says** is what we can follow, but also what He **did**. The Perfect Man—and so we can trust Him. But can we trust something that a man without God's Spirit has written? We have to be careful.

**Romans 1:28** ' And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.

That kind of sums up the latter parts of what we looked at earlier. Once they rejected God and His truth, God simply rejected them. He let them go. He let things run their natural course, without intervening in the affairs of men (except in times when His purpose needed to go forward). And what does Paul say this produced, but "a reprobate mind."

Now, this is a very interesting word—**reprobate**. We get it from the Latin. Basically, what it means is that when something comes around for the second time, to be reevaluated, that it's rejected. Something might go by once and pass inspection; but when it is looked at again, more closely, the flaws are seen. So the word "reprobate" literally means "unapproved." It's like you have a quality control person looking over something. And he comes up with whatever the product is; and, instead of putting his litter sticker that says, "*Inspected by #23*" and passing it on the line—he says, "*Uh, uh. We can't send this one out.*"

That's basically what this word means. And when you stick the word "mind" after it, what does that tell you? God says, "*Stop the assembly line, and get this one off—because it's not going to represent Me.*" That's what happens when God rejects the mind of a human being. They just go, or are let go; and they become perverse.

One interesting comment from one of the word-smiths (I believe it was either Vine or Robertson, or one of the others of like scholarship) said that a reprobate mind is one that no longer functions as it should because it lacks the ability to make moral and spiritual distinction. A reprobate mind is one that no longer functions as it should, **because** it lacks the ability to make moral and spiritual distinctions. It doesn't know which way is up. That's why God rejects it. It can't make the right decisions. The New English Bible is really very blunt. It says: "*God gave them up to depraved reasoning.*" They can't think straight.

Let's go back to Jeremiah 8, and just look at this one scripture very quickly—because this is the furthest extreme of where this can go. We can lift a principle from these verses. Remember that we ended up (in Romans 1) with the idea that God gave them up and they no longer have the ability to think straight any more. Then they just degenerate from there. But this one is slightly different, because this is deliberate. God is speaking to the Jews at the time, and specifically to those who were leaders among them.

**Jeremiah 8:8-12** ' "How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us'? Look, the false pen of the scribe certainly works falsehood. 9 The

wise men are ashamed. They are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; so what wisdom do they have? 10 Therefore I will give their wives to others, and their fields to those who will inherit them; because from the least even to the greatest everyone is given to covetousness; from the prophet even to the priest everyone deals falsely. 11 For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace!' when there is no peace. [That could even be superficially, or hardly at all.] 12 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed, nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; in the time of their punishment they shall be cast down," says the LORD.

Now, this is the furthest extreme. And to the shame of the men of Israel at this time, it was the Jews that were doing this. But this extreme is a **deliberate** rejection of God to suppress the truth. They weren't just doing it because they had a debased mind. They were doing it deliberately—so that they could continue their own sins.

This was mentioned in Romans 1:18, when he said, "They suppressed the truth in unrighteousness." Basically, what that phrase means is that they hold the truth down (suppress it, keep it from appearing) so that they can do evil. They look at *the two choices*. There is God's way, which is perfect; but it requires an awful lot. And so they say, "*Um, that doesn't sound like something I'd like to do. So let's hold that down, and do the other thing—which is fun! And who cares about what the consequences are. Let's hold down the truth, so that we can continue to do what we want to do.*"

This is what God's talking about with these Jews at this time, through JEREMIAH. They gave soothing words, "Peace, peace." But they weren't dealing in reality. And so what happened was that a whole nation went down the tubes—into captivity. And so God points the finger at the leadership, the scholars, the priests, the prophets. He said, "*If you hadn't been so willing to suppress the truth so that you could do your own covetous deeds, maybe there could have been some hope for this nation. But you are going to go into captivity just like the rest of them.*"

So, we have all these parts on the spectrum. At the very least then, men without God's Spirit lack the ability to determine truth from error. They may get some things right. But, like we saw, they also get some things wrong. And certainly, they are unable to grasp the big picture—that is, what God is truly working out.

Men specialize in their knowledge. Very few generalize and come to understand how

the whole thing works. So we can, in many cases, rely on their expertise in their field of knowledge. But when they start making conclusions about how their field of knowledge (or slice of expertise) fits into the big picture, then we have to be careful; because men without God's Spirit can't see the big picture. They don't know what God is doing. They have rejected the truth. So their view is clouded with errors. That is, their wide view of what God is doing.

