

A Biblical Death Bias

Written by Bill Perkins

I left Portland International Airport at 6 a.m. which meant I arrived at the airport at 5 a.m., which meant I climbed out of bed at 3:30 a.m. I don't know about you, but at that hour my mind moves at the speed of a slug. Anyway, the plane flew me to DFW, where I caught a connecting flight to St. Louis. The American Airlines jet landed safely, I grabbed my bags, rented a car and headed for my hotel. By the time I checked in it was 5 p.m. and I had just enough time to grab dinner before my 7 p.m. speaking engagement.

After I entered the restaurant a cheerful hostess seated me, handed me a menu and left. A moment later the food-server appeared—a twenty something girl with short brown hair, bright blue eyes and a cheery smile. “What would you like?” she asked.

“Could you tell me the best meat item on the menu?”

The waitress lifted her nose and smugly said, “I don't know. *I'm* a vegetarian.”

A Moral Superiority

Now don't get me wrong. I have nothing against vegetarians. Honestly. It's just that her tone communicated a moral superiority . . . a bias that favored plant-eaters over carnivores.

At that moment I decided to ask a question: “How can you eat plants with a clear conscience?”

“What do you mean?” she asked. I tilted my head, “Aren't you aware all plant life exists on a conscious level?”

“That's ridiculous” she said.

“No. It's true. If you don't believe me go to plantscream.com and you can hear a streaming audio of wheat people screaming as a combine cuts them down.”

“I don't think so,” she said, shaking her head from side-to-side.

Hoping to expose my error she turned to the young man at her side—I suspect a waiter in training—and asked, “Isn't that the craziest thing you've ever heard?”

“No. It's true,” he said. “I've been to the website. You should check it out.”

We laughed and she took my order for a hamburger without the bun.

We're All Biased

We're all biased. Sometimes our biases are as evident as the food we prefer. And sometimes they're based on a faulty understanding of Scripture.

In Matthew 16:21-23 we read: “From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

“Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Lord!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’ Jesus turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.’”

He Just Knew

I’m confident Peter did not hear Jesus say he would be raised to life. Why? Because when he heard the Lord say he “must be killed” his bias kicked in—he knew, he just knew, Jesus could not die. After all, Daniel 7:13-14 clearly states the Son of Man’s kingdom would be eternal.

Because of this the disciples believed Jesus, the Son of Man, was eternal and could not die. The rest of the Lord’s statement—the part about being raised to life—didn’t matter and so Peter blocked it from his consciousness. The disciple’s bias was so certain that he rebuked Jesus to his face.

Bound in a Bias of Death

After the Lord was crucified and placed in a tomb, the thought he would rise from the dead never crossed their minds. Because they were bound in a bias of death, they rejected any thought of resurrection. When Mary Magdalene reported she had seen Jesus alive, we read, “They did not believe it” (Mark 16:11 NIV). When Joanna and Mary, the mother of James, and the other women told the disciples they had seen the risen Jesus, we’re told, “But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense” (Luke 24:11 NIV).

The disciples didn’t believe the report of Cleopas and Mary when they said they had talked with the risen Christ on the way to Emmaus and over dinner (Mark 16:13). Of course, everyone knows about doubting Thomas. When the other ten disciples said they had seen Jesus at the same time, Thomas replied, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe” (John 20:25 NIV).

A biblical bias based on truth can protect us from error. A biblical bias based on a faulty interpretation can trap us in a lie and prevent us from hearing the truth.

The disciples lived with a pro-death-anti-resurrection bias. So do most of us. When something goes wrong don’t we tend to think negatively? Don’t we imagine how things will get worse? Some of us obsess in a way that generates fear, anxiety, depression and anger--plus a host of other toxic emotions.

Building a Resurrection Bias

In this series of blogs you’ll discover why we think this way and how, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we can develop a bias that always and in every situation expects God to bring life from the loss--resurrection from death. We will build a resurrection bias.