



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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ROMANS 8:19-23: DELIVERANCE AND REDEMPTION #1

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

In profound Romans 8:19-23 the peerless Paul wrote... *“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”*

The five verses quoted above are confessedly difficult. I learned this many years ago in reading twenty or more commentaries on the Book of Romans on this debated section of Sacred Scripture. Errors have been injected into this passage. Far too many have taken this Pauline passage out of its context. Be it remembered that a passage taken out of its context, its setting, becomes a mere pretext. It surely applies to these five verses.

WHAT IS NOT TAUGHT IN THIS PASSAGE

1) Paul is not teaching of heaven's location being of no importance. One person said it made no difference whether on a renovated earth or UP in heaven or the above. It mattered where Jesus went when He ascended in Acts 1:9-11. He went to heaven,

above or up. His throne in heaven was to be at the right hand of Jehovah God. This makes location of supreme import. In eternity He, God, is not going to renovate His footstool. This would be a demotion of Heaven's Almighty God as well as a demotion for His beloved Son and our beautiful Savior. Subsequent to His resurrection Jesus did not renovate the earth for His eternal presence. Of that we can be absolutely certain. It was not a renovated earth that He depicted so delightfully in John 14:1-6. He ascended to heaven as per Mark 16:19 and Acts 1:9-11. Mark and Luke were inspired when they penned these attractive affirmations. In His precious prayer in John 17 Jesus requested of His Heavenly Father, *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”* (John 17:24).

2) “Creature” in verses 19-21, “whole creation” in verse 22 and those who have “the firstfruits of the Spirit” in verse 23 do not refer to plants, shrubs, trees or brute beasts such as lions, tigers, horses, dogs, cats, etc. Plants and animals do not wait for the manifestation of the children of God. They are not the ones made subject to vanity or possess heavenly hope. Jesus did not die to ransom the old rugged cross on which He was crucified or the fig tree He cursed shortly before His death. They are not the ones who can become better by facing the afflictions so common to humanity. Israel's Sweet Singer and dedicated

poet wrote this in Psalm 119:67, 71, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy law...It is good that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.”* James adds to this thought, *“My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience”* (James 1:2-3). The Psalmist and James were not discussing plants or animals in the Scheme of Human Redemption. Jesus, the Lamb of God, came to redeem sinful humanity, those who had come short of God's glory (see Rom. 3:23). Animals will not walk the golden streets of that heavenly city that lies foursquare (Rev. 21:16).

Romans 8:17-18 describe the rich reward of Heaven's redeemed. They read, *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and jointheirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

3) Those possessing the firstfruits of the Spirit do not refer to all Christians as many commentators have surmised. This is a ready reference to the apostles of whom Paul was one. The subsequent article (part 2 next month) will explain the why of this statement.

4) When correctly analyzed these verses do not stand in contradiction of any other Biblical affirmation.

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Romans 8:19-23...



Editorial...

LIBERALS & LIBERALISM

Garland M. Robinson

***Liberalism's very existence is counting on,
depending on, people not knowing the Bible.***

Liberalism thrives on ignorance.

Knowledge kills it.

Liberalism in religion is a belief and movement that advocates a broad interpretation of the Bible, freedom from rigid doctrine and authoritarianism (*Collins English Dictionary*). Liberalism rejects biblical authority, advocates tolerance and holds a repugnance for authoritarianism and a love of freedom. It is an attitude of respecting and allowing many different types of beliefs or behavior (*Cambridge Dictionary*). It is willing to respect or accept behavior or opinions different from one's own; open to new ideas. It regards traditional beliefs as dispensable, invalidated by modern thought, or liable to change. Regarding interpretation of law, it is to be broadly construed or understood; not strictly literal (*Oxford Dictionary*).

Liberalism and those who uphold and espouse it have no respect for authority. Its approach is to go beyond what is written, "adding to" and "taking from" what the Bible says. Liberalism says there is no such thing as absolute truth. Anything goes! No restraints. No boundaries. If you believe you're right, your right. However, Jesus said, "**...If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free**" (John 8:31-32). The truth only makes you free IF you obey it. Liberalism keeps you in bondage to sin.

Liberalism approaches the Bible with the idea that it may be a "good book," but does not require strict devotion, interpretation and certainly not obedience. It must be modified and adapted to suit local situations, circumstances and times. In other words, it is to be fluid, accommodating, mov-

ing and fitting each one's personal beliefs. With this philosophy, the Bible is not a book that demands our strict attention and adherence, it's to be considered and interpreted as a generalization of what "we think" and "how we feel."

