

Intro:

It happens that there was a birthday this last week.

Of course, you know that the most significant birthday this last week was my daughter, Susan's!

But some lesser mortals were also born on the same day of the year.

- Abraham Lincoln for one – you will agree that Susan is more significant, right?
- And Charles Darwin for the other. Surely he is less significant, especially in the eternal scheme of things.

Nevertheless, these other names are much better known in the world.

It happens that this year would be the 200th anniversary of Darwin's birth, and indeed it is also the 150th anniversary of his book, *Origin of the Species*.

- Certain web-sites have been making a 'to-do' about it... *the-scientist.com* is one I check out a lot (they are total unbelievers, but sometimes I find illustration material there)
- Apparently in some churches, the pastors were planning to celebrate Darwin today! (Who is *their* god?)

Well, we won't be celebrating Darwin, let me assure you!

Instead, we are going to look at a passage that speaks specifically about creation and mankind's rejection of Biblical truth. I have entitled the message:

Willful Ignorance

when men deliberately reject God's truth

This is an important topic, one which has broad implications for our spiritual lives and one which I intend to connect with our mini-series on Galatians and cultivating the fruit of the Spirit.

Our passage is 2 Pt 3.1-9, our text verse 5

A note on translations

Before we get into the message, I would like to make a quick comment on the translation of verse 5. As you know, we recommend several conservative translations of the Bible. This verse happens to be one where my favorite translation really blows it, however.

<p>^{NAU} 2Pe 3:5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God <i>the</i> heavens existed long ago and <i>the</i> earth was formed out of water and by water,</p>
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^{ESV} **2Pe 3:5** For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,

^{NKJ} **2Pe 3:5** For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water,

^{NET} **2Pe 3:5** For they deliberately suppress this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water.

^{NIV} **2Pe 3:5** But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water.

I just want to note that for you and make a few key points:

- It is the original that is inspired, not the translation.
- Translators, even good ones, can make errors (or fail to communicate the meaning adequately).
- It is helpful to consult more than one translation in Bible study – when you spot a significant difference like this, you need to check it out.
- In this verse, it appears the NAS is off on it's emphasis. You might want to put "see KJV" beside this verse if you have one.
- Last, regardless, *each* of the versions we recommend: KJV, NAS, ESV, NKJ, are all faithful, dependable, worthy translations.

Back to *Willful Ignorance*:

Read 2 Pt 3.5 again

Proposition: The disregard of Biblical truth is a spiritual decision with far-reaching spiritual consequences.

I. The fact of willful disregard for Biblical truth

A. What we mean by willful disregard (or "willingly ignorant")

1. Literal rendering: 'this is hidden from them [who are] willing [it]'
2. The verb means *to be hidden from*
3. The 'them' are the scoffers from the previous verses
4. The key is the participle: "willing" – these things are hidden from them of their own will

Deliberate, purposeful, determined rejection — an inner choice to reject truth, and here, a specific truth... but more on that in a moment...

B. How God has revealed his truth

1. By the creation (Rm 1.20, Ps 19.1ff.)
2. By His Word
 - a. Either directly (Gen 2.16-17)
 - b. Or through mediators (Heb 1.1)
3. By His Son (Heb 1.2)

C. Our text speaks of a specific disregard

1. The direct act of creation by the word of God
2. The divine act of ‘dividing the waters’, making dry land and seas

D. Men tend to move from specific disregard to general disregard

1. Belief or unbelief is usually not static (stationary) — it is going somewhere
2. The process of increasing unbelief usually takes time — sometimes intergenerational

Charles Darwin, the hero of the unbelieving world, was himself a professing Christian of sorts. He knew that his theory contradicted creation by God as taught in the Bible:

“In considering the Origin of Species, it is quite conceivable that a naturalist, reflecting on the mutual affinities of organic beings, on their embryological relations, their geographical distribution, geological succession, and other such facts, might come to the conclusion that each species had not been independently created, but had descended, like varieties, from other species.”¹

¹ Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species...* (London: John Murray, 1859), p. 3, quoted by Christine Dao, “Charles Darwin: The Man Behind the Monkey”, *Acts & Facts Magazine*, Feb 2009, p. 12.

