



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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RESURRECTION THEORIES HOW SKEPTICS ATTEMPT TO REFUTE JESUS' RESURRECTION

Jon Gary Williams

Biblical skeptics, including some liberal theologians, adamantly reject the resurrection of Jesus Christ. While they, in a very dubious way acknowledge the Gospel accounts of Jesus' life, they deny that He was ever raised from the dead. They endeavor to explain away His resurrection with a variety of theories. There are at least seven such theories, all of which lack any rationale.

They are merely fanciful, contrived ideas. What are these theories?

The Unconscious Theory

This theory says that though Jesus was crucified, He never actually died, He was merely unconscious. This is sometimes called the **swoon** theory — fainting or passing out, not dead, but just unconscious. Those holding to this view accept only those parts of the Gospel accounts they wish and discard the rest. For example, they accept the record of the Gospel that Jesus was crucified, but reject the same record stating that He died.

All four Gospel accounts clearly say Jesus was dead (Matt. 27:50; Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46; John 19:30). And, at least two of the apostles, Matthew and John, were eyewitnesses of His death. Here we raise an obvious question. After suffering such a bloody and torturous crucifixion, how could Jesus have survived, unattended, in a tomb for several days? This makes no sense whatever.

The Spiritualistic Theory

It is claimed that only the spirit of Jesus was raised, not His body. Here is the picture: His body was still there, still dead, only His spirit was gone.

But what do the Scriptures actually say? The tomb was empty. The angel said, *“He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come see the place where the Lord lay”* (Matt. 28:6). There was nothing there. Jesus' body was gone. Matthew could not have made it clearer. Later, the apostles preached that His body was resurrected (Acts 2:27,31; 1 Cor. 15:1-4, 35-40, 44). Here is another important factor. The only thing that can be raised is that which dies. However, the spirit does not die (Matt. 10:28).

The Vision Theory

Some teach that Jesus only appeared to the disciples in a vision. In other words it wasn't real at all, it was just visionary. However, this theory encounters an enormous problem. The disciples touched Jesus and ate with Him (Luke 24:30; John 20:27). If this was only a vision, how can this be explained?

It is ironic that skeptics want to create a miracle to remove a miracle, but this is exactly what they do. In attempting to circumvent a miracle, another equally obvious miracle is contrived.

The Mistaken Women Theory

It is claimed that the women went to the wrong tomb. So this view places the blame on the women! “They just made a mistake.” Again, it is amazing the extent to which men will go to avoid plain Scriptures.

Here are a few important questions. Did the men also go to the wrong tomb? Were the angels present at the tomb also mistaken? Why didn't the enemies of Jesus expose this mistake and direct the authorities to the correct tomb? Common sense says this is exactly what they would have done, which would have put an end to the resurrection story.

The last three theories are all alike in that they claim Jesus' body was simply removed. The assumption is that His body was just taken away and hidden.

The Joseph Theory

The assumption is made that Joseph moved Jesus' body to a different location. Now this may sound plausible, however, it faces several serious problems. How did Joseph convince the guards to let him take Jesus' body? Remember, the Roman guards were under threat of severe punishment if the tomb was disturbed (Matt. 27:62-66). Also, if skeptics accept the Biblical record that Joseph was a real person, why not accept what it says about his

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Resurrection Theories...



Editorial...

QUESTIONS ON SALVATION #2

Garland M. Robinson

Some say John 3 is speaking of being born again of the Spirit, not water baptism.

Answer: In John 3:3, Jesus tells Nicodemus that one must be “born again” in order to see the kingdom of God. In verse 5 he describes being born again as being “born of water and of the Spirit” in order to “enter into the kingdom of God.” We became a member of the human race when we were born of our mother’s womb. Jesus reveals there is a birth involved in order to be a member of the kingdom of God — the family of God. Our physical birth into the world involved a *father* and a *mother*. Our spiritual birth into God’s kingdom involves *water* and the *Spirit*.

