

“The Bread of Life”

Genesis 18:20-33

If you listen to religious theories put forth during the 1800's which were built on the theories of the so-called “Age of Enlightenment” from the 1700's – with their influence stretching into the 1900's and still today, you will find that the so-called “scholars” both inside and outside the academic world were just making stuff up. Guys like Gerald Massey and Charles Lyell were rewriting history or inventing facts. And they were not exactly friends of the church. And they were certainly not alone in doing this.

These are the type of men I think of when I hear Paul, in our Epistle reading, warning us when he says, “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit.” Men like Gerald Massey and Charles Lyell are still quoted today. In fact, the theories of Charles Lyell can be found in every science textbook. What you and your children have been taught concerning rock layers from the Jurassic Period or Mesozoic Period being millions of years old, stacked in a certain way, having been built up over long periods of time is not actually what you find in nature.

There is only one place on earth where all of the layers of what is known as the “Geologic column” are one on top of the other – and that one place is science textbooks – and now the internet. It doesn't exist in nature. Yet, this theory made Charles Lyell renowned in the science community in the 1800's. Charles Darwin was one of his best friends. Charles Lyell and Charles Darwin's theories have been taught for

generations as if they were fact, even though much of what they proposed doesn't actually show up in nature.

As Paul said, "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit." It is important to know who the source is for your information. Who are the witnesses to whom you are listening and believing? You have to put your trust and confidence in witnesses, for a multitude of things. You can't live life only believing something when you see it.

You don't hoard food in your home fearing that you may never be able to buy food again. Why? Because you believe that you can go to the grocery store and there will be food even though you have not seen it today. The flier in the newspaper says they have food. You have good reason to have trust and confidence in this. There is no one here who fears going to HyVee because you think all of the shelves are going to be empty. If you were living in Venezuela, you would not have such trust and confidence these days. Pray for those people, as their leaders have failed them. Those people are starving. Their shelves are empty.

So what does this have to do with Sodom and Gomorrah. We have all heard of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Even those who reject God's Word as truth have heard of Sodom and Gomorrah. The story of their destruction with fire and brimstone raining down from heaven as God's punishment for their wicked, sinful ways does get your attention.

Beginning in the so-called "Age of Enlightenment," and becoming the dominant way of thinking among the "scholars" in the 1800's, there was an attempt by these so-called "scholars" to treat the story of Sodom and Gomorrah as a fairy tale, as a fake story, as a legend. They took the Bread of Life of God's Word and said that all there is are empty shelves. These so-called scholars did this with most all of God's Word. This is exactly what our own E. J. Otto was fighting against in the late 60's and early 70's within

the Missouri Synod. This is the reason he had to spend so much time in St. Louis and why all but five of the professors at the Seminary were removed from Synod.

They had accepted the theory, based on their philosophy, that Sodom and Gomorrah were not historical places. You have to understand that a great many of the “Enlightened thinkers” reject Adam, Noah, Abraham, and even Moses; even Isaiah, David, and Solomon (for some of them) they reject them as being actual historical people who actually did the things recorded in the Bible.

Thankfully, in the last generation or so actual evidence has been found to bury the dead ideas of “Enlightened thinkers.” It began with the Dead Sea Scrolls clearly showing that the Old Testament had been written and received as authentic well before the time of Christ. In the 1960’s and 70’s, thousands of tablets were found in the city of Ebla.

Around 2300 BC, Ebla was an important city of about 250,000 in Northern Syria. There are references to it from Egypt and other places. From the tablets found in Ebla, there are references to the biblical world with corresponding names and places – including Sodom. In the 1970’s the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were found – right where the Bible said you would find them.

The charred remains of the cities are undeniable. You don’t need wild theories or philosophies to interpret the evidence. Of course, there are those who still deny the evidence because they reject the Bible as being the witness of history. Scripture says, “Faith is being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you do not see.” Thankfully, the witness of archaeology has allowed us to see that the witness of the Bible being history is a faithful witness.

The Word of God is a faithful witness in which you have every reason to place your trust and confidence. The thing is, I don’t believe what the

book of Genesis says about Sodom and Gomorrah because of archaeological work done in the 1970's, or an article I read in Biblical Archaeology Review magazine. I trust the book of Genesis being the history of God interacting with those people because the Word of God testifies that this is the history of God interacting with His people.

I believe that Jesus rose from the dead, not because, as I mentioned last week, there is this mountain of evidence proving it through the science of history with all of the trustworthy witnesses from inside and outside of the church. I believe that Jesus rose from the dead because God's Word tells us that Jesus rose from the dead. Paul tells us this in our Epistle reading from his letter to the Colossians. And, Paul is one of the firsthand eyewitnesses testifying that Jesus rose from the dead.

Thousands of Jews in Jerusalem, including many priests and Pharisees, changed religions and made very bold claims about the empty tomb. That fact is undeniable. They viewed the grace of God and hope of their own resurrection from the dead so high, they risked everything, even their own life, for the sake of that Good News. How you wrestle with that witness, with that testimony is the only question. What does this mean for you?

Sodom and Gomorrah were real places that God destroyed, because the Law of God is real also. Fire and judgment is in the future of those who do not receive the Gospel.

Who are the witnesses to whom you are listening and believing? You have to put your trust and confidence in witnesses. The witnesses whom you trust – are they offering you real food or any empty shelf. "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit." Don't ever let anyone steal away the Bread of Life. Amen.