



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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BUT THEY MOCKED

Denver Thomas

“And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till [there was] no remedy” (2 Chron. 36:15-16).

This passage of Scripture gives rise to some very interesting thoughts relative to the days of extremes in which we live. To begin with, evil men have risen to power that threaten the country. Removing God from all internal affairs has been the goal of many in recent years. Thus, any sense of morality has been lost in the formulation of laws that affect the populace as a whole. *Sodomy, murder* and *euthanasia* are now embedded within the laws of the land, and yet no one seems to care. America looks more and more like Sodom and Gomorrah as the days pass. They have mocked God.

Think about how man has taken God's Holy Word and perverted it to allow for thousands of so-called faiths. The unity characteristic of God's plan of salvation has been lost in these so-called faiths. It seems there is an attempt to provide something for everyone. In recent years there has been a proliferation of versions, revisions, editions, etc. of the Bible, largely created by sectarian councils. So, they have mocked God.

Think about how those who claim some allegiance to the Lord's church

have violated His Word by corrupting worship. Some have added choirs and mechanical instruments to singing. Some are now using women in leadership roles and some are offering communion in various ways; and, on alternate days. Worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24) has been lost in many instances. It seems God's way is simply not adequate for some. They have mocked God.

Think about church oversight and its performance today. In so many instances, elders in the Lord's church have ceased to feed the flock (Acts 20:28). Instead, they are heard to say “That is why we hire a preacher.” Further, they have allowed situations within congregations to continue to exist that are contrary to “sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). Purity is sacrificed in favor of greater attendance. It's the fear of seeing numbers shrink that so often lies at the root of this situation. So, they just mock God.

Think about what people are seeking. More and more, congregations are now demanding their preachers have those distinguishing capital letters following their names. It seems they want a lot more than just the Bible and what it has to say. Perhaps, it is that “itching of the ears” they have developed (2 Tim. 4:3-4). They just mock God.

Think about those whose responsibility it is to sow the seed of the Kingdom. Today's Gospel preachers have found numerous ways to avoid “going” (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15ff) and “contending” (Jude 3). It seems that keen desire to seek and save the

lost of the world no longer exists. Furthermore, there is a lack of earnestly contending for the faith. Might they be saying “It is not worth fighting for?” Their general lack of action would certainly suggest as much. They just mock God.

In stark contrast, think about those many deeply dedicated (uneducated by worldly standards) Gospel preachers of just one or two generations ago. Did they labor in vain? Did all that “going into all the world” go for naught? Did all those debates defending the truth result in nothing? Was that fast growing church something that was really needed? Was that concern for “right” just make believe? Were those men simply misdirected? Are their efforts being mocked today? Yes, indeed they are! God was not mocked by their efforts! Surely, we need a lot more who would do as they did. Seeking the lost and earnestly contending for the faith would put the church in the forefront once again. Evil men would have some resistance with which to deal for a change.

“Times have changed” keeps coming up in conversations relative to the work of the Lord. What these dissenters fail to see or say is that man has also changed but God and His Word have not changed, nor will they ever change (Heb. 13:8). It is difficult to explain how some continue to look for different ways when the ways of the faithful men of the past were so successful.

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But They Mocked...



Editorial...

CAUSING TROUBLE, SOWING DISCORD GOD CONDEMNS

Garland M. Robinson

Some contend that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship and when and how often to observe the Lord's supper are optional matters. Needless to say, these things are very troubling to the church.

Proverbs 6:16-19 lists seven things God hates. They are an abomination (disgusting, an abhorrence) unto him. One of the seven is: ***“he that soweth discord among brethren.”*** This regards those who cause strife, division, contention, trouble.

The New Testament church has never been exempt from those who cause trouble. We read of Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17). The Scripture says, *“Who concerning the truth have erred...and overthrow the faith of some.”* We read of unnamed false brethren in 2 Corinthians 11:26 and Galatians 2:4. So much more work could be done if it were not for having to defend the truth from its perverters. This has always been the case. In Nehemiah 4, there were those who were troubling the Jews in rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. So much so that their full attention could not be focused on the work. Verse 17 says the workers were building with one hand while holding a weapon to defend their work in the other hand.

