

How Far Will It Get You?

In the current economy, people are a lot more concerned about how far a car will take you on a gallon of fuel.

Consider this interesting chart, published 35 years ago in Reader's Digest, Oct. 1981, and written by Milton Moskowitz and Michael Katz. It shows how far various vehicles will travel on a gallon of fuel:

- Moped, 120 miles
- Harley-Davidson 1200, 50 miles
- Volkswagen Rabbit diesel, 42 miles
- Model A Ford, 25 miles
- Piper Cherokee at 144mph, 15 miles
- Maserati Quattroporte, 8 miles
- GMC Astro tractor and trailer, 5.4 miles
- GM diesel locomotive chugging at 70mph with 50 fully loaded freight cars, 632 yards
- Boeing 747 jumbo jet cruising at 39,000 feet with 385 passengers, 280 yards
- Crude oil supertanker fully loaded at 17mph, 31 feet. (This ship needs 41 gallons of fuel to travel its own length!)
- Saturn V rocket at takeoff, 10 inches.

Well, I wasn't planning to drive a Saturn V rocket to work in the morning anyway (even living around the corner, as I do, it would take thousands of gallons of fuel) so I guess this chart is mostly for curiosity's sake. And, it makes me appreciate the efficiency of my little four-cylinder Toyota.

But, more importantly, it got me thinking about the different attempts to reach God. Some of them get much better mileage.

Man often makes his own gods, and follows his own ideas of good living and spirituality. Paul found this to be true in Athens, and he told the people that their efforts were running out of gas short of the goal. We ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, and

image formed by the art and thought of man. Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent (Acts 17:30–31). The Jewish system was better, but still inefficient. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb. 9:13–14). Animal sacrifices did the job God intended them to do, symbolizing the cleansing of the flesh. But they didn't redeem the soul. "It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). That had to wait for something better.

Only one will thing will get you all the way to heaven—the blood of Jesus Christ! ...you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a Lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18–19).

I Am God and I Approved This Message

Political ads are always concluded with a statement from the candidate himself, which says, "I am So-and-So and I approved this message."

I guess this is to help distinguish between the political ads designed by the candidates themselves, which are usually positive and respectful, and the ads designed by superPACs, which are usually negative and vicious. The candidate has to put his stamp of approval on his own ad, so that voters know the message originated with him.

But it got me thinking of what God did with His word. When the gospel was preached, how were people to know that this gospel was God's authentic word? How were they to distinguish it from all the other so-called revelations being released throughout history? God had to put His unique stamp of approval on it, to say, in effect, "I'm God, and I approved this message."

Miraculous signs and miracles were the stamp God used. Nicodemus pointed out in John 3:2, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him."

A miracle is, by definition, an act that breaks the laws of nature. (We sometimes call amazing events miracles—the birth of a baby, surviving a terrible car accident—but these aren't truly miracles). Only God has the ability to break the laws of the universe. And when He does it, it is

to make an important statement. In this case, it is to show that He approves of the message spoken. After it [the gospel] was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will (Heb. 2:3–4). When the Apostles and prophets revealed the gospel, God did His part, by accompanying their words with miracles. See also Mark 16:17, John 20:30–31, and Acts 8:6–7. —John Guzzetta

Ancient Landmarks

In ancient times, there were no survey instruments for quickly and accurately measuring tracts of land, no courthouses to keep the records. Instead, stones were placed to mark the boundaries, and while they were hefty, they were not impossible to move with a bit of effort.

It was an act of great dishonesty to shift a boundary stone to add a few hundred feet to one's property, or to expand it to include that choice nut tree or that stream. As a result, disturbing a boundary stone was a serious crime in the laws of Babylon, Egypt, and Assyria.

In Israel, it was also a sin against heaven. First, because such a man was disturbing the order that God had established. Proverbs 22:28 says, "Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set." These fathers were the men of Joshua's generation, who placed the markers where God instructed them (see Joshua chs. 15–21). God asserted, "the land is Mine" (Lev. 25:13, cf. Numb. 36:7, Deut. 19:14) and He permitted no change in its layout amongst the tribes.

Second, because such a man usually acted when his neighbor could not notice the crime or defend it. Proverbs 23:10 says, "Do not move the ancient boundary or go into the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; He will plead their case against you." God sees such fraud. Those who would cheat or take advantage of the powerless will become a byword when God judges (see Hosea 5:10).

But we Christians living under the new, spiritual covenant of Jesus Christ would be wise to apply this principle in another way. We live on His estate, and His landmarks are the truths of His word. We must resist the temptation to shift them here or there, to give us a few more feet of wiggle room for sin, to broaden His doctrines where we would like more allowances. We must not remove such landmarks as baptism and the Lord's Supper, which God Himself

established, and which we have no right to move. The faith has been “once for all delivered” (Jude 3). False teachers attempt to move the marks to fool the weak. But the one who fixed the marks will judge.

—John Guzzetta