

# Misunderstanding the Truth

written by Tim Jennings, M.D. | June 19, 2009



Do you ever get misunderstood? I am rarely misunderstood when I am in session with my patients, or in personal conversations with friends or family members. But I have noticed one situation in which I am too frequently misunderstood and often misquoted.

I teach a Bible Study class at my church and whenever I challenge a traditional view all too often someone misunderstands what I said. A few months ago two religion professors were in my class. During class I challenged the idea that God has to inflict eternal death on the unrepentant in the end. I affirmed the Bible position that says, “sin when it is full grown brings forth death” James 1:15. I went on to say what confuses many is that God, in many places in the Bible, used His power to put people to rest in the graves (flood, Sodom, first born of Egypt etc). But I pointed out that all of those people are going to be resurrected either to eternal life or, at some future time, to reap the full consequence for unremedied sin.

But after class I received an email from one of the professors expressing frustration that I would teach that God did not destroy the world with a flood or kill people in Old Testament times. Of course I never said this, but that is how it was heard.

Recently, I was invited to a church to do a Healing the Mind Seminar. After all was scheduled, travel

had been arranged and with just a few weeks before the event the pastor emailed me to cancel because he had read some troubling reports about my beliefs on an anonymous website. As I explored what had been said about me I was able to clarify that every position on the website was false, a distortion arising out of the misunderstanding in the mind of the person who wrote the website.

I tracked down the author of the website and called him. He had never spoken to me personally nor taken the time to clarify what he thought I believed. Needless to say he had made numerous assumptions about what I said that I never intended.

Recently, I was holding a Bible study with a group of young people and a young lady had many questions. I did my best to answer her questions. After the study however there were many concerns yet unanswered. This young lady took a very Biblical approach, she contacted me directly to clarify her concerns, and sure enough multiple misunderstandings had occurred. When I said that Jesus didn't have to die to somehow change His Father from an angry wrathful God into a loving and forgiving God (i.e. appease the Father's wrath), she thought I said Jesus didn't have to die. Of course, I never said any such thing (I called and checked with several other persons who attended the study and they agreed I had not said Jesus did not have to die). I had even explicitly said that mankind could not be saved without the death of Jesus, yet it somehow wasn't heard.

These examples expose one of the weaknesses of our human minds. Once we have settled on a belief, drawn a conclusion, formed an opinion the mind begins filtering information based on the beliefs we hold. Thus new truth, insights or ideas that contradict current beliefs are often misunderstood or misheard. There is an old saying, "We don't believe what we see. We see what we believe." And there is much truth in this saying. Our minds have the ability to deceive ourselves (Jer 17:9). Therefore, we must learn to develop minds which remain open to new truth, new ideas, new perspectives, minds that love the truth and will follow it wherever it leads. We must resist the temptation to "arrive at the truth" for the moment we arrive at the truth the mind closes and is no longer open to grow.

The Bible tells us in the end the wicked are lost because "they did not love the truth and thus be saved" (2Thes 2:10). The lost are those people who close their minds to new truth, new ideas and new insights clinging instead to old truths, traditions and understandings. This process happened to the Jews in Christ day who would not accept the unfolding truth that Jesus brought, but instead clung to their traditional views. This process is stated beautifully by one Christian writer:

Of the people in his day Christ said: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." The Jews willfully closed their eyes and their ears, and barred their hearts with prejudice, lest they should see a better way, and be aroused from their dream of security. The people of the present generation are pursuing a similar course. New truths are constantly unfolding; new and clearer light is shining upon the pathway of God's people. But the great mass of mankind are satisfied with their present condition, and are unwilling to exchange error for truth. But we are to be sanctified through obedience to the truth. For want of this Bible sanctification, the soul of many a professed Christian has become a desecrated shrine, the haunt of hollow formalism, of selfishness and hypocrisy, pride and passion. {ST, January 28, 1886 par. 4}

Be a lover of truth! Keep your mind open to new light, new truth, new insights shining forth from the throne of God. The Sun of Righteousness is rising with healing in His beams of truth! The Latter Rain of

the Holy Spirit is being poured out to enlighten and ennoble a generation to meet God. Open your mind to God's Spirit and be willing to follow the truth wherever it leads!