In the New Testament, the churches of Galatia were being troubled. Notice the words of Galatians 1:6-9. *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto*

you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any [man] preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”

False brethren were causing trouble among the churches. They were perverting the pure and unadulterated Gospel. Verse seven says, *“there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”* What some were doing was troubling to brethren and the churches. The word trouble means “to agitate, to cause one inward commotion, take away calmness of mind, to disquiet, make restless, to stir up, to strike one’s spirit with fear and dread. To render anxious or distressed. To perplex the mind of one by suggesting doubts.” They were causing unrest, uneasiness, discord among the brethren. The results of their efforts were perverting the Gospel. To pervert means “to turn around, corrupt.”

“Uncertain sounds” in the church are always troubling. Paul deals with uncertain sounds in 1 Corinthians 14:5-11. When a sound is uncertain, the truth suffers because there is no clear, distinct word from God. There is no profit in an uncertain sound because there is no “revelation...knowledge...doctrine” from God (v.6). Uncertain sounds do not provide stability, certainty and steadfastness in the Lord. Acts 2:42 makes clear that brethren ***“...continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine.”*** Peter tells us that some things Paul wrote are ***“hard to be understood, which they***

that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know [these things] before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (2 Peter 3:16-17). First Corinthians 15:58 tells us to be ***“...stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”***

Faithful brethren are often labeled as causing trouble and unrest in the church when they ***“mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned”*** (Rom. 16:17). But, it’s a false label applied to the faithful by the troublemakers themselves. It’s an effort to shift the focus and blame away from them (those causing the division) to those who are standing up for the purity of the Gospel. This tactic is not new. It was tried by king Ahab in the long ago. ***“When Ahab saw Elijah... Ahab said unto him, [Art] thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim”*** (1 Kings 18:17-18). This ploy did not work then and it will not work now.

There are uncertain sounds in the church today that are very troubling. There is unrest and discord in our local area that is disrupting the unity and harmony of the churches. Two areas of concern are the use of ***mechanical instruments of music in worship and the observance of the Lord’s supper.*** It is being contended by some that God did not condemn instruments of music in the worship of the church in the first century and that we should not, must not, condemn them. And, it is also being contended that the Bible does not specify “when” nor “how often” the Lord’s supper is to be observed. We are being told it is up to each local congregation whether they will use mechanical instruments of music in worship or not; and/or when and how often they will observe the Lord’s supper; whether on Sunday or any other day of the week; whether weekly, monthly or every day. It is being asserted that God gives no Word on these matters — that is, no

direction, guidance or counsel. As you can well imagine, these points are troubling the churches in our county, surrounding counties, and the brotherhood in general.

In an effort to resolve the trouble and unrest, a meeting was assembled with representatives of numerous congregations in the area, particularly those connected with the area-wide **Bible Bowl** and **Short Mountain Bible Camp**. This meeting was held with **Al Bugg, Jr.** (preacher for the Smith Grove Church of Christ) regarding his belief on these matters. He contended that the use of instrumental music in worship and that the day of, and frequency of, observing the Lord's supper were optional matters and brethren could make no Bible-based determination concerning them. And, therefore, he could not prohibit instruments of music in worship and could not limit partaking of the Lord's supper to a Sunday only observance. The meeting was conducted in a very cordial and gracious manner. Everyone made certain the only motive of the meeting was the Truth, a "thus saith the Lord." What the Bible authorizes was the goal. Yet, the meeting was adjourned with no progress being made. As a result, Al Bugg, Jr. has been marked according to the instructions of Romans 16:17. "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*"

The Scriptures are clear on the subjects of Instrumental Music and the Lord's Supper. We desire to follow the principle of Colossians 3:17, "*and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" What we say and what we do must be according to a "thus saith the Lord." We must be able to give Scripture for all we say and do. As Christians, we are obligated to obey the laws of God. We cannot ignore them.

