

MISCONCEPTIONS

Jon Macon

John Shelby “Jack” Spong is an 80 year-old retired Episcopal Bishop who is a prominent and influential writer and speaker, a leader in the Modernist or “Liberal Christian” movement. He has published over 20 books, the most recent of which is *Re-Claiming the Bible for a Non-Religious World* (2011). Even if you have never heard of this man, his point of view is typical of what pervades modern Protestant denominations and is a serious threat to the faith of any true Christian. In reality, he is nothing more than a modern-day Sadducee, an atheist for all intents and purposes. The modern “religion” that he espouses is actually secular humanism. In fact, Spong “won” the 1999 Humanist of the Year award (if that can be accurately referred to as an “award”). His basic viewpoint is contained in “twelve theses,” in which he rejects the concept of “theism” (i.e. the literal existence of God), and calls for a new way to speak about God (or whatever you would call such a non-existent “Being”). He does not believe in Jesus Christ as the actual Son of God (a logical step to take for one who essentially rejects belief in God Himself), nor does he believe in Christ’s virgin birth, his crucifixion, or his resurrection from the dead. He believes in Darwinian evolution and rejects Creationism. He does not believe in miracles or life after death (i.e. the resurrection). He believes the Bible came strictly from men, not God, and is therefore not to be taken literally, or to serve as any kind of objective standard for mankind. This past week, he wrote an essay which was featured on the website cnn.com. The essay is entitled “My Take: The 3 biggest biblical misconceptions.”

Jack Spong’s misconceptions

Spong begins his essay with the claim that “misconceptions abound” about the Bible. He says, “To me, three misconceptions stand out and serve to make the Bible hard to comprehend. First, people assume the Bible accurately reflects history. That is absolutely not so, and every biblical scholar recognizes it.” You can see he immediately places those who would disagree with him in the camp of the “non-scholars.” If being a “biblical scholar” requires rejection of the historical accuracy of the Bible, then please sign me up for membership in the “non-scholar” club! Of Spong’s kind of “scholarship,” the Lord has said, *“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain”* (1 Cor 3:18-20). Spong says that it would be impossible for the Bible to be accurate since its historical information is the product of what men passed down orally over the centuries to other men until they were finally written down. Spong asks, “Can a defining tribal narrative that is passed on orally for 45 generations ever be regarded as history, at least as history is understood today? Do stories of heroic figures not grow, experience magnifying tendencies and become surrounded by interpretive mythology as the years roll by?” When you don’t believe the Bible was inspired of God, it is easy to disbelieve its accuracy, especially if you also reject the mountain of supporting evidence God has preserved outside of the Bible. In truth, the historical accuracy of the Bible is unassailable, and that is because the written record was inspired word-by-word by the One who made the history happen in the first place, God! Spong goes on to write, “The second major misconception comes from the distorting claim that the Bible is in any literal sense ‘the word of God.’ Only someone who has never read the Bible could make such a claim.” Once again, he uses scorn to

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(continued)

try to intimidate his opponents, deriding them as non-readers of the Bible. And the important point is not what Spong or any other human being “claims” about the source of the words of the Bible. The Bible itself claims in *every* literal sense to be the word of God: “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Tim 3:16), and it “*came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Pet 1:21). How do we know this is actually *God’s* claim about the Bible (which is the only claim that matters)? Because God confirmed the word! That is, He proved it was His inspired word with His own testimony by “signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Heb 2:3-4). Of course, Spong rejects the very idea of such miracles, but *Jack Spong was not there when they happened!* He was not a witness, and what he and other non-witnesses say matters not at all. We have the testimony of the eyewitnesses that the miracles did in fact occur. To disbelieve God’s record is to call God a liar (1 John 5:10)! Spong then says, “The third major misconception is that biblical truth is somehow static and thus unchanging.” He claims that the Bible is “not about religion at all but about becoming deeply and fully human.” Thus, Spong takes whatever parts of the Bible he can twist to advance secular humanism and dismisses the rest. Yet, Christ affirms that the Bible is indeed a static, unchanging body of truth that we can and must live by: “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” (Matt 4:4). He also said, “*Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away*” (Matt 24:35). This is the word that will judge us all in the last day (John 12:48). Spong rejects these facts, but his unbelief does not change God’s truth. Clearly, what Spong would call *our* misconceptions are actually *his* misconceptions!

Beware of this leaven

Sadly, the views of Jack Spong are not on the fringe, but permeate mainstream so-called “Christianity” today. But this is not a new situation. Even more sadly, the high priest and the leaders of the Jewish nation in Christ’s time were Sadducees (Acts 5:17). Acts 23:8 explains their doctrine: “*For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit.*” Yes, that means the leaders of Israel in the First Century A.D. were completely secular and indistinguishable in their “beliefs” from atheists. They are also indistinguishable from Jack Spong, who would not disagree with *any* of their views as described in Acts 23:8. Jesus said to the Sadducees of his day, “*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God*” (Matt 22:29; Mark 12:24). John the Baptist called them “vipers” and urged them to repent (Matt 3:7). What Jesus and John said then applies just as well to Spong and all other modern-day Sadducees, the secular humanists of our time. Satan loves what his servant Jack Spong says. But Jesus Christ has warned his disciples to beware of this kind of doctrine, or “leaven” (Matt 16:1-12). We had better take heed, lest we too become leavened with this false doctrine of humanism and modernism (Gal 5:9). We can resist this if we listen to the voice of our Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and flee from the voice of strangers (John 10:1-5)!

2011 ATTENDANCE AVERAGES

Sunday mornings: 65.7 (53.7 in 2010, 46.8 in 2009)
Sunday evenings: 56.1 (45.8 in 2010, 41.0 in 2009)
Wednesday evenings: 51.5 (41.4 in 2010, 40.6 in 2009)