

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: THE PERIL OF FALSE PREMISES

Scripture: Matthew 7:34-37

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings with his disciples, the people were astonished at his doctrine; For he taught them as one having authority from God, and not as having authority from the Scribes.

The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal,
the Lord knoweth them that are his.

When I was in the fifth grade, there hung on the wall of my school room a perpetual calendar with a separate page for each day of the year, each page bearing a motto. I have forgotten three hundred sixty-four of those mottoes, but one I remember went like this: "It's better not to know so much than to know so many things that ain't so."

Let your imagination and memory run back in history a little and you will be amazed to recall so many things that were once believed and even positively known by all the best, most informed, best educated people, which weren't so. All the best people in Jerusalem knew that nothing good could come out of Nazareth; but Jesus did. All the best people knew that the world was flat, and that if you sailed too far out into the ocean you would drop over the edge into space; but Columbus didn't believe it. All the best people, the scientists, and even the church had what they thought was positive knowledge that the earth was the center of the universe, but Copernicus proved differently. In the days of Harvey, all the best medical men knew that the body was filled with various "humors" which oozed here and there through the tissues; and they laughed at Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood; but Harvey was right and the best people were wrong. Pasteur, who is the father of our present

concept of disease germs; Lister, the father of antiseptics; and Jenner, who proposed vaccination as a preventive of smallpox, all had to meet this kind of stubborn but erroneous opinion. George Washington was killed by an ignorant but well meaning doctor who held the theory that pneumonia was caused by bad blood, and that therefore the cure for pneumonia was bleeding to get rid of the bad blood.

Many imposing scientific, philosophic, and religious edifices are built upon false and unsound premises -- upon erroneous assumptions -- upon things that "ain't so." The man who built his house upon the sand built an imposing structure too. But when the testing winds and floods of cold hard fact hit a house built on something that isn't so, the whole imposing structure collapses like a house of cards.

One false premise which has been responsible for much of the religious doubt and skepticism of our day is the assumption that nothing is real except what can be seen, weighed, measured, discerned through the physical senses. In high school I was taught, for example, that the universe was completely material; that only that which is tangible is real, and that all energy comes from and is a product or result of matter. My teacher didn't go so far as to propose the thought

that inevitably followed this basic assumption -- that if there was a God he was a product of matter too, and therefore not much if any better than ourselves, because he too would be abjectly subject to the material laws which produced him.

It is interesting and satisfying to note that there has been a complete reversal of that philosophy in the last thirty years, as we have delved into the structure and nature of the atom -- the building block from which all elements are created. The atom, today's scientists now admit, is not composed of matter at all. It consists simply of certain groupings of positive and negative charges of electricity, around a neutral core, with the protons, neutrons, and electrons held together by the most powerful force known to science. The atom consists of pure force, energy, or electricity -- or as some men call it, mind, thought, or spirit. It has no substance. Energy is not derived from matter, but matter is derived from pure energy. In spite of the scoffings of all the best people who knew a lot of things that weren't so, the Bible was right when it said that the universe was derived from God, that in him we live and move and have our being, and that the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Many an imposing structure of philosophy and ethics and religion has been reared in time past on the false premise of this materialistic origin of the universe. If that theory was right, the Bible story of the creation of the earth and of man were only myths. If man is all matter, there is no spirit; there is no immortality. If man is all matter and no spirit, there was no fall, and the sin we find in ourselves is merely the remnant of the brute beasts from which we have evolved. If man is all matter, and is still engaged in a process of evolution by which he shall some day -- given enough time -- be perfected, then man needs no Savior, no redemption from his fall; and the New Testament, as well as the Old Testament, can be relegated to

the realm of the mythical and the false. Much of the humanism of the past century was based on just such a premise. It held that Jesus was a great man, a superb teacher, having a fairly workable body of ethics and morals, but that he was not Deity; he was not a Redeemer; he had no more power than any other man.

Much of what passes for modern Christianity has become infected with this sort of philosophy, built on a false premise. The Deity of Jesus is denied; his atonement is ignored; his resurrection is scorned as a pious fabrication; the continuance of his life and power and purpose in the world today are categorically denied. Closely related to this same theory is the belief held by many of the best and most wise and well informed people today that God finished writing scriptures about 97 A.D. when John finished his book of Revelation. In spite of the fact that there is not a verse in all the Bible which says that GOD is through writing scripture, religious leaders for centuries have built the whole structure of their religious philosophy on the false premise that God would never reveal any more scripture, that his power to call apostles and prophets, his power to give gifts of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healings, miracles, prophecy, tongues, interpretations of tongues, and discernment of spirits, had suddenly failed to operate in the first century after Christ. When men build their lives on false premise, and cease to expect the true premise to work, it does fail to work for them, just as no one who was sure the world was flat ever succeeded in sailing around the world.

What do you believe? Are your premises sound? The fact that all the best people believe them along with you is no proof that they are right; it is apt to be proof that they are wrong. "It's better not to know so much than to know so many things that ain't so," for it is only the things which are so that will supply a sure foundation for the structure of your life when the winds blow and the floods descend.