

Be a Berean!

The Bereans...received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day. (Acts 17:11)

["Be a Berean" will regularly cover topics that arise during Lockport Alliance Bible classes. Contact Franklyn Pfeil—liftedup@lockportalliance.org—with questions or comments.]

"God Rules"

Right around last Christmas, at the final class of a year-long Bible course, Tina Simmons gave me a present--a "God Rules" auto emblem in shiny, raised, chrome-colored letters.

(If you're new to LAC and wondering who Tina is, just locate God's heart and you'll find her there. Contrapositively, if you don't know where to locate God's heart, just find Tina and you're there. It's spiritual MapQuest!)

I once told Tina's class how the fish symbol on the back of my truck had cured my road rage. Well, it might not have cured it, but it stopped me from exhibiting it. If you had cut me off prior to the fish symbol, you would have gotten an indication of my displeasure. But because my means of signaling displeasure did not exactly fit within the category of What-Would-Jesus-Do, I now keep both of my hands on the wheel, if you know what I mean.

Tina must have figured that since the fish had done so much for my driving, a "God Rules" emblem might have a positive effect on other unredeemed aspects of my life. So if you see a small red truck with both a fish and "God Rules," don't cut me off! If you do, you won't have to deal with my former hand signals, but you'll have to deal with Him! And maybe He'll deal with you by sending Tina as His representative. You don't want that.

"God Rules" is expressed in many ways in the Bible. The concepts of sovereignty, dominion, kingdom, and providence illustrate His authority and purpose in everything, everywhere, always. 'Sovereignty' means He alone is in charge; 'dominion' speaks of the limitless scope of his rule; 'kingdom' speaks of his form of government (where we won't get to vote!); 'providence' is His unseen Hand moving the glove of visible circumstances.

It may not always look like it, but God rules. He reigns as King not only over His people, but also over the nations.

But what about all the chaos and evil in the news every night?

We learn from the book of Job that He permits evil for His purposes. But evil can't go further than the end of the chain that God's got Satan tied up with (1).

When evil is all that He's got to work with, He'll use evil to bring about good (2). It is easily understood from my own life that if He were to instantly judge sin--and pay *the wages of sin* (3) at sin's every occurrence--then I would never have gotten to the day when I turned to Him. Everything--the good, the bad, the ugly--must pass before Him in review. He either waves it on, allowing it to continue for another day; or He stops it.

But he gave us free will, the freedom to choose.

We do have the freedom to choose--because He said so.

Exercising free will, one person chooses to look to Jesus Christ for salvation. That soul is saved, in accordance with God's Word.

Exercising free will, another person does not turn to Jesus Christ for salvation. That soul is not saved, in accordance with God's Word.

So whether we choose for or against Jesus Christ, the Word of God will prevail. His Word is the ultimate determinant, in either case.

He uses those who oppose Him (Babylon, Herod, Rome, the Pharisees, Pilate, Judas Iscariot, etc.) **to fulfill his plans:** *The wrath of man praises Him* (4).

"Rulers" (kings and czars and presidents and prime ministers) do not make history; rather, God uses them to effect history (5).

God told Jonah to preach to Nineveh. Jonah exercised his free choice to go the other way, towards Tarshish. But the last we saw of Jonah he was in Nineveh, preaching! God's will was determinant, His Word fulfilled.

We live in a day when people "judge" God. They weigh in with their opinions about His Word and about His Son. Don't you be thus deluded. We do not judge Jesus Christ or His Word; indeed, He will judge us: "He will trample out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored. His truth is marching on"-- whether we've joined the parade or not.

We will neither defend nor justify our ways before God.

Around the middle of each year, I've told every Bible class which I've taught, "If you learn one thing from this class, learn this: When you go before God, plead guilty. Say to The Father, 'I am a sinner who has trusted Your Son Jesus Christ to save me. I have nothing but the blood of Jesus Christ to recommend me. Without Jesus, I don't have a prayer.'"

He will turn to Jesus, the Judge, for confirmation: "It is as he says. He trusts Me."

"Then you are *accepted in the Beloved* (6), accepted for My Son's sake.

"Next..."

On that December night, after that last class, after she'd given me the "God Rules" emblem for my truck, I quizzed Tina:

"Did you learn something this year, Tina?"

Without pausing, she replied, "Plead guilty, and tell Him that my only hope is Jesus."

If students were graded, she'd have received an A+, in shiny, raised, chrome-colored letters!

Scripture cited: (1) see Job, chapters 1-2; (2) see Gen. 50:20, Rom. 8:28 (3) see Rom. 6:23, Ezekiel 18:20; (4) Psalm 76:10; (5) see Isaiah 45:1-7, John 19:10-11a; (6) Ephesians 1:6 KJV

It is our fervent hope that you will 'be a Berean' by attending one of these Bible-based classes this week! —

"Major Bible Themes"--Sunday at 9:45

"Jesus, the One and Only"--Sunday at 9:45

"Speak God's Word"--Sunday at 9:45