



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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FORMAL WORSHIP, POWERLESS PRAYERS, PITIFUL LIVES

Marvin L. Weir

Great progress was being made regarding the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The Jews had been punished for their rebellion against God by being carried into Babylonian captivity. Bethel had sent men to the priests and prophets in Jehovah's house asking, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years" (Zech. 7:3)? It appears this particular "fast day" was a test case for several other fast days the Jews had been observing. Coffman comments on this situation as follows: "Now the most important thing about all of these fasts was that God had neither commanded nor authorized any one of them! Only one day in the year, the Day of Atonement, had God commanded His people to fast; yet they had added all these others! In the times of the Pharisees, that class of bigots even fasted 'twice in the week' (Luke 18:12). At this point, we anticipate the prophet's answer, which in fact was 'No!' although it was stated in the form of some six observations from which that was the obvious and mandatory deduction. The primary reason for this was that all they were doing was actually 'will worship,' having nothing at all to do either with what God commanded or authorized."

Let us break down God's answer to the question that was asked with the following points:

Formality In Worship! The concept of custom or ritual has always seemed to infiltrate what God intended worship to be. Three things that were problems for the Jews of Zechariah's day are still problems today. They are:

Hypocritical Fasting! God asks: "When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh [month], even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, [even] to me" (Zech. 7:5)? The fasting the Jews were engaged in was not designed to produce a closer fellowship with God. It was rather for their own glory and personal contentment and satisfaction.

The Lord's church today is not exempt from such pretense. What is the chief attraction in today's congregations? Is it an elaborate building? Is it the gorgeous décor that boasts of success? Is it an eloquent preacher and elders who speak in such an intoxicating way that you agree with what was said even though you do not understand a word that was spoken? Is it the 'country club' atmosphere of rubbing elbows with the rich and influential of the community? Is it the non-judgmental attitude that bends over backwards to be tolerant of sin and worldly behavior?

The people of the Lord's day appeared to be solemn and sober as they fasted, but it was only for show and their own personal glory (cf. Matt. 6:1-7, 16-18). Such actions have never pleased the Lord!

Self-centeredness! God knew the people's hearts and thus said: "And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat [for yourselves], and drink [for yourselves]" (Zech. 7:6)? Many today who profess to love the Lord have neglected something that God will not allow to be omitted. It is a simple but profound command: "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Neglect Of The Word! The question that was asked so long ago needs to be asked today. The question was: "[Should ye] not [hear] the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets..." (Zech. 7:7)? People who are impressed by formality have no real need for the Word of God. A "thus saith the Lord" is considered rather old fashioned and useless while outward acts and traditions that appeal to the masses are praised and glorified.

Powerless Prayers! Prayer is powerless for one primary reason — a disobedient and insincere heart (mind). Some causes of the failure of prayer are listed by Zechariah. They are:

Lack Of Mercy And Compassion! God commanded mercy and compassion to be shown "every man to his brother" (Zech. 7:9). Our attitude toward our brother has much to do

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Formal Worship...



Editorial...

MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, JOHN OLD TESTAMENT OR NEW TESTAMENT?

Garland M. Robinson

If you reject the Gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (including Acts 1) being any part of the Lord's New Testament, then you have to accept the conclusion that nothing the Lord said or taught while on earth is valid for the church today. That makes everything the Lord and Savior said, null and void.

We received a letter that took issue with the Lord's words regarding divorce and remarriage which was discussed in the April 2015 issue of *Seek The Old Paths*. In part it reads:

"Just to keep it simple I ask, do you believe we are under the old law? I know you will say No. Matthew through Acts 1 is old law given before the church was established on Pentecost. We are not bound by these teachings — thus your article of Divorce, Baptism, Eunuch is not valid."

In reply, please consider the following.

Jesus the Christ lived and died during the Old Testament era. Therefore, He was amenable to the Law of Moses. However, the Scriptures teach that the New Testament replaced the Old Testament. Who among the Lord's people would deny it? Is there anyone out there who would disagree? His life and teaching was to "take away the first that he may establish the second" (Heb. 10:9).