The use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is sinful. There are eight verses on the subject of the worship of the church in song: Acts 16:25, Rom. 15:9, 1 Cor. 14:15, Eph. 5:19, Col. 3:16, Heb. 2:12, Heb. 13:15, James 5:13. All eight authorize singing. None of the eight authorize mechanical instruments of music. Two of the eight verses are very clear in telling us what to do. Ephesians 5:19, "*Speaking to your-*

selves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Colossians 3:16, "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*"

The human element involved in our worship in song is speaking, teaching, admonishing. Each of these have to do with instruction — learning and knowing the will of God — instructing others concerning the will of God. Mechanical instruments of music cannot do that. Nothing is learned by the sound of instruments of music. There is no communication with instruments. There is no authority for their use. Using or playing mechanical instruments, clapping, humming, oohing, aahing or making sounds in any other manner is not authorized in New Testament worship. They are additions to that which is written and are condemned in Revelation 22:18-19. The human voice and heart are the instruments to be used in the worship of the church in song. We have Scripture for SINGING but do not have Scripture for INSTRUMENTS or any other kind of sounds.

Observing the Lord's supper is made clear in the New Testament. Jesus instituted the Lord's supper (Matt. 26:26-29). He said it would be observed in the kingdom/church. After the church began on Pentecost, we find four references regarding the Lord's supper: Acts 2:42, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 10:16, 1 Cor. 11:23-30. Let's examine two of them.

Acts 2:42 is a summary of the things that were occurring in the early days of the church. All the matters in this verse are spiritual in nature: "*they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" The church continued in those things instituted by the apostles: doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, prayers. These instructions were given them by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17). They each pertain to "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). You would have to go out of your way to make "fellowship" and "breaking bread" a common meal in verse 42.

Outside of worship and separate from it, a common meal is mentioned

in verse 46. Separate from their spiritual service (worship), they enjoyed time together and eating a common meal together. The things recorded in Acts 2:42-47 did not all occur on the same day at the same time. These verses are speaking about the days, weeks, and months after the day of Pentecost. They engaged in spiritual matters (doctrine, fellowship, breaking the bread, prayers) and they engaged in social matters in their associations one with another day by day and eating common meals in one another's houses.

The Lord specifically tells (commands) us to eat the Lord's supper (break the bread) as a memorial in remembrance of his death, and to do so till he comes again (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-26). But, while there is no direct statement regarding *when* and *how often* to eat the Lord's supper, there is a *divine example of when* and *how often* the church observed it (Acts 20:4-7). While Paul "hasted" (speed, earnestly desiring) on his way to Jerusalem hoping to get there by Pentecost (Acts 20:16), he arrived in Troas and stayed there seven days (Acts 20:6). "*And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...*" (Acts 20:7). Since he was in a hurry, why did he stay in Troas a full week? Was it not because that was the day the church at Troas assembled to eat the Lord's supper and he wanted to be there? If the communion can be observed any day of the week as is contended, then wouldn't the presence of the apostle Paul authorize such an occasion? He was in such a hurry that when he left Troas he bypassed Ephesus, sending word to the elders of the church there to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:15-17). So, why wait in Troas for seven days? What other reason can there be than the *first day of the week* was the day churches everywhere assembled to eat the Lord's supper. Where did the church at Troas learn that except from the apostles? It was not possible to move the day of its observance to another day of the week. It had been set by heaven as this divine example proves. Their assembly was not just what they decided to do in their local situation. They were following the *decrees* (Acts 16:4) and *tradition* (2 Thess. 3:6) of the apostles. Acts 20:7 is a divine example regarding worship

on the first day of the week in observing the Lord's supper.

Also, Acts 20:7 calls attention to a specific, special bread with the word "the" attached to it in the Greek text as it also does in Acts 2:42. They weren't breaking just any bread. They were not simply eating a common meal. They were breaking "the" bread. This was a church assembly on the first day of the week when the church at Troas came together to worship. Their purpose was to "break the bread," i.e., eat the Lord's supper. And, they engaged in a period of spiritual instruction when Paul preached unto them.

