



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 34, No. 8

August 2023

THE NEW BIRTH #3

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1912-2013

THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION

The Bible nowhere teaches the direct, mysterious, miraculous, operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion. John 3:8 does not teach it. “THE GOSPEL” is “THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION”(Rom. 1:16).

Does God work a miracle today every time one is born again? If so, this makes God responsible for sinners not being converted — that God withholds the divine power necessary to save them. This means that God is a respecter of persons if He withholds converting power from some, and on others He sends it, and they are converted. But the Bible plainly says that “*God is no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; 1 Peter 1:17). When Jesus said, “*ye must be born again,*” He put the responsibility on man. If a man were wholly passive in the new birth, it would be impossible to tell him he must be “born again.”

NO DIRECT OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

No direct operation of the Spirit is needed. The word of God is “*able to save your souls*” (James 1:21). Then why do some people say that the WORD is not able, that it takes additional divine power to save? The Gospel is THE power of God — God’s ONLY power — to save (Rom. 1:16). No case is on record where anyone ever received a direct operation of the Spirit for his salvation. The apostles did not teach

that this was essential to be saved, neither did they ever pray for the Holy Spirit to come directly into a sinner’s heart to regenerate him. Christians are not found where the word of God has not been preached. Missionaries are sent to preach the Gospel to the lost that they, hearing the word, may believe it and be saved (Col. 1:5). Where did any inspired man ever call any thing else “THE POWER OF GOD” to save the lost, save (except) the Gospel? If a direct operation of the Spirit is necessary in conversion, and God does not operate on all, then is He not showing partiality?

There is an influence exerted by the Spirit in conversion, but the point is, HOW does He operate? Is it directly or indirectly? What does the BIBLE say on the subject?

THE SPIRIT OPERATES THROUGH THE WORD

Must one be begotten? It is by the word. — 1 Cor. 4:15

Must one be quickened? It is by the word. — Psa. 119:50, 93; Eph. 2:1

Must one be converted? It is by the perfect law. — Psa. 19:7

Must one be saved? It is by words. — Acts 11:14; James 1:21

Must one have light? Understanding? It is by the word. — Psa. 119:105, 130

Must one have faith? It is by the word. — Rom. 10:17; John 20:30-31; Acts 15:7

Must one be made free? It is by

the word, the truth. — John 8:31-32; 17:17

Must one be called? It is by the Gospel. — 2 Thess. 2:14

Must one be born again? It is by the word. — 1 Peter 1:23, 25

GOD’S WORD IS FULL OF POWER (Heb. 4:12)

There is no power in the paper and the ink of the Bible. The power is in the ideas expressed in words. The Bible contains God’s ideas and thoughts revealed to man.

THE GOSPEL, AS IT IS, IS ABLE TO SAVE MAN, AS HE IS.

(1) God is the author of the new birth, (2) the Holy Spirit is His agent, and (3) the Gospel is the Spirit’s instrumentality employed.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit, “*when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin*” (John 16:8 ASV). If you know that you are a sinner, the Holy Spirit convicted you of this fact. But HOW did the Holy Spirit convict you of sin? “*By the law is the knowledge of sin*” (Rom. 3:20; 7:7). There is no other way to convict of sin. The Holy Spirit, a person, uses law, an instrument, to convict of sin.

This example will enable us to better understand the point: “Mr. Jones cut down the tree with the ax.” (1) Mr. Jones cut down the tree. (2) The ax cut down the tree. (3) Jones, the man, cut down the tree with the ax,

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The New Birth #3...



Editorial...

BAPTISM & THE NEW CREATURE

Garland M. Robinson

Many claim they are a new creature and/or have been born again long before they became a Christian. That's impossible!

Second Corinthians 5:17: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* Notice the words “in Christ.” We are a new person, a forgiven person, a child of God, a new creature, IN Christ, not OUT of Christ. Sinners are OUT of Christ, separated from Christ because of their sins. Salvation is reserved for those who are IN Christ.

There are many things we read about that are only found IN Christ, not OUT of Christ. Sinners are out of Christ, Saints are in Christ.