Membership in the Lord’s kingdom is essential. Only those who are members of the kingdom go to heaven. Those not in the kingdom do not go to heaven. Both John the Baptist (Matt. 3:1-2) and Jesus (Matt. 4:17; 10:7) preached about the “kingdom of heaven” being at hand; i.e. it would soon begin. It is also called the “kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14; 9:1). Membership in that kingdom is an absolute necessity. Read these passages carefully: Acts 2:41,47; Col. 1:13; Eph. 5:23; Heb. 12:28. Jesus revealed in Matthew 16:18-19 that his kingdom is the church — his church is the kingdom. It is the body of the saved. Jesus is the savior of the body, the church (Eph. 5:23; 1:22-23; 4:4).

When Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of the new birth (being born again), the kingdom had not yet been established. Jesus is talking about a birth that would put one into the kingdom of God. The practice of this new birth took place for the first time on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Believers on that day were told “...Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission

of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). About 3,000 obeyed the Gospel that day and became members of the Lord’s church, his kingdom (Acts 2:41,47). They put into practice what Jesus revealed to Nicodemus.

Let’s look at John 3 more closely. 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.*” In verse 5 “*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.*” “Born again” (v.3) is the same as “born of water and of the Spirit” (v.5). In order for us to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must be “born again.” Verse 5 explains that being born again involves being “born of water and of the Spirit.” Being born again involves “one birth” that consists of two elements: *water* and *the Spirit*. There is no new birth unless it involves both. One is not born again without both water AND the Spirit. The only water connected with entering the kingdom (being saved) in all the Scriptures is water baptism. If it’s not water baptism, then what water is it — what is the water? It’s impossible for the water to be the water of our physical birth. Our physical birth included two elements, a father and a mother; and, the new birth includes two elements, water and the Spirit. Jesus is talking about another birth, a second birth, separate from our first birth.

“The Spirit” is not Holy Spirit baptism. “The Spirit” in being born again is spoken of in Titus 3:5 as a renewing of the Spirit. Notice the words of the Holy Spirit in verse 5: “*according to his mercy he saved us, by **the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.***” Salvation comes when a sinner is “born again” of water and the Spirit. When sinners believe, repent, confess and are baptized, their sins are washed away just as Saul’s sins were washed away when he was

baptized (Acts 22:16). The “old man” is done away (buried in water) and a “new man” arises (Rom. 6:6). This is according to the teaching (instructions) of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the one who revealed the will of God to man. He does this by and through the Scriptures. In the Old Testament, “...*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Peter 1:21). In the New Testament, the truth was revealed “*by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*” (1 Peter 1:12). If it were not for the Scriptures we would not know about sin and what to do to have forgiveness of sins. The Holy Spirit worked through the apostles and those upon whom they laid hands to impart miraculous gifts (Acts 8:18). One of these gifts was the revealing of the Scriptures. Inspired words were written down by inspired writers. What they wrote down are the 27 books of the New Testament. Since the revelation from God was completed in the 27 books, the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit ceased. It is no longer needed (see 1 Cor. 13:8-13).

In physical birth we say a child is begotten of his father and born of his mother. In the new birth one is begotten of the Spirit and born of water. There is a begetting and a birth. How does the Holy Spirit beget and bring about the new birth? It’s by (through) the Word of God. “*Of his own will **begat** he us with the word of truth*” (James 1:18). “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God*” (1 Peter 1:23). Paul wrote, “...*in Christ Jesus I have **begotten** you through the gospel*” (1 Cor. 4:15).

When a sinner reads, hears, learns the Gospel, he is begotten of the Spirit when he comes to “belief” (faith). But as he was not born at the moment of his physical begetting, he is not born spiritually when he comes to belief. He has the right “to become” a Christian, but he has not completed the process. Concerning Jesus we read, “*As many as received him, to them gave he **power to become** the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (John 1:12). A man and a woman obtain a marriage license. They now have the right to get married but they’re not married yet. A sinner hears the Gospel and believes (is be-

gotten), but he must also be born again — born of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Water is simply water. There's nothing special about it. Any water will do as long as there's enough of it to immerse the believer. Baptism requires "much water" and a going "down into the water" (John 3:23; Acts 8:38-39).

