

6. What You Get is Not What You See (1Q 2015—Proverbs)

Biblical material: Proverbs 14; Dan. 7:25; Mark 12:30, 31; Prov. 15:3; Isa. 5:20; Proverbs 15; Matt. 20:26–28.

Quotes

- What we achieve inwardly will change outer reality. *Plutarch*
- Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one. *Albert Einstein*
- If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values—that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*
- Appearance is something absolute, but reality is not that way—everything is interdependent, not absolute. *Dalai Lama*
- Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced. *Soren Kierkegaard*
- Nothing ever becomes real 'til it is experienced. *John Keats*
- Reality leaves a lot to the imagination. *John Lennon*
- Reality is frequently inaccurate. *Douglas Adams*

Questions

What is real reality? How do we know if anything is real or true? How can we look behind the immediately visible to see what is fundamental? Why are we so often deceived? Why is it so important to look beyond mere appearance? What does this say about the devices used by Satan in his continuing conflict with God?

Bible summary

Prov. 14:6, 8 NIV sums up the perspective: “The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning... The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.” Much of what passes for truth in today’s world is an illusion. Even when we’re happy we’re sad: “Even in laughter the heart may ache, and rejoicing may end in grief.” Prov. 14:13 NIV. While the world thinks one way (the foolish) the wise will look beyond the immediate perspective to the reality that lies behind. For the one opposed to God even speaks against the Most High (Dan. 7:25) just as the serpent did in the beginning. The true principles are as Jesus summarized the commandments: love for God and love for your neighbor (Mark 12:30, 31). Denial will not help us, trying to say that good is bad, and bad is good: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.” Isa. 5:20 NIV. We are to operate from a completely different set of principles than those of the world, especially when it comes to power and leadership (Matt. 20:26–28).

Comment

An early computer term was WYSIWYG—what you see is what you get—and was significant because in those days you often didn’t get what you saw! But this study focuses on the idea that though you may see something, the results can be otherwise. It may appear that sin has its attractions, but the end results are ruin and death.

The other aspect is that when we see, we only see the immediately observable. We don't see what is behind; we don't see the spiritual dimension. We even try to switch good and evil and redefine reality. But this can never work. It would be like living in a world that was a photographic negative—an impossible experience.

Jesus came to confront us with absolute reality. The Jesus of today, as commonly understood, is far from the truth of the real Jesus. Having made Jesus in our own image, Jesus is now safe. Jesus is whatever we want him to be, and above all, "nice." A suitable addition to a comfortable lifestyle, today's Jesus that we endorse is perhaps more a figment of our imagination than anything like the person who lived and walked and talked and made a difference two millennia ago. For in our niceness and pleasantness, the true Jesus is allowed to say very little. He is transformed into icons and images, greeting cards and statuettes. The picture is what we want, not the disturbing reality of what he said and did, how he lived and died.

The truth is that he lived intensely for God, as God, and showed us who God was in the brief time he had opportunity. Intense? Yes certainly. But it could not have been any other way—for the forces of evil were marshaled against him, and he needed to do all he could in those brief years of public demonstration to show who God truly is.

The whole of the Sermon on the Mount is an attack on niceness and formal religion. It cares not for hide-bound tradition, or the pretentious piety that is so often the guise of religion. Don't make it obvious you are fasting, trying to win respect. Don't make your prayers obvious, encouraging people to think how devout you are. Don't make your offerings apparent to others, as if your gifts to God are the measure of your spirituality.

Don't follow the human value-system, rather follow the values of God. Reject intolerance, spiritual pretense, material concerns. Watch out for false prophets. Those who call out "Lord, Lord" do not all qualify for the kingdom. Even miracle-workers and great preachers will be rejected by God. A litany of rejection—that religion in human form is unreliable at best, and anti-God at worst. A radical approach to the Truth—for the One who is Truth Incarnate in Reality stands among us.

Ellen White Comments

Christ's mission was not understood by the people of His time. The manner of His coming was not in accordance with their expectations... the Jews had exalted the forms and ceremonies and had lost sight of their object. The traditions, maxims, and enactments of men hid from them the lessons which God intended to convey. These maxims and traditions became an obstacle to their understanding and practice of true religion. And when the Reality came, in the person of Christ, they did not recognize in Him the fulfillment of all their types, the substance of all their shadows. They rejected the antitype, and clung to their types and useless ceremonies. The Son of God had come, but they continued to ask for a sign. The message, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," they answered by demands for a miracle. Matt. 3:2. The gospel of Christ was a stumbling block to them because they demanded signs instead of a Saviour. They expected the Messiah to prove His claims by mighty deeds of conquest, to establish His empire on the ruins of earthly kingdoms... Not by force of arms, not by violent interpositions, was the kingdom of God to prevail, but by the implanting of a new principle in the hearts of men. {COL 34-5}

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