- 1) Salvation is IN Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).
- 2) There is no condemnation IN Christ (Rom. 8:1).
- 3) Redemption from our sins is IN Christ (Rom. 3:24).
- 5) We are new creatures IN Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
- 6) We have hope IN Christ (1 Cor. 15:19).
- 7) The faithful are IN Christ (Eph. 1:1).
- 8) Grace is IN Christ (2 Tim. 2:1).
- 9) All spiritual blessings are IN Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Since all of these things are IN Christ (and there are many more), there are two logical questions that must be asked:

HOW does one get INTO Christ?

WHEN does one get INTO Christ?

There are only two verses in the New Testament that answer these questions:

Romans 6:3 tells **HOW** one gets into Christ: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”*

Galatians 3:27 tells **WHEN** one

gets into Christ: *“For as many of you as have been BAPTIZED INTO Christ have put on Christ.”*

HOW does one get INTO Christ, by being baptized into Him.

WHEN does one get INTO Christ, when one is baptized into Christ they put him on.

There is no passage that says sinners “Believe into Christ.” There is no scripture that says sinners “Repent into Christ.” No scripture says sinners “Confess into Christ.” There are none that say sinners “Pray into Christ.” But, there are two passages that say sinners are baptized into Christ and both of them make clear that it is at one’s baptism into water.

In John 3, Jesus talks to Nicodemus about being “born again.” It is through this process that one becomes a Christian. Without it, one cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus recognized Jesus as a *“teacher come from God”* as evidenced by the miracles he performed. He knew God was with him. In verse 3 *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born of water and of the Spirit**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”*

Jesus made it clear in order for a sinner to enter the kingdom of God he must be “born again.” Being born again involves being *“born of water and of the Spirit.”* The word “and” connects “water” and “Spirit.” God linked water and Spirit together and

man cannot separate them (but they desperately try). You can’t have one without the other. That makes being born again “one birth”, not two births. According to Jesus, being born again involves two elements: *water* and the *Spirit*. There is no such thing as being “born again” unless it involves both. One is not born again without water AND the Spirit. The only water connected with salvation in all the scriptures is water baptism. If it’s not water baptism, then what water is it, what is the water? For two thousand years scholars have recognized the water as water baptism. Baptism puts one INTO Christ — having been “born again” into a new life with Christ, forgiven of their sins. *“Therefore if any man be ‘in Christ,’ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17). There is no new life in Christ without being born again, born of water and the Spirit.

Denominational preachers refuse to believe that water baptism could possibly have any connection to salvation, so they desperately try to explain it away. Not knowing how to explain it, someone came up with an idea by saying the water is the water of our mother’s womb when we are born as a baby. Multitudes have latched onto that idea and keep repeating it even though it’s not true. Nicodemus was also confused and wondered if he must go back into his mother’s womb and be born. He knew enough to know his birth as an infant had nothing to do with salvation. But Jesus was not talking about one’s birth as an infant. He was talking about another birth, a new birth that involved being born again. Being born as a baby into this world has absolutely nothing to do with being saved from our sins, yet that is what many believe. Babies have no sin. If being born as a baby is being born of water, then that would make two births: 1) a birth as a infant and 2) a birth as an adult. The Lord’s explanation does not include two births. There’s one birth in being saved from our sins. The very reason it is called “born again” removes it from our birth as an infant. That certainly was a birth. But Jesus is talking about being “born again” (separate from our birth as an infant). Jesus clearly pointed out that being “born again” involves both “water” AND the “Spirit.”

Some try to make “the Spirit” to

be “baptism of the Spirit.” But it can’t be Spirit baptism (where’s the water). “The Spirit” in being born again involves the “teaching” (instructions) of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who reveals the will of God to man. He does this by and through the Scriptures, the written word (2 Peter 1:21). If it were not for the Scriptures we would not know there is a Spirit. We would not know about sin (Rom. 3:23; 7:7) and what to do to have forgiveness of our sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).