WHERE did the second (new) Testament law come from? It came from God and was delivered by **Jesus**, the **apostles** and other inspired writers such as **Mark**, **Luke**, **James**, and **Jude**. Those who

delivered and recorded the new covenant (testament, law) were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

Will you deny that Jesus delivered any part of New Testament doctrine? If you reject the Gospel records of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (including Acts 1) being any part of the Lord's New Testament, then you have to accept the conclusion that nothing the Lord said or taught while on earth is valid for the church today. That makes everything the Lord and Savior said, null and void. That leaves the entirety of the Christian Age without any words that Jesus spake (while living on this earth) that are relevant to the world today. Therefore, nothing the Lord said or taught has anything to do with how we live! Who can imagine such a devilish and disastrous doctrine?

Are we to understand the apostle **Paul** (even though guided by the Holy Spirit) did not know the Lord's words did not pertain to New Testament doctrine? That cannot be so because he certainly knew they applied to the church. He told the elders of the church at Ephesus that we are "...to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35). He was an inspired apostle, I choose to believe brother Paul who had no problem recognizing the words of Jesus, though spoken

before the church began, had application to the church and the world.

Moses prophesied that when Jesus came into the world, we were to hear his words. "For *Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, [that] every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people*" (Acts 3:22-23; cf. Deut. 18:15,18-19). If people today do not hear the words of Jesus, they will be destroyed.

When **Philip** went down to Samaria, Acts 8:5 says he "preached Christ unto them." Are we to believe that Philip "preached Christ" but refused to teach anything the Lord taught? Shall we believe in Jesus but not believe that anything he said applies to the church? The point is this, you can't preach Christ without preaching Christ's Words.

Luke 16:16 is very clear. It records Jesus saying, "*The law and the prophets [were] until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached...*" (Luke 16:16; cf. Matt. 11:13). From the beginning of John's preaching and continuing through the teaching of Jesus, *the words of the New Testament were in the process of being delivered*. John began preparing the way for Jesus and the New Testament era (Matt. 3:3; 11:10; Isa. 40:3-4). The WORDS of the kingdom (regarding the New Testament church) did not start or begin to be given (delivered) in Acts two. They started with John, but did not become effective (made law, ratified, probated) until Acts two and then continued with the inspired apostles and writers through the delivery of the rest of the New Testament. It's also worthy of note that even though the events recorded in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John occurred before Acts two, they were not actually written until after Acts two.

Jesus went about preaching "*the gospel of the kingdom*" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:13; Mark 1:14). What does that mean? What is "the gospel of the kingdom?" Jesus said he would build his church and give unto the apostles the keys of the kingdom (Matt. 16:18-19). The church and the kingdom are

one and the same. Since the kingdom is the church and the church is the kingdom, Jesus was preaching the Gospel of the church. According to Acts 1:3, He was preaching things “*pertaining to the kingdom of God*” — the church of Christ. The Lord’s preaching (teaching) was concerning things that would be a part of the teaching of the New Testament. Does Luke 16:16 mean nothing? Are they just words taking up space?

If nothing recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts 1 is a part of the New Testament, then we don’t have to listen to anything Jesus said. Isn’t it interesting that God anticipated such foolishness and recorded the account of Jesus on **the mount of transfiguration** when he met with Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:1-5)? Moses represented the Old Law and Elijah represented the prophets — in other words, the entirety of the Old Testament. What did God tell Peter, James and John and, by extension, the whole world to do regarding Moses, Elijah, and Jesus? “*...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him*” (Matt. 17:5). What does God tell us to do concerning the Lord and his words? HEAR HIM. But, if nothing He said is the doctrine of the New Testament (church), then we have a major dilemma between what man would have us believe and what God tells us to do. Will we believe the teaching of MEN or will we believe the teaching of JESUS? In keeping with what Joshua said in the long ago (Josh. 24:15), “for me and my house,” we will accept the teaching of Jesus.

