

## PREACHING ANOTHER JESUS

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"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might bear with me." (II Corinthians 11:3-4)

The apostle Paul's fears concerning the church have surely been realized. The whole church has been betrothed to Christ, and redemption has provided that all believers should enjoy that elite place, but the entire body is not going to be the Bride Company. Many have been deceived and will not qualify to stand beside the Bridegroom. Satan was never able to overcome the church with brute force. All believers were baptized into one body on the day of Pentecost with the tremendous power of the Holy Ghost; and for a while, none could overcome them. They endured many severe sufferings, while others gave their lives. The power of the Holy Spirit sustained them and they were able to prevail over all the power of the enemy. When the devil saw that he could not overcome them with suffering and death, he turned to his former ways, and as with Eve, began to conquer through wiles.

Paul was fearful that the saints should be corrupted from the "simplicity that is in Christ." The word "simplicity" means "singleness, sincerity," and denotes dedication to the pure gospel. The corruption of that simplicity is described in verse four, and is threefold. (1) Preaching another Jesus. (2) Receiving another spirit. (3) Accepting another gospel. "Preaching another Jesus" is the subject of this article, but we want to touch briefly on the other two. The spirit of which Paul speaks is not the Holy Spirit, but rather refers to the spirit in which Paul came, ministering to them. He came with "demonstration of the Spirit and power" (I Corinthians 2:4), but he also came, demonstrating the very spirit of Christ. It was a spirit of love, tenderness, compassion, grace and great concern for the people. He warns that all do not come with such a spirit; and if they do not, there is a strong possibility that the saints will be robbed of the message which will bring them to bridehood.

"Preaching another gospel," is not actually another, as he writes to the Galatians. Gospel means "Glad Tidings," and Good News." There is another gospel which is being preached today, and it brings devastating results. It is what I call the "gospel of omission," because there are those who will not preach the entire message, even though they may see it in the Scriptures. We have heard of more than one example of a preacher, who says, "Yes, I see that truth, but if I preached it, I would lose most of my congregation." The church has been literally robbed, deceived into thinking that there is no more truth for them. If we do not hear all the counsel of God, there is no way we can grow up into Christ in all things. The "simplicity that is in Christ" is sufficient Gospel to present the entire church holy and blameless before him; but it must not be corrupted by men's theories.

"Preaching another Jesus" may be seen in two distinct ways. Paul gives the first one in Acts 20: 30: "Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them." The apostle is speaking of believers here -- "those of your

own selves." They have preached in such a manner as to build a following of their own, instead of drawing them to Christ. Preaching "another Jesus" is to establish another head rather than Christ, to assume a place which He alone is to occupy. God has ordained that Jesus be the Head of His own body, the church, but many men have assumed to take that place, and have drawn disciples after THEM.

This corruption comes about because men have not adhered to the sincerity that is in Christ. In the Lord's letter to the Ephesian Church in Revelation two, He commends them highly for their works and patience, and their stand against all manner of evil. He points out one glaring fault, however: "Thou hast left thy first love." This means that they have abandoned their pre-eminent love for Christ. Someone else holds that place which should be reserved for Him alone. The fornication mentioned here is by no means only physical. It means also that Israel bowed down to other gods (heads), a place which belonged only to God. Numbers 25:1 declares that it was whoredom, meaning idolatry or adultery. The Lord continues His assault against Pergamos, and in verse 15, says: "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate!"

Nicolatinism means "ruler, or overcomer of the people," and describes present conditions in Christendom, where leaders lord it over God's heritage, taking a place of headship that God never gave them. Paul terms it witchcraft, with severe consequences, as he writes to the Colossian Church: "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels... and not holding the Head..." (Colossians 2:18-19). The use of "angels" here does not necessarily refer to heavenly beings, but to "messengers."

It may seem to be very pious to render reverence and awe to a "man of the cloth." Paul says that such things "have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and humility." The truth of the matter, however, is that the ones who accept such homage are usurping authority given only to Christ. Some ministers throughout the years have even been idolized. People may follow a certain denomination, being governed in every area of their lives, and in some cases, condemned and subverted by the decrees of that church.

Paul instructed the Ephesian elders to "FEED the flock of God over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers," but they were never to take the place of headship or dictator. Their primary purpose of feeding the flock of God is a ministry that is sorely lacking today. When the apostle Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ," he did not mean that God had ordained him to direct their every move, and build a following for himself. He did not wish to establish the "Church of Paul." He said, "Was Paul crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (I Corinthians 1:13). He would by no means take a place that belonged to Jesus. By following him, Paul meant that they should observe the example of the work which God was doing in him. He was living proof of what the Word of God could accomplish in a life, that the life of Christ could be manifest in a mortal body. Paul did not direct other ministers as to what they should be doing. In I Corinthians 16:12, we read that he had a desire for Apollos to go to Corinth, but "his will was not at all to come at this time." Paul did not try to get the mind of the Lord for Apollos, and yet, we find many today assuming such a place of headship in directing the paths of others. Faithful ministers of God are to be respected and honored for their God-given position, but NEVER, NEVER, to the point of worshipping them, or being controlled by them. When this does take place, such a leader becomes "another Jesus," for

he has taken a place belonging only to Jesus.

Christ' s headship is also violated subtly by those who miss-use the gifts of the Spirit. Through tongues and interpretation, a word of prophecy, or a word of knowledge, some seek to dictate the will of God to others. They may not realize what they are doing. The example of Agabus in Acts 21 is used to prove that God makes His will known through such gifts. Agabus was correct in his declaration to Paul: "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles."