The Holy Spirit does not communicate the will of God to men through visions, dreams, or in any other direct fashion. He worked that way on the apostles; they in turn revealed what they had been given to the entire world through their words. Those words were written down. What they wrote are the 27 books of the New Testament. Since the revelation from God was completed in the 27 books, direct inspiration ceased. It was no longer needed since the entire will of God had been given (see 1 Cor. 13:8-13). Second Peter 1:3 says, *“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”* Since we have been given ALL THINGS that pertain to life and godliness, there is nothing more the Holy Spirit could reveal. All things necessary for one to become a Christian, to live faithful to the Lord, and go to heaven, is revealed in the New Testament.

Consider this: If someone comes along and gives us more than what we have in the New Testament, they are giving us too much. If they give us less than what we have in the New Testament, they have not given us enough. If they give us exactly what the 27 books reveal, they are giving us what we already have. Therefore, nothing they give us is needed. The Scriptures forbid “adding to” or “taking from” what the Bible says. It does so near the beginning of the Bible (Deut. 4:2), in the middle of the Bible (Prov. 30:6), and at the end of the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19).

Are you a “new creature” in Christ? Have you been “born again?” Many claim they are a new creature and/or have been born again long before they became a Christian. That’s impossible! One is not a new creature (a Christian) until he is baptized into Jesus Christ.

THE HYPOCRISY OF “FAITH ONLY SALVATION”

Jason Patrick Hilburn

People of true faith believe every word of the Holy Scriptures, not just a few verses that talk about faith or grace.

Some say man is saved by faith alone without any acts of obedience. Is it not ironic that those who put so much emphasis on belief do not actually believe what God said? Those who teach “faith only” salvation are the very ones who do not have faith in what God said!

1. They don’t believe God, who said that *“by works a man is justified, and not by faith only”* (James 2:24).
2. They don’t believe God, who said that *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:20).
3. They don’t believe God, who said that *“ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth”* (1 Peter 1:22).
4. They don’t believe we have any role in our salvation, even though God said, *“save yourselves”* (Acts 2:38-40).
5. They don’t believe God, who said that baptism is *“for the forgiveness of sins”* (Acts 2:38).
6. They don’t believe God, who said that baptism is to *“wash away thy sins”* (Acts 22:16).
7. They don’t believe Jesus, who requires both belief and baptism for salvation: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”* (Mark 16:16).
8. They don’t believe God, who said that *“water...baptism doth also now save us”* (1 Peter 3:20-21).
9. They don’t believe God, who said man is not in Christ until he is *“baptized into Christ”* (Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; cf. 2 Tim. 2:10).
10. They don’t believe God, who said that man becomes *“free from sin”* after he has *“obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine”* (Rom. 6:16-18).
11. They don’t believe God, who said that *“he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him”* (Acts 10:35).
12. They don’t believe God, who said to obey Him and *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”* (Phil. 2:12).
13. They don’t believe Jesus, who taught that belief in Him alone is not enough, and that only those who obey God will go to Heaven (Matt. 7:21-23).

Those who put so much emphasis on belief, inconsistently accept verses about the necessity of grace, repentance, and confession (going beyond “faith alone”), but amazingly reject verses that speak just as plainly about the necessity of water baptism! One cannot really be a person of faith if he does not believe everything God said (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). It is hypocritical and inconsistent to preach about faith, and lack faith at the same time. People of true faith believe every word of the Holy Scriptures, not just a few verses that talk about faith or grace.

May we all study and “rightly divide God’s Word,” finding the harmony that exists in the totality of the Scriptures, with the desire to please God and go to Heaven (Psalm 119:160; 1 Thess. 5:21).

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The New Birth #3...

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the instrument. Now apply this illustration to the word of God. The word of God is the “*word of the Spirit*” (Eph. 6:17). In conversion it is the Spirit that pierces the heart. But does the Spirit pierce without His sword? No, the Spirit does not throw the sword away and jump into the sinner. Remember the example on Pentecost (Acts 2:37)? On this day, hearts were “pierced” (people were convicted) and three thousand souls were turned to the Lord. The Holy Spirit did this work, but He used His sword. It was the word of God, preached by the Spirit through the apostle Peter, that “pricked” these people “in their heart” and led them to become Christians.

To those who had been born again, Paul said: “*BECAUSE YE ARE SONS, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*” (Gal. 4:6; Acts 5:32). To become a son one must (1) hear the Gospel, (2) believe the Gospel, (3) repent of his sins, (4) confess his faith in Christ, and (5) be baptized.

