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In recent weeks we have been considering some of the evidence in support of the truth of the Holy Bible and its contents. This task was prompted by the death of the brilliant Professor Stephen Hawking, who despite his brilliance went to his death confident that at the moment of his physical death, he himself would cease to exist. To adopt that belief, Hawking and those like-minded have to reject clear evidence showing that their "death is the end" belief is a catastrophic folly: namely the evidence from creation around us, demonstrating the existence of an extraordinary Creator to whom we are answerable (eg., Romans 1); and secondly, the evidence concerning the Bible itself, with its account of Christ's death and resurrection lying at its very heart (egs., the final chapters of the four Gospels / I Corinthians 15).

But such Bible rejectors are not the only ones who are fools in God's sight! In Luke's Gospel (24.13-35) the Holy Spirit gives us the account of Jesus drawing alongside two of His followers as they walked to Emmaus on the evening after His resurrection; "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (v 16, KJV). The two of them, dejected and puzzled, told their new companion what had happened in Jerusalem in the past few days, and mentioned some wild talk about Jesus now being alive again (vv 17-24).

And then, "Bang!". Far from their Listener giving them the proverbial "tea and sympathy" in their loss and confusion, He told these two disciples, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (24. 25). He exposed their foolishness in not believing the teachings of "Moses and all the prophets", which He then duly explained to them in the finest Bible study there can ever have been (vv 26-27)! We notice that as Jesus did this, His emphasis lay in one clear place - "the things concerning himself" (v27b). So much for the notion sometimes bandied around today that the Old Testament is a waste of time for Christians - the absolute opposite is the case, as the risen Lord Jesus demonstrated so clearly on the Emmaus road that evening.

The message for the likes of us is simple: we are to accept that the Bible truly is the written Word of God as it constantly proclaims; we are to believe what the Holy Spirit tells us within its pages; and we are to apply these things, under the guidance of this same Holy Spirit dwelling within us, as faithfully as we can in our daily discipleship (eg., Romans 8.9-17, 26-27).

How easy it is for to respond to such expectations, "Yes, yes, we know all that already". That may well be true, but it is equally true that Cleopas and his companion would also have known their "Moses and the prophets" already. Though they knew these scriptures, somehow they had not made the link between them and the ultimate fulfilment of those scriptures which had just occurred before their very eyes – the gruesome death and glorious resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord. We must not blame those two, for surely we too would have been among the "O fools, and slow of heart to believe", and perhaps at times we still are.

We know full well that we are living in times of confusion, violence and trepidation. Within this dangerous mix the Holy Bible as God's Word stands as tall, true and

central as it has always done, yet due to human sinfulness and foolishness it is elbowed aside by people – fools in God's sight - who think they know better.

But as with those two on the Emmaus Road we need to be alert to the spiritual significance of current events, notably involving the Bible lands of the Middle East, with Israel and Jerusalem at the centre. The Scriptures are filled in both Testaments not only with the Lordship of Christ but also with divine promises concerning the Jews, many of which are yet to be fulfilled. For centuries it has been fashionable in some Christian quarters to redirect such promises to the Church in the belief that God has finished with the Jews, but such redirection flies smack in the face of Scripture, as for example the birth of the state of Israel against all human odds in 1948 so plainly demonstrates. God is very far from being finished with the Jews – and we do well to be “quick of heart”, rather than slow, to believe this key fact, for it lies at the heart of so much going on in the world today.

Meanwhile at this joyful season we respond afresh to Jesus' words, “I am the resurrection and the life Do you believe this?” (from John 11.25-26), by lifting our hearts and voices in praise, for truly Jesus Christ IS risen, and Jesus Christ IS Lord!

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