The phrase "breaking [the] bread" is a figure of speech called a *synecdoche* where a "part stands for the whole." That is, breaking the bread includes both the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. It is simply a reference to the "Lord's supper" (1 Cor. 11:20), the "Lord's table" (1 Cor. 10:21), the "communion" (1 Cor.

10:16), and "break [the] bread" (Acts 2:42; 20:7). The Lord is with us every first day of the week when we meet together to break [the] bread in His kingdom/church (cf. Matt. 26:29).

Heaven's order concerning "giving" is authorized by *command* in First Corinthians 16:1-2, and it is to be done "*upon the first [day] of the week.*" Heaven's order concerning "the Lord's supper" is authorized by *example* in Acts 20:7 when the church at Troas met "*upon the first [day] of the week.*" What God has joined together, let no man put asunder (cf. Matt. 19:6).

The Lord's supper has been observed by churches on the first day of the week since the beginning of the church in 33 A.D. This was the precedent set by the apostles as they were guided into all truth (cf. John 16:13). Even secular history (from numerous sources) records that Christians have always met on the first day of the week. I wonder why?

Though brethren have the option to assemble and worship God any day of the week as we do during Gospel meetings in singing, praying, and preaching; Sunday worship, the first day of the week worship, is not an option. The *tradition* of the apostles (cf. 2 Thess. 3:6; Acts 16:4) was/is *divine tradition*. Every church through the centuries has been given the same order/command regarding worship upon the first day of the week.

Ephesians 5:11 commands, "*...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them].*" How can we be faithful and ignore what the Holy Spirit says?

I might add that others in our area have also spoken and written concerning these very matters. Who's going to stand for the truth and who's going to compromise on the plains of Ono (cf. Nehemiah 6)?

CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM #8: OTHER DOCTRINES

Adam Good

LOVE: The word love appears twenty-seven times in 1 John 4:7-21. "God is love" and He "manifested" that love "toward us" by sending "His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins." "We love him [God], because he first loved us."

The *Qur'an* presents a very different god. Although Allah is described as possessing loving-kindness in Surahs 11:90 and 85:14, his love is limited to those who first demonstrate their love for him. Muhammad taught "If you love Allah, then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive you your faults...surely Allah does not love the unbelievers" (Surah 3:32). Allah's love is limited to Muslims. Surah 30:45 reaffirms "surely [Allah] does not love the unbelievers." Muslims who abandon Islam lose Allah's love (Surah 22:38). The God of the Bible

"...commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. ... When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son..." (Rom. 5:8-11). If God did not love His enemies, there would be no hope.

SIN: The Bible teaches, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed" (James 1:13-14).

Muhammad taught that Allah leads people astray and causes them to transgress. "Do you wish to guide him whom Allah has caused to err? And whomsoever Allah causes to err, you shall by no means find a way for him" (Surah 4:88). Allah "causes to err whom he pleases and guides whom he pleases; and most certainly you will be questioned as to what you did" (Surah 16:93). Allah is unjust; he condemns those he caused to sin. Islam

has overtones of Calvinism (predestination). "Whomsoever Allah guides, he is the one who follows the right way; and whomsoever he causes to err; these are the losers. And certainly we have created for hell many of the jinn [spirits from Arabian folklore] and the men." Allah "causes to err" those who are destined for hell. "He leaves them alone in their inordinacy, blindly wandering on" (Surah 7:178, 186). Muslims have no reason to teach unbelievers. "As for the disbelievers, it being alike to them whether you warn them, or do not warn them, they will not believe. Allah has sent a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing and there is a covering over their eyes, and there is a great punishment for them" (Surah 2:6-7). It is up to Allah to select "whom he pleases to enter into his mercy" (Surah 76:31).