Let us notice two things about this prophecy. First, Agabus did not tell Paul anything that the apostle did not already know (Acts 20:23). He did not open up the mind of the Lord to Paul, because the Holy Spirit had already witnessed to him "that bonds and afflictions wait for me." Secondly, this "message" which Agabus gave to Paul was absolutely exact, but it was not intended to dictate the will of God to Paul, as those present indicated. He was not dissuaded from his objective, and we read, "when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done."

If Paul had followed the urgings of those present, based on what they had heard, he would have been out of the will of God. Giving a word of prophecy or a word of "knowledge," can be dangerous. If we are able to get the mind of the Lord for others and God tells US what THEY should do, it gives US an awesome power and control over them. This power belongs only to Jesus. People will tend to look to those with "spiritual gifts" to direct their lives, rather than looking unto Jesus. God never intended that we should be "another Jesus," directing others into the will of God. If individual believers are not close enough to the Lord for Him to tell them what to do, how will they ever be close enough to carry out His will? When we begin to look for special "signs" to ascertain the will of God, we cease to walk by faith, and are walking by sight.

Jesus can make His will known to us in many different ways. Sometimes it is through circumstances entirely beyond our control. Sometimes it is by the authority He has placed over us. We can hear His voice in the Word of God, either by reading or meditation, or by ministering it. He is not limited as to showing us His will. It may be ministering quietly to our spirit; regardless of the way He does it, He does not intend that we should be controlled by the desires and whims of others. Some trusting souls have been deceiving by a person who said, "I have a message from the Lord for you." Those who make such a statement are going on record as meaning, "What I am going to tell you, is infallible." It has to be, if it is from God, because God never lies, nor is He ever mistaken.

The second way of preaching "another Jesus" is to portray Him in a light that is contrary to God' s presentation of Him in the Scriptures. Satan is the author of such perversions, as we note in his conference with Eve. When asked about the tree of knowledge of good and evil, Eve intimated that they would die if they partook of it. Here, Satan presents God as a liar, as he replied, "ye shall not surely die." He is saying that God does not literally mean what He says. He is not true to His Word. The devil further preached a distorted message to her, as he said, "God knows that in the day you eat of this tree, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil." He is really saying that God is withholding something good and beneficial from her, cheating her.

This same type of preaching of Christ is being done today, presenting Him as a cold, hard, harsh, exacting taskmaster, who really is to be feared rather than loved. Some were preaching another Jesus in Paul's day. In I Corinthians 15, he informs us that those who would deny the resurrection of the body, were in reality failing to preach that Christ had been raised. "If the dead rise not then is not Christ raised" (V.16). The Judaizers who came to Galatia were preaching another Jesus when they presented Christ as leading believers back into bondage under the law. Paul exclaimed: "Christ is become of none effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law" (Galatians 5:4).

The apostle Paul presents a Jesus who is filled with love and compassion for the people. He calls Him a merciful and faithful High Priest. He shows Him as taking on the seed of Abraham that He might know the temptations and frailties of His brethren, and be able to minister to them. We see Him as the Wisdom of God and the Power of God. In Ephesians 5, He is seen as a heavenly Lover and Bridegroom.

The questions we would ask at this point is: "How can we know the real Jesus? How can we keep from being deceived by all the different voices in Christendom, all using the same Bible to prove their points? The ultimate answer is that we must have the personal conviction that Christ is our Head. How is that done? Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me" (Matthew 11:23). Peter said, "But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18). Paul declared, "that I may know Him" (Philippians 3:10). The way to recognize a counterfeit "Jesus" is to know the True One, and this is only accomplished by spending time with Him. We are not to learn facts ABOUT HIM, but, like Mary, we must spend time at His feet, learning all about Him.

The Shulamite presents a beautiful eulogy of Him in Song of Solomon 5:10-16, which illustrates this point. She is declaring her "excellency of the knowledge of Christ" not just statements of fact. The knowledge of Him which she expresses is the result of many experiences they have had together. She experienced the look of divine love. She had felt the tenderness and sweetness of his kiss, which to us speaks of the personal, tender, and intimate touch of His Word. She has known the strength of His arms as He embraced her. Through it all, she had learned Him and would be able to detect any one who was not "chiefest among ten thousand." She would in no wise accept "another Jesus." The "head of Gold" speaks to us of Christ being our Head of Gold with all the authority, value, and wisdom of God. He is the One to make our decisions, though we may not always agree with them. Job experienced this as he said: "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth" (23:13). Thus Job recognized the Headship of God in his trial, that the decision was God's, though Job did not enjoy it. God asked of Job later: "Wilt thou disannul my judgment." Will you question the decision I have made concerning you, He is saying. Job concluded: "For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me: and many such things are with Him" (23:14).

God does have a specific plan for our lives. The Bride of Christ is not turned out on an assembly line. All of us will go through different experiences, which are tailor-made for us. These things may happen to us again and again, and though they may be rough, this is when we truly learn Christ personally. Finally, Job had this to say: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee" (42:5). Likewise, the Bride of

Christ will know Him so well that she cannot be deceived into receiving "another Jesus" or "another message." As was said of Ruth, "Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter: for thou has showed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men whether poor or rich" (3:10). The select Bride company follows only the True Jesus.