They can't make the right links between the bits of truth that they actually understand. And so they may know the definition of "*hupomone*" (or something like that) and be able to describe it in glowing terms, that we can understand. But when it comes to applying such a thing, how many of them have the patience of *hupomone*? How many of them understand how vital such a thing is to our salvation? That is, to have the patience of Christ—or the patience of the saints?

They can't do it! They know the technical bits that help us. Sure, great! But they can't really put it into real practice; and it eventually leads to wrong conclusions, because they are not living it. That's one of the big problems that they have—that they are not living it. If they lived it, they would understand it. Isn't that what my sermon was a few times back? That we believe, and then (as we believe and do) we understand. But they don't do that. They try to understand before they believe and do. And so they really can't help us, except in the more technical areas.

We use commentaries a lot. We use word studies, encyclopedias, histories, archeological write-ups, lexicons—you name it. We have a very well stocked library here in the office. But we've come to understand how far we can trust them. We can't take what they say in whole cloth, because they believe in going to heaven. They believe that the Holy Spirit is a person. They believe you should go to church on Sunday. Some of them believe that you go to purgatory, if you are not quite good enough. And I could name others of the doctrines that are false that they perpetuate—book after book after book.

And even the fundamentalists mention AD nauseam "the rapture"—which is not the truth, and based on very bad interpretation of certain prophecies. A mixture of truth and error! And it takes a mind with God's Spirit to discern the true from the false.

Now, I'll give you an example here from my own personal experience. I am a biblical archeology freak. I love to study biblical archeology. I got *Biblical Archeological Review* from the time I left for college, and then for years. Beth knows the stacks of *Biblical Archeological Review* that I went through. And I got disgusted with it. Here they have the name, *Biblical Archeological Review*, but it might as well have been "Archeology

Pitfalls of Scholarship by Richard T. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Review." Though their archeologists went and dug up biblical places, they didn't believe the Bible at all! They weren't even trying to make sure that the Bible is right. They were trying to disprove the Bible, in many cases. It disgusts me!

Now, obviously, I don't get *Biblical Archeological Review* anymore. I get a publication called *Bible And Spade*. It's put out by a group just north of Washington, D.C. A man named G. Bryant Wood heads it. I don't know if any of you have heard of him. He's a fairly famous, very conservative, biblical archeologist. He dug at Jericho, and found proof—very solid, convincing proof—that the Israelites came, saw, and conquered (just as the Bible said, just at the time that the Bible says).

And do you know what the rest of the biblical archeological world did to him? They said, "Poof." That's basically what they said. They said, "You're a freak. You're an extremist. You're a fundamentalist, Mr. Wood." And they are still not accepting his very conclusive findings, because they don't want the Bible to be true. They are suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. Why? Because if they believe the Bible is essentially historical, they would have to believe that the moral and ethical things in the Bible are true; and they would be compelled, or constrained, to follow them. And so anything that even hits that the Bible is accurate must be put down.

I feel for this man, G. Bryant Wood, because he is a man of faith (I'll put it that way) in what he believes. He's trying to find things in the record of archeology that will enhance his, and others, faith in the Bible and what God has said; but he's running up hill. He just can't get over the antagonism in his field against God and His Word. And it's sad, because the man is brilliant.

As a matter of fact, I first became aware of Bryant Wood in the pages of *Biblical Archeology Review*; and you would be surprised at the letters to the editors that were in there after one of his articles would appear. Archeologists from all over the world were trying to knock him on the head, because of his theories. So I'm not as enthusiastic a "biblical archeology nut" any more. I've kind of narrowed it down to this one publication, but that's just an example of the way that the scholarly world works. They don't want God in their knowledge.

That is essentially what the Protestant minister was trying to tell me in his e-mails. "We don't want to trust God." Basically, he said, "You can't take the Bible at face value. It has to be interpreted through our advanced knowledge and understanding." He said to me, "Don't you know that the Bible is just a collection of Jewish writings? It's not the authoritative Word of God." So now I'm putting words in his mouth; but he basically said, "We are free to adapt it to our modern cultural and ethical sensibilities."

So, what good is it anymore? You might as well put it next to the Sears & Roebuck catalog, in your bathroom. That's just, basically, how it came across to me. The Bible must be "worthless" IF we can't trust it—IF we have to interpret it through all of the very confusing and contradictory arguments of the scholars. You could go crazy by trying to figure out what was true after reading their stuff all the time. If you didn't have God's Spirit and the simplicity of the Bible's basic knowledge, you could drive yourself just bananas. Basically, he told me that we fundamentalists (if you want to use that term) are stupid—for putting so much blind faith in the Bible.