This is not the God of the Bible. Jesus came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). The Lord is "longsuffering toward us, not

wilingl that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS: The *Qur’an* claims to be perfect, claiming “if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy” (Surah 4:82). Should Muslims gamble or drink alcohol? The *Qur’an* offers two answers. Surah 2:219 reads “They ask you [Muhammad] about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men, and their sin is greater than their profit. And they ask you as to what they should spend. Say: What you can spare.” This verse permits gambling and alcohol in moderation (“what you can spare”), but Surah 5:90 strongly forbids both activities. “O you who believe! Intoxicants and games of chance...are only an uncleanness, of Satan’s handiwork, shun it therefore that you may be successful.” Yet, rivers of wine flow in Paradise (Surah 47:15). How did Satan’s handiwork enter into Paradise?

Discrepancies abound in the *Qur’an*. Did the creation last six days or eights day (Surah 7:54; 10:3; 11:7; 25:59; 41:9-12)? From what was man created: a blood clot (Surah 96:1-2), water (21:30; 24:45; 25:54), clay/black mud (15:26), dust (3:59; 30:20; 35:11), nothing (19:67), earth (11:61), or a drop of fluid/small seed (16:4; 75:37)? Did the Israelites abandon the worship of the golden calf before Moses returned from Mount Sinai (Surah 7:149-150) or after he returned (20:91)? Who became the first Muslim: Muhammad, Moses, or Abraham (Surah 39:12; 7:143; 2:132)? Does this math add up? A man dies and leaves behind two daughters, his two parents, and his wife. The two daughters together receive 2/3 of the estate, the parents together receive 1/3, and the wife receives 1/8. How can an estate add up to 112.5%? Here is another example: a man dies and leaves behind his mother, his wife and two sisters. The mother receives 1/6, the wife 1/4 and the two sisters together receive 2/3 for a grand total of about 108% (Surah 4:11-13, 176). Admittedly, adding fractions is a tough concept.

MYTHS AND LEGENDS: Surah 18:9-26 recounts the story of

several men and their dog that slept for 300 or 309 years only to awaken in perfect condition. Surah 2:65 and 7:163-166 records how the people of a certain village violated the Sabbath by fishing and were transformed into apes. The golden calf crafted by the Israelites mooded (Surah 7:148; 20:88). God picked up Mount Sinai and held it over the heads of the Israelites, threatening to smash them if they rejected the Law of Moses (Surah 7:171).

SCIENTIFIC ERRORS: Surah 21:33 teaches that Allah “created...the sun and the moon. They float, each in an orbit.” Another translation renders it “each in its rounded course.” This surah implies that the sun orbits the earth just like the moon. Does the sun go down into “a muddy spring” or “a black sea” when it sets? It does according to Surah 18:86. Numerous surahs indicate that the earth is flat

like a carpet (15:19; 20:53; 43:10; 71:19). The mountains were created to hold down the earth (Surah 21:31). Muhammad thought the stars were “missiles to drive away the Evil Ones,” a reference to demons (Surah 67:5).

These Islamic teachings reinforce the conclusion that Muhammad’s Allah is not the living God who made a covenant with Abraham, who sent Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian slavery, promised David an heir to sit upon his throne forever, and sent His only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ, to save the world.

The *Qur’an*, filled with error, contradiction, and the doctrine of man, is not worthy to be spoken of in the same breath as the Bible.

*Last in the series
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Elder's COLUMN

WORTHLESS WATCHMEN

Marvin L. Weir

Watchmen who are willing to warn God’s people have almost become obsolete! We pray they all will arise to the task and accept their responsibility.

There are many sad statements recorded in God’s Word. One such statement comes from the lips of Isaiah as he said, “*His watchmen [are] blind: they are all ignorant, they [are] all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, [they are] greedy dogs [which] can never have enough, and they [are] shepherds [that] cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, [say they], I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, [and] much more abundant*” (Isa. 56:10-12).

