



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Psalms 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; there is no one who does good."

His name was Martin Jenners. He died 99 years ago. Born in a log cabin in Indiana, he made his living by painting carriages. He was one of the best in the area. He, like most of his generation, would have passed on in obscurity, except for one thing. His grave is one of the most visited ones in the entire state. Fourteen years before Jenners died he had his tombstone erected at Lafayette's Spring Vale cemetery. This stone caused such a commotion that those owning lots nearby demanded that it be taken down. The cemetery board said there were no rules against what he had done.

On his tombstone, it reads, "My only objection to religion is that it is not true." Then there are two passages cited on the stone: 1 Cor 15:52 and Isa 26:14. This was Jenners proof that religion was not true. The Corinthian passage says that the dead shall rise. The Isaiah passage says, "they are dead, they will not live; they are shades, they will not arise..."

At the bottom of Jenners' gravestone it reads, "No preaching, no praying, no psalm singing permitted on this lot."

And, our verse today says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" For nearly 100 years, Jenners has made his declaration and stance with other fools who have denied the existence of God. Turning their backs on Jesus, they die in their sins without forgiveness or hope. What he thought was a contradiction is not. The context of the Isaiah passage is talking about rulers who will no longer rule. God would end their rule and they will not rule again. The eternal status of the soul is not under discussion. What was dead, in the Isaiah passage, was their ability to oppress God's people. Babylon was coming to an end and they would not rise up again. That's the idea. Corinthians is dealing with the individual soul. We will be resurrected.

Not grasping the background of the Bible, it is easy for people to construct what they believe are undeniable contradictions. Their conclusions, without any proof, is that the Bible was written and edited and put together by man. Which men? When? Why? They do not know. How does the Bible tell about things that were not common knowledge? How is there a single consistent thread running all through the Bible?

(OVER)

How is it accurate with sciences, history, geography and in areas that ancient writers would not have complete knowledge in? How is it that no other book compares to the Bible? How is it that there were witnesses to Jesus Christ? How is it that there is evidence of a world wide flood throughout the world?

Then, where did we come from? If there is no God, is matter eternal? Modern evolutionists would have us believe that all the right ingredients came together in a primeval pond. And energy, from an explosion, a bolt of lightning, with just the right amount of power caused these ingredients to be stirred and the first forms of life began. Don't ask where the ingredients came from. Don't ask how did they all come together at the right moment. Don't ask how and where did the energy force come from. Don't ask how did life come from non-life. Sprinkle in billions of years and here we are today. Getting up and going to work, raising families and understanding that shooting people isn't a good thing to do. Where did morality come from? Fruits and vegetables don't tell us to be nice.

Finding a couple of verses that seem opposite is a quick and easy way to dismiss our responsibilities and obligations toward God. But it doesn't answer the where's and the why's and the how's of life. If we are nothing more than a billion years removed from a rock, why is killing someone else wrong? Animals do it all the time. Why do we honor our dead by burying them in cemeteries? Road kill is left on the road.

People don't like the idea of God. They don't understand God. They think the problem of suffering is proof that there is no God. If there was a God, He'd stop all suffering. They don't understand God. Without God, what's the point? What a dull, lifeless life this is. We are on our own and there is no one to help us. And, this is as good as it gets, if there is no God. The tenants of economic socialism are built around the concept that there is no God.

Logic, science, Biblical proof, external natural evidences all point back to Jehovah. There is a God! We need to be thankful to Him. We need to know Him. We need to be obedient to Him. Poor Mr. Jenners could have found the answers to why those verses do not seem to fit. I wonder what questions we have. I wonder if we are allowing those questions to eat away at our faith or if we are seeking to find the answers. Doubting Thomas, as we call him, stayed around the apostles for a week until he saw Jesus for himself. He wasn't with critics and deniers. He was with the believers. Don't you expect he was asking them questions. Don't you think he was listening over and over. When Jesus appears, he knows. He fed his faith and not his doubts. He sought answers. He didn't allow his questions to conquer him.

James Jewell, reporting about the unique Jenners grave stone in 1985 said, "visitors to the site will notice only splotches of grass dot the plot. No grass has ever grown on the grave." How interesting.

I have visited this grave several times. On many occasions I have taken other Christians with me. And, yes, we did sing and pray while on his lot. I fondly remember singing, "There is a God." I know the Lord heard us. I expect Jenners now wishes he could have joined with us in that song.

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