Liberalism is a system that is "all inclusive." All conditions and circumstances of individuals must be accepted, included, tolerated. It's main tenet (dogma, principle, doctrine, conviction, creed) demands there is no absolute truth. Truth, in the perception of liberalism, is relative. Society decides what truth is and that it's always changing to accommodate the times and culture. As a result, every vice of immorality, no matter how depraved or perverted, is to be accepted (such as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, killing your unborn children, etc., Rom. 1:18-32). In their system, anything and everything is accepted. Since "truth" does not exist, the door is wide open for every vile, deviant and disgusting behavior. The same is true in regards to worship - anything goes — from women preachers and elders, to helicopter rides!

Liberalism's very existence is counting on, depending on, people not knowing the Bible. Liberalism thrives on biblical ignorance. Its proponents attempt to convince people they can't know the truth anyway; and, they're very successful at it because so many love to have it so. Some of the elite of their number tout that we're not able to discuss the Bible with them because we're not on their academic level. Such pride! God rightly proclaims, "**Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall**" (Prov. 16:18). However, when people learn

and know the truth (educated in the Scriptures), their knowledge of the Bible drives a "death knell" into liberalism's heart every single time.

Sadder still is that there are some who have Bible knowledge, but don't accept it. They ignore it. Woe to them that know better but don't do better (cf. James 4:17). The God of heaven declared, "**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee...**" (Hosea 4:6). God's holy and eternal Word forbids any alterations, whether adding to it or taking from it.

God has always warned His people to not stray from the "strait and narrow" (Matt. 7:14; Luke 13:24). We are always to walk in God's Path and follow His Way. This was made clear to Moses and the children of Israel. In Deuteronomy chapter five we read, "**And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. ... Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the RIGHT HAND or to the LEFT**" (vs.1,32). This same admonition is seen throughout the Scriptures. The people were warned time and time again, don't deviate from God's law. Don't depart from it to the left hand or to the right hand.

The tried and true way of God is to be maintained. We must not depart from it. It's ancient because it is God's order. It's the tradition God has given us to keep. Liberals hate biblical tradition. With them, tradition is automatically bad because in their view we have to always be changing and adapting. However, there are "traditions of men" and there are "traditions of God." The traditions of men are condemned in the Bible. Jesus said, "**...Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men...** And he said unto them, **Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition**" (Mark 7:6-9; cf. Matt. 15:8-9).

The traditions established by the Lord (through the apostles and other inspired men of the New Testament) are authorized; yea demanded to be kept and maintained. For example, the apostle Paul told the church at Thessalonica: "...Stand fast, and **hold the traditions** which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15). "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and **not after the tradition** which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). As Paul and Silas "...went through the cities, they delivered them **the decrees for to keep**, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4). Paul told Timothy, "**Hold fast the form of sound words**, which thou hast heard of me..." (2 Tim. 1:13).

The decrees and traditions of the New Testament are the words from which all humanity will be judged (John 12:48). How tragic that liberals and progressives hate the inspired word. They misuse it and twist it to suit their own agenda. David said his enemies were always twisting and distorting his words, yet in spite of it he said, "**In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me**" (Psa. 56:2-5). The same thing is done today by those who don't revere God's book. Peter pointed out that the "**unlearned and unstable wrest**" (wrench, twist, torture, pervert) the Scriptures unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16). That's what liberals do.

Giving Book, Chapter and Verse in rightly dividing the word (2 Tim. 2:15) is ridiculed and diminished by liberals. They refer to it as "proof texting." They don't consider referring to Book, Chapter and Verse to be a good thing, but it sounds like a great thing to me. Why would they hate quoting Scripture and expounding upon it? Why would they try as best they can to get us to stop quoting the inspired word of God? Why? That's easy enough to understand. It exposes their false doctrine and puts a stop to their power and control. The last thing in the world they want is for people to become educated in the Scriptures. In an attempt to get people away from the Bible, many of them go so far as to tell us we can't know which parts of the Bible are inspired and which

parts are not! That's blasphemy! Every word, every jot and tittle, is inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). When people learn the truth and humble themselves to obey it with all their being, they cease to be liberal! Nehemiah 8:8 reveals one of the great highlights of their day. "**So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.**" Liberals hate this verse! Do YOU understand the reading of God's Word?