Many refuse to believe water baptism has any connection to salvation, so they desperately try to explain it away by saying the water is the water of our mother's womb when we are born as a baby. Being born as a baby in natural child birth has absolutely nothing to do with being saved from our sins. Babies have no sin. If being born as a baby is being born of water, that would be two births: 1) a birth as a baby and 2) a birth of the Spirit as an adult many years later. There are not two births in John 3:3-5. There's one birth. The very reason Jesus calls the new birth being "born again" removes it from our birth as an infant. Being born from our mother's womb was certainly a birth. But Jesus is talking about being "born again" (separate from our birth as an infant). Being "born again" can't have any connection to one's birth as an infant. Jesus clearly pointed out that being "born again" involves and includes "water" AND "the Spirit."

We must not stretch or twist the Scriptures beyond their natural and normal meaning. For example, would we say that a person must first be physically born in order to ride a bicycle or drive a car? Such a concept would never be imagined. Of course one must be born and mature to the point at which they learn to ride a bicycle or drive a car. Nicodemus wondered if Jesus had reference to a natural birth when he asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4)? Jesus responded by saying he was not talking about being born of the flesh. He is talking about a spiritual birth. A spiritual birth cannot be seen with human eyes. As we cannot see our sins with our physical eyes, we cannot see our sins when they are washed away by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). When sinners are begotten by the word of God when they believe and are born of water (baptism) according to the teaching of the Spirit, they are "born again." That is a spiri-

tual birth. That's when the Lord "*delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*" (Col. 1:13).

OPEN DOORS

In the Bible, there is such a thing as a literal door/gate being opened (Acts 5:19; 12:14). In the book of Acts, as well as in letters written to first-century Christians, we also read about the Lord symbolically opening doors for His people. When God opens a door it means He provides an opportunity.

After Barnabas and Paul completed a lengthy preaching trip, they reported to the church in Antioch of Syria "*all that God had done with them, and how he had **opened the door of faith** unto the Gentiles*" (Acts 14:27). What had the Lord done? He granted Paul and Barnabas the chance to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. That was wonderful because the Gospel has the power to save Gentiles and Jews alike (Rom. 1:16), and both need God's good news due to their sins (Rom. 3:23).

In a later instance, Paul told the saints in Corinth that he had been in the city of Troas, and there "*a **door was opened** unto me of the Lord*" (2 Cor. 2:12). Paul was there to preach the Gospel, but in that instance he had another pressing matter which caused him not to remain in Troas.

Through John, the Christ spoke these words about Himself to the saints in Philadelphia: "*These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, **he that openeth, and no man shutteth...** I have set before thee **an open door**, and no man can shut it...*" (Rev. 3:7). How encouraging those thoughts must have been to those disciples who lived in a time and area in which Jesus' followers faced severe persecution.

What have we learned from the passages above? It is undeniable that the God of heaven opens doors for His servants, and He can keep doors open despite the efforts of humans to close them. Thank God that in His providence (God providing for His children in non-miraculous ways), He grants His children opportunities to serve.

There is another aspect of open doors that we must not neglect. What is that? Praying for them. When Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he made this request of the brethren in Colosse: "*...praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ...*" (Col. 4:3). Paul was convinced that our heavenly Father would respond to the prayers of His saints by opening doors to proclaim the Gospel to lost people. Brethren, let us send up such prayers today. Let us pray for evangelistic doors to open in North Korea, Iraq, China, and other places where New Testament Christianity has not been welcomed. At the same time, let us pray for doors to open to teach the good news in the community where we currently live. Do not stop there: let me encourage you to pray for *you* to have opportunities to teach a lost soul.

