



# THE BEREIA PAGE

“Examining . . . to see if these things are so” ~ Acts 17.11

## “Keen but Clueless”

“What Paul wrote about unbelieving Jews in his day could be said, I fear, about some believing Christians in ours: ‘I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened.’\* Many have zeal without knowledge, enthusiasm without enlightenment. In more modern jargon, they are keen but clueless.” ~ John R. W. Stott, *Your Mind Matters*, IVP Classics ed. (IVP Books, 1972, 2006), 13 [\*Romans 10:2 RSV]

## Writing Evangelists

“In addition to speaking to people about Christ, whether in public, in small house groups, or as individuals, one further method was open to early carriers of the gospel. Those with the talent could write. And they did. In fact, they invented an entirely new literary form, the Gospel, to carry their evangelistic message.” ~ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Eerdmans, 2003), 346

## Ancient Apologists

“The argument from prophecy and the argument from miracle were regarded by first-century Christians, as by their successors in the second and many following centuries, as the strongest evidences for the truths of the gospel” ~ F. F. Bruce, *The Defense of the Gospel in the New Testament*, rev. ed. (Eerdmans, 1977), 16

## To Know the Things of God Teaching Disciples: Where They Learned It

David Anguish

In [part 1](#), we saw that justification for going “back to the Bible” is rooted in the New Testament’s emphasis on teaching the word. In particular, we noted the 207 appearances of the verb διδάσκω (*didaskō*) and its cognates, along with some of the synonymous expressions found in the books where those words are not used. We turn now to what prompted the disciples’ commitment to the teaching of the Scriptures.

In simplest terms, as in all things, they learned it from Jesus. *Didaskō* and its cognates appear 121 times in the gospels and 21 times in Acts, where the church continues Jesus’ work. He was often called “Teacher” and identified himself as such, as we see in John 13.13: “You call me Teacher (διδάσκαλος, *didaskalos*) and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.”

In stressing the importance of teaching the word, Jesus was carrying on the emphasis we see throughout the old covenant. We get a sense of it when we notice that the phrase, “word of the Lord” appears 245 times in the Old Testament in the ESV, 153 of which are in the prophets.

A notable example is Hosea 4.1-14, where the prophet announces God’s displeasure with Israel for disobeying the covenant commands. The text begins with the announcement that God was bringing “a covenant lawsuit” (NET) against Israel because of their disloyalty (v. 1).<sup>1</sup> They were charged with violating the Ten Commandments, five of which are named in verses 1-2. Because they had not kept the commandments, things were not well in the land and they were being destroyed (vv. 3, 5-8, 10-14; cf. Deut 6.2-3; 28.15-68).

We should note that, while holding the people accountable for their disobedience, Hosea stressed that they were, in effect, victims of spiritual malpractice. He singled out their teachers (“priest” and “prophet,” vv. 4-5) in his statement about the

## All Will Worship

“The point [in Rom 1.18-32] is that human creatures need their gods. As creatures they will always be dependent on someone or something for their fulfillment as creatures. If not God, then something altogether baser. Without God they become subservient to their own desires. It is their relation to God (bearing his image) which makes them ‘like God.’ Without that they have only substitutes and copies.” ~ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Eerdmans, 1998), 92

## Values Reversed

“What sort of people does God intend men to be? To this question Christ gave an explicit answer which, if considered seriously, is a real shock to the mind. He gave a complete reversal of conventional values and ambitions, though many people miss this undoubted fact because of the poetic form and archaic language of what are now called the ‘Beatitudes.’” ~ J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (Macmillan, 1961), 92

## Recently Found

Recently, while performing a library purge, I found some slips of paper in one book on which my wife, who often borrowed my books, had written some quotations, including this one:

*“The teacher said to the students, ‘Come to the edge.’ They replied, ‘We might fall.’ The teacher again said, ‘Come to the edge.’ And they responded, ‘It’s too high.’ ‘Come to the edge,’ the teacher demanded. And they came, and the teacher pushed them and they flew.”*

An internet search reveals two versions of the above, a discrepancy explained as a composition written by [Christopher Logue](#) in tribute to [Guillaume Apollinaire](#) (1880-1918).

people’s “lack of [the] knowledge” that would have forestalled their destruction. Because the teachers had “rejected knowledge,” the people had “forgotten the law of your God” (v. 6; cf. Deut 31.9-13, 19-21; Ezek 3.16-21; also Jas 3.1).

In addition to “the word of the LORD,” other texts use different phrasing to stress the importance of God’s word for Israel’s well-being. A notable example is Deuteronomy 6.1-13, probably best known for the *Shema* (שמע) in verses 4-5. The text begins by saying that God told Moses to teach “the commandment”<sup>2</sup> to the people. In response, they were to show they revered the Lord by “keeping all his statutes and his commandments” (v. 2) and intentionally teaching them to their children in ways that showed God’s word was at the heart of who they were and what they did (vv. 6-9). Compliance with the teaching was vital for honoring God and living righteously (vv. 10-13). Keeping the commands would also ensure “that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey” (v. 3).

Continuing the Old Testament’s emphasis, the New Testament also includes multiple passages where teaching is highlighted as essential for the mission and growth of God’s people. The standard for church practice is established in Acts 2.42 where, following the addition of the 3,000 to the body of the saved (vv. 41, 47), the believers “were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (NASB). The NASB’s translation, “continually devoting,” brings out the force of the two verbs that are used together in this verse: the imperfect form of εἰμι (*eimi*), “to be,” and the present participle form of προσκαρτερέω (*proskartereō*), a word that referred to persistence in something, in the sense of continuing or persevering.

In part 3, we plan to consider some texts that show the rationale for and application of this emphasis in the church.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the covenant lawsuit (רִיב, *riyb*) as a feature of Near Eastern treaty customs, see J. Carl Laney, “The Role of the Prophets in God’s Case Against Israel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. 138, No. 552 (October-December, 1981): 313-325.

<sup>2</sup> As correctly translated in the ESV, et. al., “commandment” is singular in Deuteronomy 6.1, as explained in this note in the NET: “The word מִצְוָה (*mitsvah*) again is in the singular, serving as a comprehensive term for the whole stipulation section of the book.” See also Deuteronomy 5.31.

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