

HAS GOD REALLY SAID?

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"Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field that the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen.3:1).

The serpent's question could be more accurately put, "Did God really say you must not eat from any tree of the garden?" You notice a bit of a sneer in his question. "Well, now did God really say this? Did He really speak?" This is one of the great questions of today. "Has God really spoken?"

We see His power, majesty, and tremendous skill throughout nature, and unless a person has been brain washed by clever philosophical arguments, he is apt to be convinced that there is a great God. But do we know anything about God's character and His purpose? What is life all about? To know this we must have a revelation from God. He must speak. So this question touches on a very vital problem: Has God really spoken?

But the question goes even beyond this. Exactly what has He said? Can we trust what He said? Is this actually God's Word? Or is it purely a mythical book one cannot take seriously? In secular educational institutions, I believe that more people have lost their faith through ridicule than through any kind of intellectual argument. People do not like to be considered as thinking something regarded as absurd to most people. So this is a vital question for us. Are we in this world like a person lost in a dark forest not knowing what direction to go? Using your human wisdom you try to figure it out, and eventually despair of any meaning to life. Just

have a good time while you are here and that's all there is to life if God has not really spoken.

And if He has spoken, what has He said? Right here it is very easy to mislead people by pretending the Bible says something it does not say. Like, "So you believe in a flat world? Do you really believe the earth is the center of the universe? How can you really believe such fool ideas?" So if God has spoken we must go to His Word and be sure what it says before we agree with those who present ideas they claim the Bible teaches but does not. A great many people get their idea of what the Bible says from what they have read in magazines, or heard on TV rather than from going directly to the Scripture.

I recall picking up a book written by a Methodist minister titled, How to Become a Bishop Without Becoming Religious. He had many suggestions on how to make a lot of money and get ahead in the ministry. One suggestion was: Every now and then in your sermon say 'the Bible says.' Then you can go on and say anything you want and people will nod their heads in agreement and think it is great. How very sad that he stated a measure of truth because many who think they believe the Bible really do not know much about what it says.

God had given Adam and Eve a wonderful garden full of all manner of wonderful things for their enjoyment. But they were forbidden to eat from one tree. They were to give evidence that they would do what God said without knowing the reasons involved. It was that simple. Just the willingness to do what God said even though they did not fully understand why. God wants us to be more

interested in doing His will than in enjoying any particular good thing in the world.

God wants us to enjoy the good things to this world, but He wants us to realize that they are temporary and not to make them our ultimate objectives. He does not expect us to try to make a perfect world because we cannot do it. Everyone who has tried to, if he lives long enough, has been terribly disappointed in seeing the results of his efforts. He wants us to do good and stand for what is right, but He wants our ultimate objective to be to do His will which is the preparation of human beings to live with Him forever. This is why He has left us here. What matters most is each individual's soul which will live forever. All these material things will disappear.

When the serpent said, "Did God really say you must not to eat from any tree of the garden?", poor Eve was so concerned for the goodness of God that she took God's command and carried it to an extreme. She was trying to defend God against the implication that He was mean. She replied, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." God had not said, "Neither shall ye touch it." It is easy for us in defending what we stand for to get ourselves in a position that is not what we really should stand for. There are good things in the world that we had better not touch because they have been so polluted by evil. But there are many other areas in life, not inherently evil, that God has made

available to us and He has never said we must not touch them. In Eve's defense of God's goodness, she neglected to be sure she was defending what God had really said.

There are those today who desire to defend the Scripture's great truths, but think science has proven we cannot take every word of Scripture as true so therefore we must pick and choose so we can find herein what is spiritual that is true. They believe the Bible is infallible, but not inerrant. But when you take that position, very soon you proceed to the point where you do not believe it is infallible in anything!

I was talking to a woman who had been brought up in a church whose people she loved, but now they had a new minister whom the people thought was grand. In a Sunday School meeting he said, "Don't have the children sing, *Jesus Loves Me This I Know For the Bible Tells Me So* because what the Bible says doesn't prove anything; you must not build on that." This woman left that church, but I fear many others were carried along by that attitude toward the Scriptures.

Some Christians are saying, "The Bible is true in what it says about spiritual things, but we cannot trust it in history or science." Whereas we do not want to treat these people as enemies if they are truly saved, nevertheless God wants us to recognize that they are headed in a direction that eventually leads to abandonment of the Scripture and of Christianity and will eventually lead to despair and pure materialism.

This attitude has come in gradually until it has taken over institutions that were founded to completely serve the Lord but now have abandoned that stand. One such institution that was founded by a fine evangelist to stand for the Word of God, took the position that it was necessary for it to win the approval of unbelieving scholars as well as Christian scholars. Certainly our scholarship should be good enough to win the recognition, if not the approval, of those who deny the Word of God. But this institution made so great its objective to win the approval of unbelieving scholars that before long it began hedging and hedging and hedging until eventually it changed its doctrinal statement so as to do away with any claim to accept everything in the Word of God as true. Then it sought to convince evangelical institutions that they were taking the wrong stand in saying the Bible is inerrant because you cannot depend on the Bible in historical and scientific things, but only when it talks about religious matters can it be trusted!

Who is going to decide? What is the authority? Is God the authority? Do we decide by comparing Scripture, seeing what it teaches, and studying the exact meaning of its words? Or do we decide the truth by using our human intelligence to determine what is important and what is spiritual and taking the things that fit with it and abandoning the others?

Not only is it necessary for us to understand that God has spoken, but it is very important for us to examine just what He has said and not add to it and go beyond what Scripture says. ■