Hebrews 1:1-2 is very clear concerning the words of the Lord — the words he spoke while walking the earth. “*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [his] Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*” We will have to take these verses out of the Bible if Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are not a part of the New Testament.

These two verses tell us plainly that God has spoken to the whole world, this Christian Dispensation, by his only begotten Son, Jesus the Christ.

John 12:48 is certain. If the New Testament does not start until Acts

two, then why did Jesus say, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Which is it? Either his words mean nothing, being spoken while living under the Old Testament and cannot be a part of the New Testament, OR they are a part of the New Testament because all men in the Christian Age will be judged by his words. I think I’ll believe and teach Jesus’ words. What about you?

No less than **seven parables** spoken by Jesus in **Matthew 13** are specifically pertaining to the kingdom, the church. By these parables the apostles were to know the mysteries of the church (v.11) and the word of the church (v.19). The kingdom/church would last until the end of the world (v.40). This is not true of the Old Testament, but it is true of the church of Christ. These parables were the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom/church: such as Matthew 13:13 from Jeremiah 5:21; verse 14 from Isaiah 6:9; and verse 35 from Psalm 78:2. They teach of the great value, treasure and importance of the Lord’s church. We are to forfeit all that we have in this world in order to be a faithful member of the church (vs.44-50; cf. Matt. 6:33). These parables apply to the Christian Age, not the Mosaic Age.

WHEN did the words of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (historically part of the New Testament) become effective? It was on the day of Pentecost when the church began (Acts 2). The Lord’s last will and testament was in the process of being given (delivered) in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John while he was on earth, but would not become effective until preached on Pentecost in Acts 2.

Hebrews 9:15-17 tells us **when** the Lord’s words in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John — those things pertaining to the kingdom (Acts 1:3) — became effective. “*And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.* ¹⁶*For where a testament [is], there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.* ¹⁷*For a testament [is] of*

force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.”

While we live we have the opportunity to write our own “last will and testament.” As long as we live we can change and modify it — add to and take from. While we are living, the stipulations of our will are null and void. It is only after our death that our will can be probated in a court of law. At that time, the executor(s) of our will has the power to administer the estate. This is exactly what we read in Hebrews 9. While the Lord was alive, he was speaking/teaching his will. That’s what we read in Luke 16:16. After his death, his will was preached. That’s what was done in Acts 2 and the rest of the New Testament. What’s so hard to understand about that? Men need help to misunderstand it and there is plenty of this kind of help around!

DESPERATION

Those who believe and teach the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are a part of the Old Testament and not a part of the New Testament, often do so in order to avoid (dismiss) what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:32** and **19:9**. In these two passages, Jesus gives only one reason for a divorce and remarriage that meets God’s approval. Jesus said, “*Whosoever shall put away his wife, except [it be] for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*” (19:9). Why did Jesus talk about eunuchs in verse 12? What was the point? The point is, those who have an unscriptural divorce cannot marry again. They must live as a eunuch — not married. Going to heaven is far more important than marriage. Those who are divorced, but did not divorce their spouse because of their spouse’s fornication, have to make a choice: marriage or heaven, they can’t have both.

To remove the passages of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 from the New Testament does not help their case whatsoever. Instead, if they’re looking to be able to divorce and remarry, it makes their situation even worse. If you take away these two verses, there is NO passage from Acts 2 throughout the rest of the New Testament that authorizes a divorce and

remarriage. Consequently, there is NO authority whatsoever for one to divorce their spouse and enter another marriage. If one does so, they're "living in adultery" and cannot be saved unless they repent and get out of the adulterous marriage in which they are living.

I've heard some say you can't "live" in adultery; that committing adultery is simply a "one time" event. You just repent of your divorce and then you're free to enter another marriage. However, they conveniently ignore the words of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 where Jesus made clear that whoever enters another marriage "committeth adultery." The verb tense is continuous action — you "keep on committing adultery" as long as you continue in that marriage. In Colossians 3:5-7, the Holy Spirit actually makes application of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 by reminding some of the members of the church at Colosse that before they became

Christians, they had "lived in" fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness. You can't just wish or ignore these passages away!