The apostle John wrote, "**Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits** whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). To try them is to compare them to the Bible. That's the last thing they want! "**Prove all things; hold fast that which is good**" (1 Thess. 5:21). Jesus said, "**beware of false prophets...by their fruits ye shall know them**" (Matt. 7:15,20). "**If any man have ears to hear, let him hear**" (Mark 7:16).

If you love God, liberalism makes no sense. Everything about it is contrary to God. It tears down what God established. Liberalism does not respect law. It can't be reconciled with what Jesus said in John 14:15: "**If ye love me, keep my commandments.**" Liberalism says His commandments are not important. Jesus also said, "**Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you**" (John 15:14). If you don't respect and obey the New Testament then you're not a friend of Jesus.

We need people today who will seek God's ways, stand in the old paths and walk therein (Jer. 6:16). The world needs people who will educate themselves in the Scriptures and seek to spread the good news in every place (Matt. 28:18-30; Mark 16:15-16). The brotherhood needs a great awakening to renew their commitment to God and His Word.

God is not a liberal!

WHO WILL SAVE YOUR CHURCH?

Richard Latham

This question may be an unusual one, but it comes on the heels of a study that I had with a cousin of mine. I was explaining to him what the Lord required one to do to become a Christian. As I spoke, he began to get angry with me which prompted him to ask, "Is God not in this (Baptist) Church?" If the church that he is a member of can be proven from the Scriptures, then his question is already answered, but if not then what?

Jesus said, "**He that rejected 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). When we examine the Scriptures we find that the Lord's church was built by Him (Matt. 16:18); built upon Him (1 Cor. 3:11); began in the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 1:16; Acts 2); and spread throughout the known world (Col. 1:23). It is called the *body of Christ* (1 Cor. 12:27); the *church of Christ* (Rom. 16:16); *family of God* (Eph. 3:14-15); *house of God* (1 Tim. 3:15); and the *kingdom* (Col. 1:13; Matt. 16:19).

Let me hasten to say that I am not trying to offend anyone but we

need to examine his question. I will also tell you that I use to be a member of this denomination before I obeyed the Gospel of Christ. Now I ask, "Could I have remained a Baptist and be in the church of Christ at the same time?" Are saved people referred to in the Bible as Baptists, or Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28)? Is there any discipline in the Baptist Church when members practice sins such as adultery, fornication, lying, etc.? Yet, this cousin of mine has left his wife simply because he was tired of her and started dating other women and nothing was done about it. What does the Bible say about this (2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Cor. 5:1-6)? Furthermore, He is considered a faithful member in their congregation and serves as an usher. Now I ask, Would Christ leave His bride (church) for another (Rev. 19:7)?

The Bible teaches that Christ is the head of His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) and that body is His church. We are also told that Christ will save His church (Eph. 5:23). Now if Christ is going to save His church, who will save yours? Often times we hear people speaking of "my church" as though

it belongs to them. Even their preachers speak this kind of language and I suppose they could claim them since they do not belong to Christ. Members of the Lord's church (church of Christ) recognize that we have no church but are glad to be members of the one bought and paid for by Christ Himself (Acts 20:28). These people will say, when all else fails, "the church is not important" or "the church does not save."

So I ask them these questions:

1. Why do you attend the services of your church?
2. Why do you try to make disciples for your church?
3. Why do you give your money in support of your church?
4. Why do you sing songs to the praise of God in your church?
5. Why do people speak proudly of being members of their church?

From the answers given, it sounds to me like it is important to them. After all, why would someone spend so much time in that which is unimportant. I believe what they are really trying to say is that Christ's church is not as important as theirs.

I speak of the Baptist Church because that is what my cousin belongs to, but all denominations will have to answer the same questions.

Let us note a few things:

1. Where is salvation found? Answer, In Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).
2. Where does Christ place the saved? Answer, In the church (Acts 2:47).
3. What is Christ coming back for at the end of time? Answer, His church (1 Cor. 15:23-24).

If Christ could save people from their sins before denominations came into existence, then what purpose do denominations serve? If we would accept the Bible for what it says, we know that the Lord's church began in the city of Jerusalem about A.D. 33 and none of these religions that exist today were known then, and yet people were saved from their sins in the first century. The answer to my cousin's question, "Is God not in this (Baptist) church" is "no," not because I say so, but because the Bible says so.

Now think with me for a minute: if your spouse (male or female), whom you love dearly, was drowning and others were drowning and you could only save one of them, who would you save and why? Christ will

only save His true love, His church/body, the one He died to purchase and establish (Eph. 5:25; Acts 20:28). What about you?