When we beg God to open doors for us to serve in ways that will glorify His name and benefit His Kingdom, we need to be ready to step up, perhaps even step out of our personal comfort zone, and take advantage of the doors He has opened. It does not make sense, and it does not show a great spirit on our part, if we plead for open doors but then fail to take advantage of them.

Thank God for open doors! Let us give Him the praise, and let us be praying for, seeking, and leaping through the doors He opens.

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THE TEN COMMANDMENTS NEVER SAVED ANYONE

Eddy Gilpin

Much is made in religious circles about the Ten Commandments. They are elevated above all else God has said by most people. I have often stated in a facetious manner that most people believe that “if you keep the Ten Commandments, eat all your oatmeal, and brush your teeth, you go to heaven.” The majority believes that keeping the Ten Commandments is both essential and sufficient; and, to say otherwise is essentially blasphemous. However, the majority is uninformed about this matter. For example, many have no idea which day the Sabbath actually was. It was not the first day of the week (our Sunday), but the seventh day of the week (our Saturday). Others speak of the “Christian Sabbath,” of which there is no such thing in Scripture. This misinformation about the subject is the result of ignorance about what the Bible says and a failure to “rightly divide” what the Bible teaches (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). This results in truth being minimized and trivialized (as nothing else really matters as long as one “keeps the Ten Commandments”). But, what does the Bible reveal?

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS NEVER SAVED ANYONE IN MOSES’ DAY

Two Old Testament chapters reveal the Ten Commandments. They were given initially at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17), and then rehearsed to those entering the new land (Deut. 5:1-21). The Old Testament itself reveals that it would yield to a better law (Jer. 31:31-34). It is amazing that most will not accept what the Old Testament says about itself! Hebrews 8:8-12 (as well as other passages) reveals the fulfillment of this matter. Jesus “fulfilled” the law of Moses (Matt. 5:17-18). He “blotted it out” (Col. 2:14).

If keeping the Ten Commandments was sufficient for the people in Moses’ day, what about *circumcision* (Gen. 17:9-14; John 7:22), the *Passover* (Exodus 12:14-17; 24-25), *sacrifices* (Lev. 5:14-19; 7:37-38; Heb. 9:22), and various other laws contained in Moses’ covenant? If one merely kept the Ten

Commandments, he would have observed none of these. And, while the prescribed sacrifices could not remove sin in actuality (Heb. 10:4), they pointed, by faith, to that ultimate Sacrifice which could (1 Peter 1:18-19). Yet, if one in that day merely kept the Ten Commandments, he would never have offered such. Likewise, in keeping only the Ten Commandments, there is not a single drop of blood to be found. And, “*without shedding of blood is no remission*” (Heb. 9:22); hence, no salvation.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS NEVER SAVED ANYONE IN JESUS’ DAY

The Jews of Jesus’ day were divided over which command was the greatest. Jesus was asked about this (Matt. 22:34-36). By His answer, which of the Ten Commandments did He reveal? He gave none of them (Matt. 22:37-38). Jesus added to this conversation “the second” greatest command. Which of the Ten Commandments did He give? Again, none (Matt. 22:39). If one could be saved/justified by keeping the Ten Commandments, surely at least one of these ten would have made the top two.

Additionally, the man commonly referred to as “the rich young ruler” came to Jesus and asked, “*What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life*” (Matt. 19:16)? When questioned by Jesus it was revealed that this young man had basically kept the Ten Commandments from childhood (Matt. 19:17-20). However, he had not yet done that which would afford him “eternal life.” There was something yet missing (Matt. 19:20-21). The point is, if keeping the Ten Commandments was sufficient for salvation in Jesus’ day, this young man would have been saved by so doing. But, he was not.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WILL NOT SAVE ANYONE TODAY

The Ten Commandments never was intended as a system of salvation, but rather a moral code for a particular people for a particular time (Deut. 5:2-3). The Sabbath Day itself was

not even made known until Israel was at Mt. Sinai (Neh. 9:13-14; Deut. 5:1-3).

