

The A.S.K. Newsletter

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Dear Associates and Friends,

March 2010

As we approach “**the latter times**” we need to recognize the danger of what the apostle Paul wrote:

“Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron ...”

• **1 Timothy 4:1–2**

This describes the subject of the first of two articles by Dr. Ernest L. Martin this month, “Conscience and Responsibility.” Paul himself avoided having his “**conscience seared with a hot iron,**” which meant the cauterizing, burning and deadening of his conscience. I wish we all could make the claim about our consciences as did the apostle Paul when he was brought before the Sanhedrin. He claimed:

“And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”

• **Acts 23:1**

Later brought before Felix, the Roman procurator of Judea, Paul defended his teaching. He had been charged with sedition and insurrections (Acts 24:5). Paul’s conscience regarding his teaching was clear:

“In this, I am exerting myself also, to have a conscience which is no stumbling block toward God and men, continually.”

• **Acts 24:16, Concordant Version**

Paul instructed the Corinthian *ekklesia* that they had freedom and they should not adulterate the Word of God, but they should always manifest the truth as a matter of conscience:

“... where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ... according as we were shown mercy, we are not despondent. But we spurn the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness, nor yet adulterating the word of God, but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in God’s sight.”

• **2 Corinthians 3:17–4:2, Concordant Version**

It is our responsibility to defend our freedom by manifesting truth. Truth should not be held back. It should not be hidden, but rather truth should be defended. Only then will our consciences be clear.

Hopefully, your conscience is not seared. The focus of Dr. Martin’s article is to encourage you to live according to your conscience, act responsibly regarding what you believe, and avoid the evil of hypocrisy. We should all be encouraged to live up to our responsibilities before God, our fellow believers, and even your unbelieving neighbors. God frequently warns against hypocrisy, indicating the importance of the teaching that came through Christ and His apostles.¹

Truth needs to be repeated, and error should not be tolerated. If you are willing to hear error time and again without comment, without protest, without challenge, then maybe your conscience is bothering you —

¹ Discussion of those who practice hypocrisy is found in the New Testament in Matthew 6:2, 5, 16, 7:5, 15:7, 22:18, 23:13, 15, 25, 27–29, 24:51; Mark 7:6, 12:15; Luke 6:42, 11:44, 12:1, 56, 13:15; Galatians 2:13; 1 Timothy 4:2; and 1 Peter 2:1.

or maybe it has been “seared.” People too often mildly accept teaching they know is wrong, and passively accept error being taught in their presence time after time. They “go along to get along,” risking hypocrisy in their lives, in their teaching, and in their associations with others. They are hypocrites by their silence.

Through my association with Dr. Martin and his work I know that he practiced what we all should do. He examined himself, his conscience, and his responsibility, and he lived from a position of conscience and responsibility. Throughout his professional life Dr. Martin was forced to start his career over at least three times because he refused to compromise with truth as he understood that truth. Some wanted him to be less controversial, water down his teachings, and compromise his historical and theological research. These times of starting over cost him dearly, both personally and professionally.

Rachel's Tomb

The second article this month, “The Tomb of Rachel,” discusses the location of the historical site of Rachel’s Tomb mentioned in Genesis and the site of the Tomb near Bethlehem mentioned in Matthew chapter 2. Did Matthew make a mistake? This subject suddenly is not as unimportant as you may think. The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to pick a traditional location for the fulfillment of prophecy rather than the real place, the historical place. Why did Matthew do that?

When explained, Matthew’s apparent contradiction of Genesis will give insight into how, as Dr. Martin used to say: “The Bible is true, even in its errors!” You will find this article interesting, even fascinating.

Thank You

God knows us, He understands us, and He wisely guides us through our lives so we learn what He wants us to learn. As King David writes:

“O YHWH, You have investigated me and are knowing me; You Yourself know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought from afar; My path and my pallet You have measured off, And for all my ways You have made provision.

For though there be no declaration on my tongue, Behold, O YHWH, You know it all. Back and front, You have besieged me, And You set Your palm upon me. Such knowledge is marvelous beyond me; It is impregnable; I cannot reach to it.

I shall acclaim You, for You are fearfully distinguished; Marvelous are Your works. You have known my soul very thoroughly; ... How precious are Your thoughts to me, O El, ... Search me out, O El, and know my heart; Test me, and know my disquieting thoughts. See if a grievous way is in me, And guide me in the way eonian.”

• Psalm 139:1–7, 14, 17, 23–24, Concordant Version

Think about how much time you have spent in your life thinking about your children. They probably never realized you did so, how often, or how much you worried about them. You and I are being observed, watched over, thought about, and studied individually by God the Father Himself. That is what David is saying in Psalm 139. Small details that seem insignificant to us are very important for our development of character for us to be like Christ. This does not apply just to “special” people like King David. Each of us is God’s child. He knows our conscience.

We at ASK continue to fulfill our responsibility to present the teachings of the Word of God with clarity and consistency, primarily through presentations of Dr. Martin’s studies and research. We thank you all for your various contributions. I know that each of you gives what he or she can as God leads you to do so during these troubling times. These are difficult times for us at ASK also, and so we are grateful for the grace you give to us over the months and years. May God bless you all for helping others through the work that we do at ASK.

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