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WHEN GOD DECIDES ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Roger D. Campbell

Never forget this declaration of Jehovah: "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live..." (Ezek. 33:11). That statement was made during the time that a number of the Israelites of the Southern Kingdom/Judah were living in captivity in Babylon.

Let's go back and consider what led to Judah's fall and captivity. In 2 Chronicles 36:14-16 we read that God's people, including the chief priests, imitated the abominations of the Gentiles and polluted God's house (36:14). Their action was inexcusable. You see, God had held out His hand of mercy to Judah for a long time, giving them chance after chance to repent and turn back to Him. The people refused. Here is the narrative of 36:15,16: "And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes [early], 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."

Look at the scenario which preceded God bringing Judah down: there was *mercy, messengers, and mockery*. The Lord sent His messengers to speak to the Israelites. Those messengers were guided by God's Spirit to speak just what Judah needed to hear. It was God's compassion/mercy that caused Him to continue to reach out to His people. Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and other prophets were a blessing to the nation as they proclaimed a "thus saith the Lord." It was in God's heart to spare them, not destroy them.

Alas, Judah's response to God's mercy was stupidity. The people mocked God's messengers and despised His words (36:16). No one can do that before Jehovah God and be guiltless in His sight!

When it became clear that Judah was not budging from her path of self-willed rebellion against Jehovah, there was only one way the situation would end. The Bible text first points to God's *compassion* (2 Chron. 36:15), then another aspect of His character is revealed in the very next verse — "the wrath of the LORD arose against His people." Read again the tragic words which follow that statement: "till there was no remedy." When Judah turned away from the Lord's instructions, they were turning away from the only remedy! He alone was the Physician with the "balm of Gilead" to heal Judah's spiritual sickness. God was basically saying, "Fine, if you do not want my balm/remedy, then you will face the consequences."

In the end, God decided that "enough is enough" and raised up Nebuchadnezzar to punish His stiff-necked people. Was the fall of Judah avoidable? Absolutely. Did God continue to love His people? For sure. But His justice would not allow Him to overlook their obstinate spirit. Choices have consequences, and Judah would have to face God's wrath.

Any modern-day person, family, or nation that thinks they can reject God's mercy and message of truth, all the while despising and mocking His faithful messengers, is foolish to the nth degree. No human has a clue about how much longer our nation and this world will continue to exist. Rather than wasting our time trying to calculate the time when the end of either shall come, we would be a lot better off making each day the best day possible in serving God.

May God help us to have a humble spirit before Him, one that will cause us to turn to His word for guidance, and if we see that we in some way have strayed from the straight and narrow way, have the courage to recognize our fault and turn to the great I AM for His remedy.

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ENMITY AGAINST GOD

Marvin L. Weir

The Scripture reads, “*Because the carnal mind (worldly mind) is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7). The word “enmity” means “hostility; by implication, a reason for opposition” (Strongs Greek/Hebrew Definitions). It is the opposite of *agape* love. One who “minds the flesh” (worldly things) is one who refuses to subject himself to the will of God. A person who is living a worldly life cannot be “*walking in the light*” (2 John 1:7).

The “mind of the flesh” (carnal, worldly mind) demonstrates such by practicing the “*works of the flesh*” (Gal. 5:19-21). To continue to possess a carnal mind is to invite spiritual death (eternal separation from God).

The carnal mind or “*mind of the flesh*” shows its “*enmity against God*” in many ways. Please consider:

The carnal mind ignores the Word of God. Man is not capable of directing his own steps (Jer. 10:23) and needs the Word of God for his guide (Psalm 119:105). Yet, countless millions prefer never to consult God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15) while indulging in “*...the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride (vain glory) of life...*” (1 John 2:16).

Hosea is correct in stating that folks will be lost because they have rejected knowledge. Their children will also likely be lost due to a lack of Godly teaching (Hosea 4:6). Those who ignore a “**thus saith the Lord**” will “*sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*” (Hosea 8:7).

Paul told the Galatian brethren, “*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting*” (Gal. 6:7-8). In choosing to live a fleshly/worldly life, the carnal man places himself at enmity with God.

The carnal mind scoffs at the godly. We live in an age where it is more popular to be ungodly than godly. To be “politically correct” one must align himself with the voice of the world and beckon to its call! However, the Word of God instructs, “*thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exodus 23:2). It doesn’t matter that everyone is doing it

— if it’s wrong (sinful) then everyone who engages therein is wrong! Jesus said, “*If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you*” (John 15:18-19).