Coffman comments as follows about Isaiah’s sad statement: “As Homer Hailey declared, ‘The evidence of this paragraph is far stronger for the view that Isaiah has turned from prophesying of the captivity, and that he is speaking to the people of his own

day, summarizing the causes that will lead to the captivity of Israel.’ ...The Temple of Solomon, at the time envisioned here, was still standing; and the abuses mentioned were all prevalent in the days of Isaiah and afterward. These were precisely the very things that led to the captivity. There is no doubt whatever of Isaiah’s authorship of all these chapters. If he had not been, Christ would never have referred to these passages, accrediting them to the great eighth century prophet Isaiah. All the critics on earth do not represent any authority sufficiently dependable to offset this fact. The terrible failure of the prophets and leaders of the Jews during this period of their apostasy was deplorable. They are here referred to as dumb, lazy dogs that will not bark. They not only neglected their duties as watchmen over the religious affairs of Israel, but they were greedy for

gain, interested only in the profits they might reap from their offices; and they also were given over to laziness, drunkenness, and irresponsibility. Isaiah will continue his prophecy regarding such leaders in the following chapter. When one contrasts Jehovah's evaluation of those dumb lazy dogs with their high social standing and the prestige they enjoyed during their generation, it raises the question regarding so-called "Christian" writers today who contradict every line of the Holy Bible on the principles of a system which in arrogance and conceit is called "higher criticism." Are any of Jehovah's words here applicable to them?

A watchmen's duty obligates him to "look" (1 Sam. 14:16). The Lord's watchmen will be looking for the aggressive movements of the enemy and for any signs of backsliding or drawing back among His people.

What will become of the Lord's people when God must charge His watchmen with:

Blindness? A blind watchman (Isa. 56:10) is worthless in physical warfare and although oblivious to many, the same is true in spiritual warfare! God's expectations of His watchmen could not be more clear: "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul" (Ezek. 3:17-19). Watchmen who are willing to warn God's people have almost become obsolete!

Ignorance? What good is a watchman "without knowledge" and only as useful as a dumb dog? Modern day watchmen (especially elders) are so infatuated with "higher criticism" and the opinions of men that they are ignorant of the mind of God! To be a watchman and be ignorant of God's clearly revealed will is to be a miserable failure. "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall

into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14).

Cowardliness? What good are "dumb dogs" that "cannot bark" (Isa. 56:10)? Many elders in the Lord's church today only "wear the title" because they are not remotely qualified to serve the congregation as God's watchmen (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). They fear men more than God and love the world more than the Lord's church! Having no conviction for a "thus saith the Lord," they sit in silence as a dumb dog would do upon mistaking enemies for friends.

Laziness? Far too many watchmen are mere dreamers who are content to lie down and slumber (Isa. 56:10). These dreamers dream big dreams and boast of their dreaming. The problem is that their wishful dreaming is in direct opposition to the Word of God! Being too lazy or having no interest to dig deep into God's Word, they are content to skim the surface and dream dreams.

Selfishness? These shepherds are described as greedy dogs who can never have enough material things and do not understand the Lord's will because they have turned to their own way for their own gain (Isa. 56:11). The apostle Paul spoke of the time to come when "...men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Tim. 3:2-5). A covetous and selfish watchman has no inheritance in the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5)!

Recklessness! "Come ye, [say they], I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, [and] much more abundant" (Isa. 56:12). What good is a watchman who consumes strong drink to dull his senses and then proudly proclaims that tomorrow will be more abundant than today? Satan will continue to rejoice that such watchmen exist! Lack of belief in God's Word will lead to a lack of spirituality and eternal ruin. In this vein, all Christians are to be watchmen. "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37)!

But They Mocked...

(Continued from page 65)

It is well to remember what Jesus had to say. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). And that, folks, is not mocking God by any stretch!

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PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES

Rusty Stark

Ridiculous! Absurd! Sometimes you come across something that makes you want to shout these adjectives. Some things are truly “ridiculous” — inviting ridicule or derision. And some things truly are “absurd” — wildly unreasonable, illogical, or inappropriate.

At the website www.prayingscriptures.com (Carol Ann Kononova), there is a practice set forth that without doubt comes under the heading of ridiculous and absurd. This practice involves printing out prayers with Scripture references, and repeating the words of those Scriptures in wrote prayers.