It is not “water regeneration” as some say who are opposed to the teaching of the Bible on baptism (cf. John 9:1-7, 30). The life begins in the generation, and that which has been begotten is born. So the sinner is begotten by believing (John 1:11-13; 1 John 5:1), then later born — baptized according to the spirit’s instruction.

The word of God is to the spiritual realm just what the grain of wheat is to the material kingdom. In nature, seed is absolutely necessary for a crop. In the spiritual kingdom, seed is necessary to the making of Christians. “*The seed is the word of God*” (Luke 8:11). No seed, no harvest; no Gospel preached, no Christians. The human heart is the soil and the seed enters the soil by hearing (Luke 8:15). The devil knows the way people are converted, and when he can, steals “*the word out of their hearts, lest they should BELIEVE AND BE SAVED*” (Luke 8:12).

If the Holy Spirit operates directly, then it cannot be said that the Gospel is THE power of God to save. If it takes both, then the Gospel is “a” power for salvation; and if God holds back the other power when the Gospel is preached, he is responsible for sin-

ners not being converted. When the Gospel is being preached, the Spirit is operating through the Word on those that hear; they can obey the teaching and be saved, or reject it in life and be lost in eternity (Acts 7:51; 28:27). Man has the moral freedom to accept or reject the Gospel (John 5:40).

There is no theory of a special operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion that does not make God an unfair, unjust respecter of persons. At the judgment the sinner would be damned for not obeying; but after all, God would be wholly responsible for his damnation, for He withheld the Spirit from him. How unjust!!!

CONVERSION IS NOT A MIRACLE

A miracle would rob the sinner of all moral responsibility.

Miracles were performed at times by the apostles to CONFIRM the word and cause sinners to BELIEVE THE TRUTH, but no miracles were performed IN sinners to enable them to believe and be saved (Mark 16:20; Acts 14:3; Heb. 2:3-4).

The miraculous theory of regeneration is not taught in the Bible. It does not record ONE case of conversion by a DIRECT operation of the Holy Spirit in the sinner’s heart! There was no mourner’s bench in the church during the days of the apostles. Man is not a machine, and conversion is not a miracle; the Bible is not a “dead letter,” and visions and dreams are not assurances of pardon. The word of God is the sinner’s assurance of pardon (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38)!

The truth, as formulated in the Gospel, is the medium through which the Holy Spirit begets, quickens, and regenerates the sinner. He who believes in Christ by being taught the Gospel, repents of his sins, and is baptized, is a Christian and entitled to all the promises of God, and if faithful unto death, his shall be the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

CONCLUSION

Many today are saying just what Nicodemus said: “How can these things be?” How can the birth of water and of the Spirit make me a child of God? How can water have anything to do with my salvation? Yet, our Lord plainly said: “*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot*

enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). Hearing the Gospel, believing the Gospel, sincerely repenting of sins, and being baptized in the name of the Lord, constitutes the “new birth,” and makes one a child of God. When one does these things, he enters into the kingdom of God. Christ said it; it must be true!

Ye MUST be born again! You MUST believe (Heb. 11:6), you MUST repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), and you MUST BE BAPTIZED (Acts 9:6; 22:16). In the days of the apostles, people who did these things were “born again,” “born of God,” “born of water and the Spirit.” It is true that we may not be able to understand everything concerning the new birth, any more than we do some of the mysteries of the natural birth, but we CAN understand what has to be done and what is necessary to be “born again.” People today do what is called “joining the church,” but in reality they are not in it. They have “joined,” because they were told they “ought to belong to some church.” The struggle for “numbers” has placed the names of thousands on church rolls who have never been “born again.” Our Lord’s statement — “ye MUST be born again,” “born of water and of the Spirit” — puts the new birth between every sinner and the kingdom of God!