The carnal mind ridicules the work of God. The very first words of Holy Writ declare, “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1). The apostle Paul told those at Rome, “*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*” (Rom. 1:20). Yet, the atheist has enmity for God as he denies His existence and the evolutionist has enmity for God as he denies His creation of the world and all that is therein. It is as Paul said, “*the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men*” (1 Cor. 1:25).

The carnal mind rejects the plea of Christ. Jesus said, “*If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). The Lord pleads for folks to come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30), but the majority refuses the tender invitation. So very many claim to love Christ while refusing to comply with His will. It is impossible, however, to love Christ while rejecting His laws! One who dishonors and disrespects the Word of God has **no** love for the Son or the Father (2 John 9).

Romans 8:7 does not teach the impossibility of repentance. Paul simply stresses that while living a fleshly, carnal, worldly life one cannot be devoted to doing God’s will. A person cannot travel the strait way and the broad way at the same time (Matt. 7:13-14)! It is as Jesus said, “*No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other...*” (Matt. 6:24).

Those who desire to go to Heaven will not demonstrate enmity against God. Let us always strive to obey, honor, and glorify the true and living God! In doing so, we can save our souls by laying claim to eternal life.

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Romans 8:19-23...

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These Pauline verses are in perfect harmony with all he wrote in his 14, if Hebrews be his, epistles. The same Spirit that inspired all the Pauline writings inspired the verses here also (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

CONCLUSION

It is my writing intent to look closely at these five verses in the subsequent article. The present article has been negative in design. The concluding article will take a positive approach. Hence, I will be as thorough and accurate as I can be for we are dealing with God’s Word — not man’s word. This is the journalistic goal of all writers of this excellent publication (STOP). Its esteemed editor demands such.

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HOW BEAUTIFUL HEAVEN MUST BE

Bill Boyd

It is fitting that the last book of the Bible humbles us. The message of God's triumph in the book of Revelation is clear, but the further we look into the text, the more difficult the book becomes. The repeated emphasis of these things happening "shortly," (Rev. 22:6), "quickly" (Rev. 22:7), and "the time is at hand" (Rev. 22:10), puts the vision of Revelation 21 and 22 in the context of the early church overcoming its then impending trials. However, the exaggerated apocalyptic language used to describe this triumph carries us beyond the then impending victory to the ultimate heavenly glory. This is a vision of heaven. It cannot be taken as literal, for gold is not transparent (Rev. 21:21), but clearly, our eternal home is beautiful.

It is beautiful because it is new: "A new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1); "new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2); "Behold, I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5). The Greeks had a word for "new" in respect to "time," but the word here is "new" in respect of "kind." This is a new kind of heaven and earth, a new kind of Jerusalem. There is also a word for "renew" in the New Testament, but that is not the word used here.

It is beautiful because it is a city: "The holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2); "the great city, holy Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:10); a city of "twelve gates" (Rev. 21:12), and "twelve foundations" (Rev. 21:14); a city that "lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breath... twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breath and the height of it are equal" (Rev. 21:16). Abraham was looking for such a city. "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God... a better country, that is, an heavenly... for God hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:8-16). Israel of old gloried in the beauty of old Jerusalem as the "city of God" (Psalm 48; Psalm 84; Psalm 87), but the glory of "new Jerusalem" exceeds the glory of the old. In context, this beautiful new city is in contrast to "Babylon, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:5).

The city is "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2); "Come hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Rev. 21:9). There are few things so beautiful that they are worthy to be compared to a bride adorned

for her husband. We read in Revelation 19:7-8, "His wife hath made herself ready, And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." We are reminded of Ephesians 5:25-27 where Paul wrote, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

This beauty, this new city, is as the beauty of precious stones. It is made of "pure gold" (Rev. 21:18). Even "the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (Rev. 21:21). And it is "garnished with all manner of precious stones" (jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst) (Rev. 21:19-20), "and the twelve gates were twelve pearls" (Rev. 21:21). Such stones have been emblems of glory and beauty from the beginning. In Eden we read of gold, bdellium, and onyx stone (Gen. 2:11-12). As "a river went out of Eden" (Gen. 2:10), so also out of this city is "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). Jesus said, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (Rev. 21:6). As in Eden there was "the tree of life" (Gen. 2:9), so also by this heavenly river is "the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2).

This city is beautiful, above all, because God is there, and because there we will be with God. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3); "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:22-23); "and they shall see his face" (Rev. 22:4). To see the face of God? How beautiful heaven must be!

