

Teaching the Natural Man

1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man [the ‘natural man’ was a term from Greek philosophy representing the best that the world had to offer: the honest, upright, ethical person] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Romans 8:7 “...because the fleshly mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be.”

If unbelievers cannot understand or follow God, what can we say to them? John Calvin decided that the logical answer was that the Holy Spirit prompts people to believe. Since not everyone is a believer, he argued that God chose those whom He would prompt to become believers. From that beginning, the death of choice was inevitable.

But, if life is not a grand delusion perpetrated by God, then we do make choices. But unbelievers, because each of them is lacking a functioning spirit, cannot understand reality from the viewpoint of a spirit. What subject matter did the early preachers recorded in the New Testament use in order to convince unbelievers to become believers?

1. For Gentile audiences, the resurrection of Jesus as an historical event (Acts 10:40, 17:31, 25:19, 26:8, 26:23) and the evidence of God in nature (Acts 14:17, 17:24 – 29, Romans 19 – 23).
2. For Jewish audiences, the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:24, 2:30 – 32, 3:15, 4:10:13:30 – 37, 17:3) and fulfilled prophecy (Acts 2:16 – 21, 2:25 – 28, 2:34 – 35, 3:18, 3:22, 3:25, 4:11, 8:32, 13:29 – 41, 17:2, 18:28)

Although we do not meet many faithful Jews who are waiting for the Messiah, many of the historical fulfillments would be good evidence for unbelievers, although some time must be spent establishing who these prophets were and when they wrote (1 Corinthians 15:3 – 8).

But, evidence and fulfilled prophecy do not provide insight into the operation of a kingdom operated and inhabited by spirits. God has provided physical illustrations of how His kingdom operates so that unbelievers may understand that His kingdom is not of this world – a fact which escapes most church-goers.

Here are a few physical illustrations of non-physical principles provided by God:

- **Marriage between Christians** illustrates the relationship between Jesus and His church (Ephesians 5:22 – 33, Romans 7:1 – 4)
- **Physical death** (separation from physical life) was included in creation as an illustration of separation of a spirit from God. (Romans 7:9, 1 Corinthians 15:21, 2 Timothy 1:10, 1 John 3:14)
- **Sacrifice** was designed by God to remind people that justice demands the death of the spirit (not the flesh), and that no sacrifice is truly sufficient.
- The **unity** of believers demonstrates to unbelievers the miraculous nature of the Kingdom (John 17:21).

Can you think of other illustrations set up by God to teach reality from the viewpoint of a spirit?