Heaven revealed that “all authority” belongs to Jesus, not to Moses or any other (Matt. 17:1-8; 28:18). His will (the New Testament) became of force (superseding the Old Testament) at His death (Heb. 9:15-17). His will (the New Testament) actually forbids man today from practicing religiously the things found in the Old Testament (cf. Rom. 7:1-6; 10:1-4; Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:24-25; 5:3-4). The latter of the aforementioned verses states that anyone who seeks justification by the law of Moses (which includes the Ten Commandments) is “fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). The book of Hebrews in its entirety is a treatise directing those who sought spiritual refuge under the law of Moses to turn back to Christ and His law. Among other things, the writer stated: “*Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first [the Old Testament], that he may establish the second [the New Testament]. By the which will [the New Testament] we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*” (Heb. 10:9-10).

In order to be saved, one will have to obey the will of Christ, not the will of Moses (the Ten Commandments).

CONCLUSION

The Ten Commandments accomplished all that God wanted accomplished. They were perfect for their intended purpose. They were never intended as a system of salvation, even to those to whom they were given initially. Being a part of the law of Moses (the Old Testament) as they were, they were “*taken out of the way*” and “*nailed to the cross*” by Christ (Col. 2:14). Keeping the Ten Commandments will make one a better citizen and likely help him in other ways. But, keeping the Ten Commandments will not save anyone. In order to be saved, one must obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17; Heb. 5:9). He must **believe** that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24), **repent** of his sins (Luke 13:3), **confess** the

name of Christ before men (Rom. 10:10), be **baptized** for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and remain **faithful** in his service and obedience to the Lord (Rev. 2:10).

Resurrection Theories...

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character? He was an “honorable” man (Mark 15:43). Would such a man intentionally deceive others?

This theory suffers from a failure to make sense. Like the others, it accepts from the Gospel records what it chooses, discarding the rest.

The Disciples Theory

This theory says the Lord’s disciples removed the body of Jesus. However, this view is easily exposed. First, if the disciples removed the body, why did the soldiers have to be bribed to say the body was stolen while they were asleep (Matt. 28:11-15)? Second, if the soldiers were asleep, how could they have known the disciples removed the body? Third, if the disciples removed Jesus’ body, this means they lied about His resurrection. Yet, these men endangered their lives teaching the resurrection. Question: Would men give their lives preaching something they knew to be a lie?

The Enemy Theory

This theory claims that the enemies of Jesus removed His body. For the following reasons this theory is seriously flawed. A sensible question would be, why would they have done this? What purpose would it have served? By stealing the body they would have only enhanced the disciples’ claim that Jesus was raised from the dead. Also, if Jesus’ enemies did steal His body, to refute His resurrection all they needed to do was simply produce the body as evidence.

An Added Note

Not only must skeptics deal with the Gospel accounts, they must also face the New Testament epistles which testify to Jesus’ resurrection, especially those of the apostle Paul, for he explicitly states that **many** people witnessed the resurrected Lord (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

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WAS JESUS PERFECT?

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Misconceptions about Jesus are nothing new. They have been around since His earthly ministry. In the seventh chapter of John there are five different answers given to the question — “Who is Jesus?” They include: a good man (John 7:12), a deceiver (v.12), a demon possessed man (v.21), the Christ (vs.26,41), and the Prophet (v.40).

There are three primary reasons for this wide range of answers: ignorance of all the evidence, a lack of honesty with the evidence, and/or a lack of passion for the truth based upon the evidence.

On the evening of July 9th, CNN host **Don Lemon** made the following assertion: “Jesus Christ admittedly was not perfect when He was here on earth.” This statement is either true and tragic or false and blasphemous. Here are three significant pieces of evidence to consider in determining accurately and conclusively the nature of this statement.

Consider the monikers used by the Bible for itself. Within its pages, the Bible self-identifies with the following terms: “*the truth*” (John 17:17), “*the word of truth*” (1 Thess. 2:13), “*the holy Scriptures*” (2 Tim. 3:15), “*the perfect law of liberty*” (James 1:25).

