



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## How to See Eye to Eye Religiously

by Mark White

Why do some people not see religious things the way we see them? Why is there so much difference between what we teach and what the denominations profess? Do we not all have the same Bible? Are we not all trying to serve the same God? Do we not all believe in the same Savior? These are perplexing questions, and they are not easily answered to everyone's satisfaction.

Basically, our understanding of the Scriptures differs from the majority of the religious world because we operate on a different principle of interpretation. To most religious people "truth" is relative, adjusting freely to different times and circumstances. For us, however, truth is truth. It is unalterable, unchangeable, and everlasting. But did "we" just arbitrarily decide this would be our regard for truth? Not at all. God's own word boldly claims "thy word is truth" (John 17:17) and "the word of the Lord is right; and all His works are done in truth" (Psalm 33:4). While there are scoffers at the idea of absolute truth, we accept Bible teaching that such does exist, and we are determined to know it. Pilate's piercing question, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) was prompted by these words from Jesus: "I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

This then, is the basis upon which we may come to see religious matters alike. There must be a commitment to the same standard of truth. No one would ever attempt to use differing standards of measurement if building a house, marking off a football field, or sewing a garment. This would guarantee error and disaster. Twelve inches must equal one foot on all our rulers if we desire uniformity. There must be a healthy regard and respect for the Bible on the part of every religious person in order for understanding to occur. Without this common devotion to God's word, all efforts to see things the same will fail. In order to come to agreement on matters essential to salvation, we must begin where we agree. From this point we must study the Scriptures, resolving differences as we go along. Major problems of difference are solved in small steps, and then we can be united in Christ. But we will never see things the same if we cannot agree on the existence, necessity, and location of the truth.

No Bible discussion is profitable unless every participant is a truth seeker. If everyone concerned really wants the truth, then coming to an agreement and an understanding of truth will be achievable. Believe it or not, it is possible to discuss religious differences without becoming rude or creating hurt feelings. People who love the truth are not concerned with who is right, but with what is right. Every truth seeker is willing to surrender any position if it is false. There is no other honorable course for an honest man. An honest man will seek the truth, and when he finds it he will believe it. "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23).

## Don't Take it Personal

Craig Thomas

Psalm 54 echoes a familiar refrain as David is being hunted down by the evil king Saul. A particular section jumps out at me (vv. 4, 5): "4 Behold, God is my helper; The LORD is with those who uphold my life. 5 He will repay my enemies for their evil. Cut them off in Your truth."

The world in general hates the truth of God's Word. People hate God's Word because it exposes them for what they are: evil. Jesus put it this way: "19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved

darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” (Jn. 3:19-21)

It should come as no great surprise to those loving God and His Word that they too will be hated by the world. Again, Jesus said (Matt. 10:24-25): “24 ‘A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. 25 It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!’”

It is not pleasant when people reject you for merely trying to help them understand and obey God’s word, but it is important not to take it personally. Again, Jesus said (Jn. 15:18): “18 ‘If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you.’”

People who reject God and His Word often come to the wrong conclusion. They believe God isn’t there, doesn’t care, or He is so weak and pathetic He can do nothing about their obstinate rejection of Him and His Word. Any such conclusions are dead wrong! In the Apocalypse the apostle John informs us that one Great Day God will have the last word. The Word of God is described as “a sharp sword” that emanates from the LORD’s mouth and with it.

He will ultimately “strike the nations” and “rule them with a rod of iron” as “He Himself [Christ] treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:15). In another place it is said that the “Lord will consume [His enemies] with the breath of His mouth and destroy [His enemies] with the rightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). This is an entirely different picture of Jesus than most realize is true. In the end, He will punish obstinate rejection of His Word. It will not stand! In the end, error and disobedience will be crushed! God and His Word will prevail! God wins! On whose side do you want to be on that Day?!

What attitude should the righteous have toward those rejecting God’s Word? Hate? No! Glee at the prospect of their final destruction? No! We need to have empathy because we were once in their shoes (Rom. 3:23). As Paul contemplated judgment he wrote, “10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor 5:10-11a). Let us always remember the value of every man’s soul (Matt. 16:26) and never grow weary of sharing the message of salvation to “persuade” others. There may not be many, but there are still some with “noble and good” hearts that truly hunger for the words of life (Lk. 8:15). Let us not rest until we take the gospel message to all of them.