“Though Darwin had not completely renounced his faith, he expelled creation science as a plausible explanation.”²

- Darwin’s father and grandfather were Unitarians and ‘freethinkers’, *i.e.*, skeptics
- Darwin was nevertheless baptized into the Church of England
- Darwin considered the Bible a *moral* authority
- Darwin questioned the Bible’s *history* after his famous voyage on the *Beagle*
- Darwin questioned the benevolence (goodness) of God in the face of pain and suffering
- Darwin stopped attending church when his daughter Annie died in 1851
- Some claim a deathbed return to faith, but his children refuted these claims

Darwin’s spiritual life began with some regard for God, God’s word, and Christianity, but he denied the Creator God of the Bible and progressively abandoned more and more of any vestige of Christian faith.

This story is repeated in countless lives: they disregard God on some point and come to disregard God on all points.

II. The consequence of willful disregard of Biblical truth

A. God will not hear (Zech 7.9-14)

1. Israel given a moral command (9-10)
2. Israel would not hear (11-12)
3. God would not hear (13-14)

B. God will not speak (Mt 13.10-15)

1. Why parables? (10)
2. Some are given to hear, to others it is not given [*i.e.*, understanding hidden from some] (11-12)

² Dao, p. 12.

3. Therefore God speaks, but in such a way that they cannot hear — the same effect of God not speaking at all (13-15)

Do you realize that you can put yourself in such a position that God will not hear your prayers?

Do you realize that you can put yourself in such a position that God will hide his speech from you?

III. The cause of willful disregard for any Biblical truth

A. As explained by Job and Paul

1. Job's observations concerning the wealthy wicked (Job 21.7-15)
 - a. The wicked prosper very well without God (7-13)
 - b. The wicked dismiss God (14-15)
 - 1) We don't desire your ways (14)
 - 2) You can't give us anything we don't already have (15)

People who can be satisfied with what the world has to offer have no need of God.

- Note: you don't have to be wealthy in order to have this mindset.
- The poor can be people who are dissatisfied with their lot but sure that this world can satisfy them.

2. Paul and the final act in the degradation of the pagan mind (Rm 1.28ff.)
 - a. They did not like to retain God in their mind (28)
 - b. So God gave them over to a mind they did want: a reprobate mind delighting in all kinds of indulgence (29ff.)

B. The connection between the lusts of the flesh and disregard of truth (2 Pt 3)

1. Notice how the scoffer's walk – after their own lusts (3.3)
2. Notice what godly persons should be in contrast to the scoffers (3.11-12)
 - a. Holy conduct

- b. Godliness
 - c. Looking for the return of the Lord
3. Remember our theme in Galatians 5: you cultivate the fruit of the Spirit by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts
- a. The flesh desires its own satisfaction
 - b. Denial of God's truth at some point gives license to fleshly indulgence

I ran across a Gallup poll done recently on whether people believe in evolution or not.

- Headline: "On Darwin's Birthday, Only 4 in 10 Believe in Evolution" (probably USA stats, likely different here)
- Subhead: "Belief drops to 24% among frequent church attenders" [*i.e.*, weekly attenders]

The article seems to trumpet that Darwin is having a tough sell, even in the climate we are in.

Well, I am not sure that is the right interpretation, although it is clear that religion is a factor in one's attitude towards Darwin.

But I have a different question:

- Why do you think 24% of *weekly* church-goers believe in evolution?
- Answer: to excuse their lusts in some way.
- And their unbelief will not stop only at this point, regardless of how often they attend church.

Conclusion:

Proposition: The disregard of Biblical truth is a spiritual decision with far-reaching spiritual consequences.

I would guess that almost everyone here would agree with my preaching on creation vs. evolution.

But let me ask you this: is there some other area of Biblical truth that you deny?

Why would you do that? to indulge lust in some way

Remember that you can get to a point where God will not hear, nor will he speak.

Proposition: The disregard of Biblical truth is a spiritual decision with far-reaching spiritual consequences.