Baptism is certainly a condition of salvation. JESUS said: “*he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*” (Mark 16:16). Will any one affirm, “He that believeth and is NOT baptized, shall be saved?” The HOLY SPIRIT, through the apostle Peter, told convicted sinners to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). These Scriptures clearly make baptism a condition of pardon. It is the final step in obtaining forgiveness. When one is baptized, he is initiated into the kingdom of God; but this does not make water our saviour. Baptism in water is a command of Christ, our Saviour, in order to obtain the remission of past sins, to one who has been taught, who believes the Gospel, and has repented of his sins. This is the reason why infants are not proper subjects of baptism. Baptism ALONE is not for salvation. The language of Jesus is not: “He that believeth is saved, and may be baptized later if he desires.” Jesus SAID: “*He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.*” Therefore, some ruin the figure of the

new birth in their doctrine by putting baptism before faith (as the birth before the begetting, in baptizing infants), and by changing immersion (the birth of water) to sprinkling water ON a person.

Have you been born again? Are YOU in the kingdom of God? If not, will you not accept the truth and be saved? *“Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3:7).

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Bradford C/C, Bradford, TN	\$150
Del Brantley	\$50
B. C. Underwood	\$25
Gary & Glenda Morrell	\$20
Anonymous.....	\$15
Beginning Balance	\$23,654.02
Contributions	\$3,790.00
Debits	
Postage	\$2,445.16
Paper.....	\$3,250.35
Ending Balance	\$24,083.51

THE NATURE OF EVIL AND ITS REMEDY

Marvin L. Weir

The account of the two demon possessed men in the Scriptures is indeed humbling and sad (Matt. 8:28-33). Evil shines brightly in its overtaking of these two individuals. Demon possession existed on earth during the time that the Lord and his apostles had the power to work miracles. Now that God’s revelation is complete (1 Cor. 13:10-12), neither miracles nor demon possession are possible today.

Guy N. Woods in Volume 1 of *Questions And Answers*, p.232, addresses demons and demon possession in saying:

Demons were wicked spirits, under the direction of Satan, opposed to God, and capable of causing much misery to man (Matt. 8:28-34; 12:24). Their powers over human beings enabled them to afflict people with dumbness (Matt. 9:32-33), blindness (Matt. 12:22), and insanity (Luke 8:26-36). They acknowledged the deity of the Lord, conceded their wicked state, recognized impending judgment, and trembled in contemplation of it (Matt. 8:29; Luke 4:41; Jam. 2:19). The apostles were given the power to cast out demons and an instance in which they exercised it is seen in Luke 10:17-18 ...Efforts to “explain” demonology of the New Testament as (1) popular superstition; (2) accommodation of the Lord to current views; (3) illness or insanity; (4) fallen angels; or (5) progeny of angels and wicked women, all fail either (a) because of their own obvious falsity or (b) because they conflict with known facts and our Lord’s limitless goodness and knowledge.

Let us now study evil as it is personified in these demon possessed men of Matthew 8:28-33.

Evil Can Use Men To Accom-

plish Its Purposes! The men of Matthew 8:28 were “possessed” by demons. Although this type of “possession” against one’s will does not exist today (as it required the Lord or His apostles to cast out these demons), a person can **allow** evil to take control of his thoughts and actions. When this occurs, evil can become the master of one’s life.

Jesus taught that a person was defiled by that which proceeded from him. In explaining to His disciples He stated, *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-23). Evil must not be allowed to dwell in our minds! As the apostle Paul implored, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Phil. 4:8).

Evil Is Associated With Death!

The fruit of continued evil is spiritual death. One should note that these demon possessed men came *“forth out of the tombs”* (Matt. 8:28). It is true that the evil heart loves **darkness** rather than **light!** The things that righteous people love and cherish are hated and despised by those who are evil. Jesus remarked during His ministry on earth, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”* (John 3:19-20).

Evil Is The Enemy Of Liberty!

These demon possessed men were *“exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass by that way”* (Matt. 8:28). Sin and evil-doing will always hinder the true liberty that one has in Christ Jesus. Never forget the words of Paul to Elymas the sorcerer: *“O full of all subtilty*

and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10)?

Evil Resists And Shuns The Presence Of Christ! It is said of the demons, “And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time” (Matt. 8:29)? The demons knew Christ for who He was but were aware that they had nothing in common with Him. All who are in bondage to sin and are happy with its pleasures hate the holiness of God. The demons, like many people today, wanted nothing to do with the Master but were fearful of being tormented by Him. Evil never provides the peace and serenity that is found in Christ Jesus.