For something to be genuinely true, there must not be any falsehood advocated by it or any inaccuracies in its recording of events. For something to be genuinely holy, there cannot be any impurities in it. The synonyms used in the Bible to describe its contents point to a book free from any falsehood.

If the Bible’s claim to be genuinely holy and wholly true is accurate, then its clear declarations of Jesus’ sinlessness (such as 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22) must be true. The holiness and truthfulness of the Bible’s contents are inseparably linked to the sinlessness of Jesus’ life. They stand or fall together.

The Holy Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ was perfect when He was here on earth (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Peter 2:21-22).

Consider the impartiality found in the Bible. As an example, every person lauded for his/her heroic faith in the 11th chapter of Hebrews also had a dark side of spiritual and moral failure. Noah got drunk and indecent. Abraham lied about his wife — twice. Sarah laughed aloud at God’s promise. Moses murdered a man. God is no respecter of persons (Rom. 2:11) and the Bible clearly documents this truth by its brutally honest record of its characters. Yet, it has no record of a single imperfection in Jesus.

Based upon the Bible’s impartial testimony, Jesus was perfect when He was here on earth (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; Heb. 7:26-27; Heb. 9:14,28; 1 John 3:5).

Consider the audacious challenge given by Jesus. During the final two years of His ministry, Jesus had constant critics scrutinizing His every word and action — they sought to destroy Him (Mark 3:6). Amid this intense hostility and microscopic surveillance, Jesus asked His enemies the following question: “*Which of you convinceth me of sin*” (John 8:46)? No one came forth.

The Lamb of God underwent months of hostile examination, yet not a single imperfection could be found in Him. In the end, His enemies had to resort to false witnesses against Him and ignore the fact their testimony did not agree (Mark 14:55-59). Three times Pilate’s legal verdict was “Not guilty” (Luke 23:22). Because of His complete innocence, the omniscient God (who knows the thought and intents of every heart) resurrected Him on the third day and declared Him to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1:4). “*Let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Rom. 3:4).

Even the enemies of Jesus testify He was perfect when He was here on earth. “*Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God*” (Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39). To believe otherwise is false and blasphemous.

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Elder's COLUMN

WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO RISE UP AND STAND IN THE GAP?

Marvin L. Weir

If elders, preachers, and all who consider themselves to be Christians so desired, they could learn from faithful Old Testament prophets. Ezekiel is such a prophet. On one occasion God said to him: *“Son of man, say unto her, Thou [art] the land that is not cleansed, nor rained upon in the day of indignation. [There is] a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof, like a roaring lion ravening the prey; they have devoured souls; they have taken the treasure and precious things; they have made her many widows in the midst thereof. Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed [difference] between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. Her princes in the midst thereof [are] like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, [and] to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered [mortar], seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully”* (Ezek. 22:24-29).

Notice what God said was happening among His people:

- 1) They were a land not cleansed.
- 2) They devoured souls.
- 3) The priests did violence to the law of God.
- 4) The priests profaned holy things and made no distinction between the holy and common.
- 5) People were not made to discern between the clean and the unclean.
- 6) The princes in their midst were like wolves ravening their prey.
- 7) The prophets were seeing false visions and telling lies to the people.

As we contemplate history repeating itself, let us take note of what is occurring far too often today in con-

gregations calling themselves churches of Christ.

1) Many congregations willingly tolerate and fellowship fellow members who are not clean from sin. What is referred to are those who live in open sin and refuse to repent! The sin of adultery is a case in point. So many today are living in adulterous marriages while elders, preachers, and other members extend the right hand of fellowship. Such a sinful situation should never be tolerated among God's people!

