

Why Is There Chaff in My Wheat?

And Why Is Revival So Messy?

Rockey Jackson - March 30, 2001

Section 6 of 9

Do We Have God Safely Under Our Control?

*How many times, when the game's in doubt,
Have you seen a broken play?
Up in the stands it looks like a rout
And the coach just turns away.
When out of the mob a receiver catches a lob
As he's streaking toward the goal.
Then the screaming crowd shouts mighty loud
When he scores the winning touchdown.*

In the real world many things are chaotic and unpredictable, but in our artificial western world we don't like things that are disorderly and unpredictable. We like everything neatly put in its place. It begins when we're just children at home. Our mothers try to teach us to keep our rooms clean and neat. That gets reinforced at school as our teachers do their part, teaching us that our desks and assignments should be kept orderly, clean, and neat. For those of us who served in the armed forces, we found out that our mothers and teachers were cream puffs compared to the drill instructors at basic training. They demanded a spit shine on our shoes, our blankets had to be pulled so tight on our beds that they could bounce a quarter off of them and our closets had to be arranged so that all the creases on our trousers looked like they were standing at attention in formation line. Usually, it's the same way when we go to church. We put on our best Sunday clothes and we greet everyone with our artificial Sunday smiles. Arranged in orderly rows, we sit quiet and straight. Our services are planned and timed with every minister, usher, and choir member in their place. We absolutely don't want any changes or surprises in our order of worship. It's what we're familiar and comfortable with. Predictability is the order of the day.

The Preacher writing in the book of Ecclesiastes had something pertinent to say about things that we cannot predict. He wrote:

“He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good” Eccl. 11:4-6.

In this passage, the Preacher has listed four things that man cannot know. (Things that we cannot know, we cannot predict.) The first is taken from the agricultural illustration of sowing and reaping. It is the long-range consequences of our actions. The second is the weather. The third is the way a baby grows in its mother's womb. The fourth thing that the Preacher says we cannot know is the “works of God.” In Isaiah 55:9 God expressed this last point in the following way:

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”

Concerning a baby in the womb, some might say that this isn't true anymore. With our technology we've been able to look inside the womb, and we've observed the fetus in all stages of a pregnancy. This is true, we know a lot more today than we used to about prenatal life, but we still don't know why, when each cell has the same DNA, some cells know to become hearts and others to become brains. How do they know where to grow? Why don't some people have toes hanging from their nose or fingers growing out of their ears?

One of the newer and lesser-known scientific specialties is the study of natural phenomena that are unpredictable. It is called Chaos Theory. For scientists in this discipline, chaos is anything that cannot be predicted by scientific laws or mathematical equations. Obviously the unpredictability of the weather puts it in this category. There are many types of phenomena that are included, far too many for me to catalog here. Many of the most common ones deal with boundary conditions found in some phenomena that can exist in more than one steady state. Steady state functions can normally be mathematically modeled by relatively simple linear equations. Most are understood quite well. It's at the boundary between two different steady states where much of the chaos occurs. I'll give only two simple illustrations that occur in common things that we are all familiar with.

One of the engineering problems that spurred interest in Chaos Theory was the first airplane built to break the sound barrier. Aerodynamic principles for flight above and below the speed of sound are well known. They are steady state, stable and predictable. But aerospace scientists couldn't predict what would happen at the point where the sound barrier was broken. Some even believed that transonic flight was impossible because the transition would be too violent for any man or aircraft to survive. (Does it kind of sound like the predictions that Christopher Columbus would sail off the edge of the world?) Well the truth is, the transition between subsonic and supersonic flight is rough. Even today, we can't model the flight dynamics that occur in the transonic region and supersonic jet pilots try to minimize the time they're in it because the aerodynamic forces are so unstable.

My second illustration is one we can each experiment with in our own homes. Does that pique your interest? Well, it's simply water flowing from a tap. If the flow is slow enough, the water drips. A faster flow produces a steady stream. Both are steady states and are very predictable using the laws of fluid dynamics. However when the flow is at the boundary between a drip and a stream, it chaotically changes back and forth. We can watch it and see that there is no pattern to the change. With all of our scientific knowledge and mathematical expertise, at the boundary, we cannot tell when the flow of water will drip and when it will stream.

It is the same way with God. He is immutable. That means he doesn't change, or in scientific language, he exists in a steady state. So there are things in His character that we can count on to always be the same, but because we cannot fully know Him, His thoughts, or His ways, then we cannot always predict what He will do. Except for those things that fall into the sphere of Chaos Theory, the world God has created for us to live in obeys the natural laws of physics that He put

in place. These laws give us the predictable or steady-state environment in which our lives exist. Heaven is the steady state we will exist in when this life is over. We've already seen that chaos often occurs at the boundary between two steady states. So, it is logical to expect that as we approach the boundary between heaven and earth, between God and man, things will become unpredictable? We might see things like a bush that burns but isn't consumed, an iron ax head float (2 Kings 6:1-7), or even a man raised from the dead. I'm sure you can think of many more.

As noted above, we like our world and especially our church services to be neat, clean, and ordered. So something the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth might be noted in reply:

**“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”
“Let all things be done decently and in order” 1 Cor. 14:33, 40.**

This is scripture. It's true and I believe it, but I have some questions. We just saw that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours, and we can neither understand nor predict His works. So how do we know what is confusion and what is a divine process? Should we or should God be the judge? Have you ever noticed how often it occurs that when we're ignorant about something, it looks like chaos to us, but after we're informed about what's going on, we can see the order emerge? Now to the second point I want to know who decides what is decent and what is in order? Is it us? Do we do it democratically? Do we each get a vote? If Jesus Christ is Lord of the Church and Head of the Body of Christ, then shouldn't He be the one we obey? That brings me back to the fact that His ways are higher than mine and I cannot understand or predict his works.

Why is it that we won't let God have His way in His church? I don't have an answer except that we desire order and control. I have to admit that, more often than not, what is decent and in order ends up being defined by the spirit of Jezebel and her two consorts: Religion and Control. I can't tell you how many times I've seen a pastor innocently make a small change in the Sunday morning routine and before the day is out this unholy trinity finds a willing champion to call him up and tell him the error of his way. For Jezebel hates the true prophets of God and seeks to kill them when she can. It is hard enough to put new wine into old wine skins, but this unholy trinity does its best to make sure that the Church gets no new wine at all.

*Pastors have sat and shown me their scars,
Earned in the spiritual wars.
Told me of times that they've manned the lines
With God leading them into the fray.
They've known without doubt what they were about
Because the Captain had shown them the way
To lead the flock, the sheep He had bought,
With His blood on Calvary one day.*

*But sometimes the forces arrayed against them
Were just too strong that day.
So they were beat, thrown out in a heap,
Left to rot in gossip's foul slime.
Other times they won but great damage was done*

Why Is There Chaff in My Wheat?

*By Jezebel, Religion, and Control.
And many of the flock would wander off
With a root of bitterness impaling their hearts.*