The New Testament describes demons not as *unbelievers* but as those who “believe and shudder” (James 2:19). They believe, but they are lost! They recognize the authority of Christ and realize that their doom is certain (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). Let us learn that evil will be punished, and that “belief only” will not save one!

Evil Leads To Destruction! “So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters” (Matt. 8:31-32). Evil always leads to ruin! Upon entering the swine, the demons did to them what they were

trying to do to the men — drove them to immediate destruction. This shows that demon possession was not a normal physical sickness. As J. Noel Merideth stated in *The Book of Matthew*, p.287 (Getwell church of Christ): “It is important to note that this is not mere insanity, for insanity does not move out of people into pigs — these demons were real.”

Evil Must Be Cast Out! Evil cannot be tolerated or reformed and made right! Evil never turns into that which is holy and good! Baptism will not change evil into righteousness! One must repent and turn from evil to escape the destiny of the demons and all evil-doers!

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THE CHURCH IS DIFFERENT

Franklin Camp, deceased

God has taught His people to be different. His people often forget this truth and lose their distinctiveness. Israel wanted to become like the other nations around them (1 Sam. 8). They did and God cast them off. Surely there is a warning for the church.

The Church Is Different From The World. The church is different from the world in its attitude and ambitions. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16). Christian values are different from sinners values. Sinners live for self. Christians live to glorify God and serve others (Matt. 16:24; Mark 10:45). Are we losing this distinctiveness today? Are the ambitions of Christians different from non-Christians?

The Church Is Different From Judaism. Judaism was carnal, the church is spiritual. “Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary ... which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washing, and carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:1,10). Look at the word “carnal.” The church is spiritual (Eph. 1:3). It is heavenly (Eph. 2:6). It worships in spirit and truth (John 4:24; Rom. 1:9). This is one reason mechanical instruments of music have no place in Christian worship. If one granted that

it was right in the Old Testament it does not suit the spiritual worship of the New Testament. Christian worship must be from the heart. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19).

The Church Is Different From Catholicism. The church differs from the Catholic Church in that it accepts the authority of the Scriptures. Catholics do not. Consider the following: “One must keep the commandments of God and the church” (Catechism of Christian Doctrine, No.I, p.31). The Scriptures are an authority, but not the only authority. In truth, it is no authority since the pope must interpret it. Catholics teach that 2 Peter 1:20 denies the right of individual interpretation, but Peter is speaking of how Scripture was given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). Paul commanded “prove all things, hold fast to that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). The Lord’s church urges all to have an open mind and “search the scriptures daily” to see if what is heard is in harmony with what they have read.

The Church Is Different From Protestantism. The church differs from Protestantism in that it accepts the completeness of the Scriptures. The church has no creed but Christ and no

book but the Bible. All teaching is based upon the Book. All questions are decided by what the Bible teaches not a manual or discipline. It also differs from Protestantism in accepting the completeness of the Scripture and denying the need for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit in order to be able to understand it. Protestants misapply 1 Corinthians 2:14. They think the natural man is a sinner and that without a direct operation of the Spirit he cannot understand the Bible. It is strange that though the Bible is made of words, just like those in school books and newspapers, one can understand a book or paper, but not the Bible.

The Church Is Different From The Christian Church. The church differs from the Christian Church in its respect for the silence of the Scriptures. The Christian church teaches that where the Bible is silent we may speak or act. This opens the door for anything that is not specifically forbidden. This is a real difference between it and the church.

We should not be afraid or ashamed to be different from the world, from Judaism, from Catholicism, from Protestantism, and even from the Christian Church. Without a doubt one of the greatest problems we are facing in the church today is the fact that most people are afraid to be different.

EXEGESIS OF EPHESIANS 5:19 AND COLOSSIANS 3:16

W. D. Jeffcoat
1929-2014

In Ephesians 5:19 Paul states, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” All Bible quotations are taken from the KJV unless otherwise noted. In Colossians 3:16 he declared, “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.”

