



"at home, thinking"

seeds for a
Biblical worldview

"As a man thinketh in
his heart, so is he."
Proverbs 23:7 KJV

No. 11

Doctrine

I HAVE BEEN THINKING about doctrine. It is a word that has fallen out of favor with many American Christians in the past generation.

I recall a number of times in my early years as a believer hearing someone say, "We don't need doctrine. We just need Jesus." I have probably said it myself.

Now, ask yourself two simple questions. 1) "Who is Jesus?" 2) "Why do we need Him?" To answer these questions correctly, one needs doctrine. I will address this point further in just a moment, but first, a bit of history.

Doctrine has more than one meaning. No doubt, you have heard of the Monroe Doctrine. In a policy set in place in 1823 by our fifth U.S. president, James Monroe, the Monroe Doctrine declares that future colonization of the Americas by the European nations would no longer be tolerated by the United States. In return, Monroe promised that the U.S. would not engage itself in any European wars.

Perhaps you have also heard of the Bush Doctrine. In response to the terrorist attacks on September 11th, 2001, President Bush declared in an address to the United States Congress on September 20, 2002, that the U.S. would *"make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them,"*

In both cases, a statement by a U.S. President established the nation's future course. In these cases the idea of doctrine involves a nation's foreign policy.

Christian doctrine is similar to foreign policy doctrine in that it establishes something of permanence, often marking a moment in time as a reference point. But Christian doctrine also adds a layer of meaning.

"Who is Jesus?" Without doctrine, Jesus is but a mere figure of history, a good teacher, a prophet, perhaps, and someone whose ideas are probably worth considering. We might even agree that He suffered a crucifixion. But so what?

Doctrine establishes not only the facts of Jesus' life, it also affirms the significance of those facts. Christ's life and teachings and death are meaningless unless we believe His claim that no one can come to the Father, except through Him (John 14:4); that He has power to forgive sins (Luke 5:20,21, 24); that He is one with the Father, and that seeing Him is the equivalent of seeing the Father (John 10:9-10); and that He would rise up from the dead (John 19:17).

To believe these things, and the many other claims that Christ made about Himself, one also must believe that Christ is more than just a mortal man. He is God incarnate.

"Why do we need Him?" Man's fallen state is clear and obvious. Our individual and collective dysfunctions evidence our corrupted, human state. Broken families, crimes, and wars demonstrate the gap between what we are, and what we are meant to be. We are lost. Countless human remedies to our collective lostness have failed us time and again.

The doctrine of Christ adds the layer of meaning to the facts of His existence. *"You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly."* (Romans 5:6 NIV)

But if Christ were not God, His suffering and death would not have the power to take away our sins. Without doctrine, clinging to Jesus would mean very little.



"at home, thinking" is published periodically by Mark W. Weaver, co-author of *The Century War Chronicles* and co-founder of Reconciliation Press. Mark is married with three grown daughters, and has been employed in the real estate and land development industry for over thirty years. Mark and his wife, Sally, fellowship at a house church in their home town of Manassas, Virginia. Copyright © 2006 Mark W. Weaver
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