2) Souls are devoured today by those who teach what the Bible does not teach while refusing to teach what the Bible does teach! The majority of those who call themselves elders today have abandoned their charge to Scripturally *“feed the church”* (cf. Acts 20:28). The congregation is allowed to do what shepherds of a herd of sheep would never allow them to do. Members can graze on and ingest whatever fodder they desire and so-called elders rubber stamp it as being wholesome and healthy. What is allowed to take place in many congregations today is an absolute disgrace! Denominational programs and gimmicks are in great demand, and serious Bible study is in short supply. Souls are being devoured while those who are supposed to be shepherds cater to what the flock desires.

3) So-called preachers are allowed to do untold violence to the Word of God. Why, brethren, why? Never have so many *uncertain* sounds been allowed to spew forth from those who should be setting forth the Word of life! Do people not study the Bible for themselves anymore? Why are so many who profess to be followers of Christ so content to allow false teaching to go unchallenged? Is it lack of backbone or do they just not care? Why give the time of day to one who says that he *feels* that God has laid it upon his heart to tell you something? Feelings come and feeling go, and they are a dime a dozen! Where in the Scriptures are we told to obey our feelings? God has told us what He would have us to

know and do in His inspired Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Where does the Bible teach that when one comes forward confessing sins and seeking restoration that a crowd of friends are to accompany him? Where does the Bible teach that one should come forward and confess his joys, successes, birthday, etc.?

4) That which is sacred and holy is being profaned today and no distinction is made between the holy and the common. God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24); not according to the feelings of man. The wise man warned, *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Prov. 14:12). Man-made innovations are common and have no part nor parcel in sacred matters. Where is the respect for a *“thus saith the Lord?”*

5) Brethren are not being challenged with what is right and what is wrong. The all-grace, all-love concept many have adopted to tickle ears does not justify wrongdoing. There will be a day of reckoning for decisions we have made.

6) Why are false teachers (ravens and wolves) allowed to teach or preach to God's people? God's truth is always undermined when a false teacher is allowed to unleash his damnable doctrine. Never invite wolves to the sheep pen! Soul-damning damage will always occur. Those who encourage and uphold the hands of false teachers will be held accountable for the spiritual slaughter that occurs.

7) False visions and lies abound today. This is what occurs when people fail to demand chapter and verse preaching. *“Drama”* tickles feelings and produces goose pimples; the Bible builds Godly faith (Rom. 10:17)!

God sought for a man to stand in the gap so that His people might not be destroyed, but there was no such man to be found. *“I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none”* (Ezek. 22:30).

What a tragedy! Are you willing to rise and stand on God's truths?

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WITCHCRAFT AND IDOLATRY

Everett Spencer

There are many religions derived from what is termed the occult. Webster defines occult as: “Of, pertaining to, concerned with, or designating alchemy, magic, astrology, incantations, etc.” Included in the occult are astrology (mystic), exorcism, witchcraft, sorcery, fortune telling, Ouija boards, trance, yoga, reincarnation, necromancy, and other like practices in which people are alleged to communicate with evil spirits in order to gain hidden knowledge. Where Bible knowledge is lacking (Hosea 4:6), people are more susceptible to practice/experiment with actions clearly condemned in Scripture. In present day society, people who dabble in divination, the mysterious, the supernatural, and spirit world, need to know the Bible position on such actions.

WITCHCRAFT – Witchcraft (sorcery) is included in the infamous occult movement. Historically, witches have been depicted as female, ugly, with pointed hats, warts, crooked nose, and riding a broomstick. Biblically, however, witches could be male or female (Isa. 57:3). Jezebel was a beautiful woman, but the Bible reveals she practiced witchcraft (2 Kings 9:22).

The world’s custom of Halloween “glorifies” witches in costume outfits, but the Bible calls witchcraft a sin (1 Sam. 15:23). Paul says witchcraft is a “work of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19-20). A person cannot live by the dictates of the flesh and inherit the kingdom of God (Heaven). Therefore, the ultimate penalty for those who are in league with the “spirit world” is banishment from where God is.