In the first text, “speaking, comes from *laleo*, which means to “talk, tell, or utter.” Speech involves pronunciation, or the giving of the correct vowel and consonant sounds. Speech involves enunciation, or the projecting of these correct sounds. Speech involves articulation, or the correct joining of the syllables into words and phrases. In both texts, “singing,” comes from *ado*, which is always indicative of praise to God. The term “music,” which appears in neither text, is defined as a rhythmical succession of pleasing tones. With these thoughts in mind, notice the following observations.

Singing is a specific kind of music—vocal music. It is not merely vocal music that pleases God, however. People may sing notations or tones, which constitute vocal music. The kind of singing which God prescribes in Christian worship involves speaking, or the pronunciation, enunciation, and articulation of words. The singing is directed toward two objects, God and people. In the second text, Paul defines that which is directed toward people as “teaching,” from *didasko*, which means to “give instruction,” and “admonishing,” from *noutheteo*, which means to “warn.” In both texts it may be observed that singing, as worship, is directed to God, while in the second text it may be additionally noted that “grace,” from *charis*, expressive of graciousness or thanksgiving, is directed toward God.

Humming, the clapping of hands, or even whistling has no place in such activity. Although both humming and

whistling constitute vocal music, and clapping of hands is engaged in by God’s creation (cf. Ps. 98:8; Isa. 55:12), and not that which is made by man (i. e. a mechanical instrument), none of them are divinely authorized! People hum and whistle tones, and not words, which involve speech. Humming and whistling do not instruct and warn people in regard to Biblical principles, but singing which involves speaking does! The clapping of hands, which is none other than a rhythmical device, is but a percussion instrument, similar to a snare drum. Thus, neither humming, whistling, nor the clapping of hands involves pronunciation, enunciation, or articulation, by which means people are taught and admonished. Among other things, Paul stated in First Corinthians 14:15, “...I will sing with the understanding also.” In the text, “understanding” is from *nous* which denotes, “the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining.” People do not reflect, perceive, understand, feel, judge, or determine anything regarding instruction and warning in the New Testament by humming, whistling, or the clapping of hands. The writer affirms, in fact, that there is absolutely no difference in using such to accompany our singing in worship and using any mechanical instrument of music! In each instance they are condemned for the same reason—the New Testament does not authorize their use!

Regarding the texts under consideration, however, there is another thing that greatly disturbs this writer. Many Christians do not sing in worship to God! The term “yourselves” in the first text and the phrase “one another” in the second text come from *heautou*, which is a reciprocal pronoun, denoting the fact that mutual action or a cross relationship is involved in the singing. It involves reciprocity or a mutual and cooperative exchange. It means that when the writer sings, he instructs and warns himself and worships and

expresses graciousness to God, and at the same time, he does likewise to the other worshipers. The other worshipers, in turn, reciprocate, or do likewise to the writer. Some hold that erroneous view that “making melody (*psallo*) in the heart” means that it is unnecessary for the singing to be audible. If this were the case, mutual action or cooperative exchange would not be involved in the teaching and admonishing of one another, and in worshiping and expressing thanksgiving to God. *Psallo*, which is used in the first passage, simply conveys the figurative idea of pulling, plucking, or twanging the strings of the heart. The term “heart” in the text is from *kardia*, which denotes the seat of the will, intellect, etc. Coupled with the statement of Paul in regard to “understanding” in First Corinthians 14:15, it can readily be seen that not only are Christians commanded to sing in worship, but they are to do so in audible fashion. Since Christians cannot engage in the other items of worship by proxy, we should not think that worship in song is any different. Of course, obviously, there are exceptions. Those who cannot speak, or those who are otherwise physically disabled, are obviously exempt. The statement however, “I cannot sing,” is an indictment against Almighty God, with the above exceptions. If this were true, God would require persons to do that which they cannot do! No doubt many people who make such statements think of their inability as compared to others. They should remember, however, that the singing is not merely directed to their fellows, but also “to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19), or “unto God” (Col. 3:16).

EDITOR’S NOTE: This article is an excerpt of a recently published book titled: *Worshipping God In Song* by W. D. Jeffcoat. It is written especially for song leaders and those who wish to improve their worship in song. For ordering information, send an email to: AgapeChristianBooks@aol.com



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