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JESUS, THE DESPISED TEACHER

Douglas Hoff

In the final week leading up to the crucifixion, Jesus' teaching infuriated those whose hearts were not right. The Scriptures affirm the Lord never sinned (Heb. 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). Thus, we can be sure He always acted properly and with love even for those who were enemies of the truth (Luke 6:27,35; Eph. 4:15). Sadly, the same cannot be said regarding the Pharisees, the chief priests, the scribes and the elders (Luke 20:1). During Jesus' kingly approach to the city of Jerusalem, the disciples began to say, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38). This upset the Pharisees, so they told the Lord "Master, rebuke thy disciples."

Jesus showed His love for lost souls when He wept over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44). He knew that within 40 years the Roman army would utterly destroy the city and the temple. The Lord's teaching included these statements: "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19:43-44). A little while later He also said, "when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-22). The love of the Lord prompted Him to teach these unpleasant truths in hope that some would take heed to the warning and save their souls.

His love also moved Jesus to do

some things that were upsetting to many. When He went into the temple and saw those who were buying and selling, He began to drive them out (Luke 19:45). Even though righteous indignation caused Jesus to act, the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him (Luke 19:47). The only reason they were not able to carry out their evil scheme was the popularity Jesus had among the multitude (Luke 19:48; 20:6; 19).

The enemies of truth are not easily dissuaded though. They came to Jesus and demanded to know, “by what authority doest thou these things” (Luke 20:2)? The Lord then asked them about the authority behind the baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men. Their refusal to answer showed their moral cowardice (Luke 20:4-7). They hated the Lord without a cause (Psa. 109:3-5).

An attempt was made to catch Jesus in His words in hopes He could be delivered to the governor for judgment. Thus, the chief priests and scribes sent spies asking Jesus, “Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly: Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no” (Luke 20:21-22)? To this, the great Teacher said, “Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? They answered and said, Caesar’s. And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s” (Luke 20:24-25). The Scripture says “And they could not take hold of his words before the people: and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace” (Luke 20:26).

However, those sons of the devil (John 8:44; Acts 13:10) kept working to destroy Jesus. Within a few days they were able to stir up the crowds to cry out, “crucify him!” (Mark 15:13-14)! Pilate knew “that the chief priests had delivered him for envy” (Mark 15:10).

Even though Jesus always loved people, many did not love Him in return. To the contrary, they despised the one who gave them the opportunity to be saved. Truly, His is amazing love!

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A RESTORATION PLEA

Victor M. Eskew

The Restoration Movement of the 1800s grew out of disgust for religious division and a love for the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Men longed for the day when all would wear only the name “Christian” and pledge allegiance to the New Testament as the sole standard of faith and practice.

From this movement, many slogans came forth. The slogans were designed to implant crucial truths into the hearts of the listeners. “**Speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent**” was one of these slogans. This was an amplification of Peter’s words found in First Peter 4:11. “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.*” Another slogan of the Restoration Movement was: “**In matters of doctrine, unity. In matters of opinion, liberty. In all things, love.**”

The preachers of the Restoration Movement recognized two major areas: **doctrine** and **opinion**. Doctrine involves the teaching of the New Testament. Paul wrote: “*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...*” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Doctrine cannot be compromised. It must be adhered to at all times. If all would commit to this teaching, unity would prevail. It is wrong to transform the teaching of the Gospel into matters of opinion.

However, the leaders of the Restoration Movement realized that matters of opinion exists as well. In these, they asked for liberty. The practice of “circumcision” was a matter of opinion (option) in the New Testament church. “*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*” (Gal. 6:15). The “eating of meat” was also a matter of opinion. “*But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse*” (1 Cor. 8:8). Again, these matters were optional. In these things, “liberty” needed to prevail. It was wrong to take matters that were “optional” and make them matters of “doctrine.” Some did this in the first century. Paul declared that those who “bound” (made a law) where God has not

“bound” (did not make a law) had departed from the faith. “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer*” (1 Tim. 4:13-5).

The last section of the slogan under consideration is: “In all things, love.” This love is one that seeks the best interest of another. First Corinthians 13:1-3 reveals the importance of love. Without it, nothing else matters. “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor; and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*”

In doctrine, unity. In option, liberty. In all things, love. This plea is just as valid today as it was when it was first penned. May every member of the body of Christ give diligence to distinguish between doctrine and opinion. In doctrine, let us hold fast thereto with unity in mind. In option, let’s grant liberty to our brethren. Then, let’s allow love to prevail in all things.

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“When people learn the truth and humble themselves to obey it with all their being, they cease to be liberal.”

see pages 26-27



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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