God, through Moses, warned the Israelites of the dangers of witchcraft (Deut. 18:9-14). Moses declared that a sorcerer was not to live (Exodus 22:18). The people were warned not to “use enchantments, observe times...familiar spirits” (Lev. 19:26,31). God meant what He said concerning sorcery and witchcraft (Lev. 20:6; Malachi 3:5; 1 Samuel 15:23). Philip confronted Simon the Sorcerer in the practice of black magic/witchcraft (Acts 8:6-13).

Witchcraft is also connected to the use of drugs and incantations. In Revelation 21:8, the Greek word for sorcery involved the use of drugs. “In sorcery, the use of drugs, whether simple or potent, was generally accompanied by incantations and appeals of the occult powers, with the prominence of various charms, amulets, etc. professedly to keep the applicant or patient from the attention and power of demons, but actually to impress the applicant with the mysterious resources and powers of the sorcerer” (Vine’s, p.52).

My prayer is that people would look to God’s Word for direction in life. Satan is deceiving many people into looking to the occult for some kind of “experience,” desire for hidden knowledge, or appeal to one’s lust for power. Man must stay within the bounds God has set for him.

IDOLATRY – Idolatry is a “religion” in which man seeks to satisfy his desire for worship or pay homage to. The worship of idols means paying divine honor or attention to something created, physical or in the mind. Webster describes idolatry as an “image of a god, used as an object or instrument of worship...any object of ardent or excessive devotion or admiration.”

In the Old and New Testaments the “graven image” was a primary method by which people worshiped false gods (Isaiah 44:9-20; Exodus 32:1-6; Acts 17:22-23; 19:23-28). Other forms of idol worship were the worship of inanimate objects (trees, rocks, water); animals (cow, lamb, frog, etc.); celestial bodies (sun, moon, stars); and hero worship. Each form of idol worship had its own immoral practices that were opposed to the Word of God.

In modern times, people may associate idolatry with worship of false gods through money, business power, political power, materialism, sports, work, hobbies, heroes, etc. When such things take precedence over the things of God, one is guilty of idolatry (Col. 3:5; Luke 8:4-15; Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8; Amos 6:1-6; Luke 12:16-21).

CONCLUSION – Man must abstain from every appearance of evil (1 Thess. 5:22). God help us to be more keenly aware of Satan’s devices that seek to draw men away. The God of heaven is the only true God worthy of worship, and Him only should we serve.

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in his article ‘The Lord’s Day’ that ‘Covid-19 may turn out to be something Satan uses to lead brethren astray’ to be most astute. To hear brethren speak of ‘assembling together separately’ is nothing less than spiritual doubletalk. To hear brethren acknowledge that ‘virtual worship’ is a substitution for what God has actually commanded and yet have no apparent sense of alarm is most troubling. Thank you for this article and the many other fine articles you have written and have published in previous issues of STOP” ...**John Chowning, Cookeville, TN.** “Thanks and God bless” ...**John Hambricht, Pikeville, TN.** “Haskel Johnson has passed away” ...**Gainesboro, TN.** “I look forward to receiving your publication” ...**Dennis Widner, Bald Knob, AR.** “I look forward each month for *Seek The Old Paths* and usually read it cover to cover the day it comes. Looking forward to your coming series on Critical Race Theory and Woke. Donald Gelles and I finished our lessons on Face Book and YouTube on Racism. For those who would like to hear our program, just type in Blue Spring church of Christ on youtube. We titled it ‘what does the bible say’” ...**Leland Reed, Pleasant Hill, MO.** “I want to thank you for the great work you do and have done for many years in *Seek The Old Paths*. It is one of the best religious publications I receive. I appreciate your strong, uncompromising stand for truth and righteousness! Your writers are Biblically based and right on top of the issues of our time. I especially commend John Chowning’s ‘A Critical Race Theory’ in the Aug/21 issue. May God grant you many more years to serve him. In Christ” ...**Rod Rutherford, Powell, TN.** “I would like to be put on the mailing list to receive the magazine you publish” ...**William Young, Gainesboro, TN.**

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