However, simply stating that something is absurd or ridiculous is not a conclusive argument against it. Even the law of God was considered “a strange thing” by some people (Hosea 8:12).

This article is for the purpose of showing what is wrong with the concept of “praying the scriptures.”

WHAT IS NOT RIDICULOUS

Do not misunderstand. We believe in both Scripture and in Prayer. We do not ridicule prayer or Bible study. We must study daily and pray constantly. We believe in the power of prayer, and we believe that prayer can make a difference in our lives and our situations (1 Tim. 2:1-2). We also believe in the great power of God’s word (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12).

We do not object to our prayers being shaped by the concepts of Scripture. We want our hearts to be filled with God’s word (Psa. 119:11). We want our ideas and desires to be controlled by the word (2 Cor. 10:5). We want to pray for and about the things God teaches us to pray for and about. And, we want our prayers to reflect godliness, spirituality, and proper priorities, all of which come from God’s word.

In addition, we do not object to using the language of Scripture when we pray. It is not absurd to pray to “*God that made the world and all things therein*” (Acts 17:24). It is not inappropriate to thank God for send-

ing “*his only begotten Son*” (John 3:16). It is proper and right to pray for “*the peace which passeth understanding*” (Phil. 4:6-7).

WHAT IS RIDICULOUS

The website www.prayingscriptures.com insists that we must pray these prayers (the ones listed on the website) repeatedly and out loud for them to be effective. There are many problems with this:

First, the Scriptures nowhere teach us to pray prayers written out on paper by someone else. Never do we see words set down that are supposed to be prayed over and over again. The “Lord’s prayer” was a model prayer given by Jesus to the disciples (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4). It really should be called the disciple’s prayer, not the Lord’s prayer. In the denominational world, it is repeated by people chanting in unison. This was never the intent of Christ. In Matthew 6:7, Jesus warns against using “vain repetitions” in our prayers. He never tells his disciples to pray using these words, he tells them to pray “after this manner” (Matt. 6:9). It is absurd (wildly inappropriate) to take this model prayer and say those exact words over and over again. Some of the words — “thy kingdom come” — do not even apply today since the kingdom came in power on the day of Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2). Sadly, it is even more absurd to take scores of Scriptures and do the same thing with them that people have done with the so called “Lord’s Prayer.”

Second, why must these things be prayed out loud? The website acknowledges that God can hear when we pray silently, but it says this:

“They should be read **out loud** every day.

Why read them out loud?

Even at the beginning of the Bible at Genesis 1:3, notice that it starts with, “Then God said...”

In verse 6 it says again, “Then God said...”

In verse 9, the same thing. “Then God said...”

God created the heavens and the earth by *speaking* them into existence. By praying the Scriptures out loud you are *speaking* God’s will for your life into existence. Sure, He can hear you if you pray silently, but it is Him *hearing the spoken Word* that makes Him move in your behalf” (emphasis in the original).

Ridiculous! God’s word is powerful (Heb. 4:12), but not as a magical incantation. It is powerful whether it is written or spoken. Where does the Bible teach that repeating the words of God for his hearing makes him “move in your behalf?” Verbalizing God’s word does not somehow mystically tap into his power.

Third, this absurd concept is based on a faulty view of God. Look at this quote about singing the Scriptures: “What better way to **catch the Lord’s attention**, than by singing His Word in song? (emphasis mine). This is truly ridiculous. We do not need to capture the Lord’s attention. Are we to act like the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 18) — shout louder and cut ourselves in order to capture God’s attention? “*For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him...*” (2 Chron. 16:9). “*For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*” (1 Peter 3:12).

CONCLUSION

It seems God’s simple plan is never enough. Men and women want something different, something more, something new and novel. “Praying the Scriptures” is not founded on the Scriptures. It is ridiculous and absurd.

We urge men to pray, but not written out prayers that come from passages selected by someone else. God urges men to “*let their requests be made known unto God*” (Phil. 4:6).

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