Let's go to John 8. Jesus is speaking to those who believed in Him, in verse 30.

**John 8:31-32** ' Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Here are words from the Man Himself. Doesn't Jesus seem to think that His words are, basically, all we need for salvation? Does He say, *"Let's go talk to the lawyers down the street. They and the Pharisees seem to know quite a bit about this; and maybe we should get them to interpret the Old Testament for us"*? No. He says, "If you abide in My word, you'll be My disciples; and you'll be free." Free of the rot and all of the stuff that comes from empty scholarship, and the ideas of the people in this world.

And we'll be really free! We'll be free to live the abundant life, according to His Word. We'll be free to enter into the Kingdom of God. It's a gift of God, by His grace—but, as He says here, if we abide in it. That means, "continue in" it. Keep doing it. Then we'll be assured of salvation. That's pretty free, if you ask me. What does Paul say in Romans 1? (In verse 16 is the "run up" to what we read before.) He says:

**Romans 1:16-17** ' For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

What we need for our salvation is contained in the gospel, and it gives us the power. Those words that are there—they are spirit and they are truth. They give us the power, the resources, to do what is right and to move from a human faith to a godly faith—and the Kingdom of God, and eternal life.

I Corinthians 1:18-31 talks about how the people of this world look at the message that God preaches through His apostles and other servants as "foolishness." Paul says, "*We should be happy that they think of it as foolishness, because God (in the end) will convict those people by how dumb we are.*" In a way, that's what he says. God doesn't call the mighty, the wise, the wonderful, the rich, the beautiful—necessarily. What He calls is **us!** And by *us* He's going to confound those who are considered wise, and wonderful, and beautiful, and intelligent, etc. They are going to one day say, "*You mean those fundamentalists knew something we didn't?*" And the very last few verses of that section say something very interesting.

**I Corinthians 1:29-31** ' [He has done this...] That no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD."

That's a very interesting statement. Remember what he'd just said. He said, "*God called the foolish, the weak, the base.*" But what do we have in us? Christ. Right? Didn't He say that He'll come and abide in us, live in us; and we with Him? So what is He? It says right here: **He** is our wisdom. **He** is our righteousness. **He** is our sanctification. **He** is our redemption, and **in Him** we have eternal life and entrance into the Kingdom of God.

We don't need the "smarts" of this world, necessarily. We already have the most intelligent, wisest Being living **in us**. We have the mind of Christ. He is our wisdom. So what does He say? We have no reason to glory. "Let him who glories glory in the Lord." He's taken us so far beyond the scholarship of this world!

Now, that doesn't mean that the scholarship of this world isn't worth anything. I'm not saying that. I'm not condemning it. I can't, because there are truths there that they have found. But we have to remember that we have been given God's Spirit. And if we are diligent in studying His Word, diligent in prayer, diligent in coming to understand and to **do** the things that are in it, then we have a leg up on them.

We can judge these things. That's what it says at the end of that chapter. In I Corinthians 2, it says that he who is spiritual judges all things, but he is rightly judged by no one. Meaning, don't let these people out in the world judge you for what you are doing. If you are spiritual, you can discern right from wrong, and don't let them tell you any different—because you have Christ living in you, which gives you His mind and His wisdom. If you take advantage of it and use it, you can discern which scholars are telling you the truth and which are trying to pull the wool over your eyes.

It's an awesome responsibility—something that we have to get use to doing. Like Mr. Armstrong said, "*The very elect **cannot** be deceived.*" And, as I mentioned in my sermon about a month ago, the reason that I think they cannot be deceived is because they will not **allow** themselves to be deceived; because they **use** the resources that God has given them to *pursue* the truth and to *do* the truth. That's why they are His elect. They're in the program. They're doing what is right. And God will do everything that He can to make sure that they finish strong. But He wants to see, from us, a little bit of the effort—so that we won't be deceived.

You might want to jot down John 12:37-50. I was going close here; but I think instead that I will close in I Thessalonians 5:21, which is another memory scripture. In the *New King James* it says:

**I Thessalonians 5:21** ' Test all things; hold fast what is good.

The *King James* says, "Prove all things." That's our job. We have the words of eternal life. They've been given to us. We study them. We do them. And if we do these things, if we continue in this way, there's no stopping us—because God has promised that, if we do them, He will fulfill them.

Have a wonderful Sabbath everyone. Maybe next time I will kind of continue this, but talk about false teachers. We talked about those who are outside the church; and we need to talk more about how to keep from being deceived by those who are inside.