An attempt to so desperately do away with Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 has left such individuals in dire straits with no Bible authority for divorcing and remarriage whatsoever. By the way, is what Jesus said in these verses so despised they must be dismissed, discredited and disposed of? If so, then you're left with absolutely NO passage that authorizes a divorce and remarriage!

CONCLUSION

Romans 7:2-3 provides authority for another marriage, not because of divorce, but because of the death of your spouse. "*For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to [her] husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is*

loosed from the law of [her] husband. So then if, while [her] husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in **the doctrine of Christ**, hath not God. He that abideth in **the doctrine of Christ**, he hath both the Father and the Son. ¹⁰If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into [your] house, neither bid him God speed: ¹¹For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11). If all Jesus said belongs to the Old Testament era, then we need to inform the apostle John he missed it in these verses!

The way of the transgressor is hard! (Prov. 13:15)

Elder's COLUMN

GOD'S BASIC MATH

Douglas Hoff

We learned in grade school the basic operations of mathematics: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. There is no doubt we use this knowledge every day of our lives. When we read the Bible we find that God also employs these functions as He deals with man.

THE LORD ADDS

Jesus taught His disciples to put the kingdom of God first with the promise that every necessity will be added to one's life (Matt. 6:31-33). The Lord adds saved souls to the church (Acts 2:41,47). At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were performed "*and believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women*" (Acts 5:12-14). When Barnabas came to Antioch a great number of people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:21-24).

The Bible makes mention of "the

book of life." This book contains the names of faithful Christians (Phil. 4:3). How did their names get there? The answer is not stated explicitly. However, it is obvious to conclude that names are added to this magnificent ledger when a person is baptized (obeys the Gospel, becomes a Christian). Hebrews 12:23 in the KJV (King James Version) speaks of "*the firstborn, which are written in heaven.*" The ASV (American Standard Version) says "*enrolled*" while the NKJV (New King James Version) says "*registered.*" To be enrolled or registered means a person's name was added to the list in writing.

There is another sense in which the Lord speaks of addition. It is not a pleasant thing for the one on the receiving end. Four verses from the end of God's word (Rev. 22:18) the reader is warned that, "*If any man shall add unto these things* (what is written in the book of Revelation in particular and the whole Bible in general, — gmr), *God shall add unto*

him the plagues that are written in this book."

THE LORD SUBTRACTS

To subtract means to take away or remove. Paul spoke of the new covenant as the time when God takes away sins (Rom. 11:27). Jesus "*was manifested to take away our sins*" (1 John 3:5). One of the greatest blessings of the new covenant is having one's sins blotted out (Acts 3:19). This is subtracting, not a part, but the whole. It is zeroed out! Thus, there is no condemnation to those whose sins have been forgiven (Rom. 8:1,2; 1 John 1:7,9).

The Lord told the church at Ephesus that He would take away their candlestick (lampstand) if they did not repent (Rev. 2:5). Those who do not overcome sin in their life, but is overcome by it, will have their name blotted out of the book of life (Rev. 3:5).

When will this subtraction (blot-

ting out) happen? Ultimately and finally it will be on the day of Judgment. Overcoming (faithfulness) requires making it to the end of the race. It is there that one will receive the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away (2 Tim. 4:7,8).

Those whose names are not written in the book will be cast out (Rev. 20:15). Revelation 22:19 warns that “if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life.” This indicates a final subtraction at the Judgment.

THE LORD MULTIPLIES

God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:27,28; cf. 9:1,7). However, it is the Lord who gives conception (Ruth 4:13; cf. Gen. 29:31; 30:22). Adam and Eve had their part in reproduction but it was God who blessed them to have children (Psa. 127:3). Multiplication occurs as God and man do their respective parts (Gen. 6:1).

In like manner the church has been given the task of preaching the Gospel to a lost world. This is spiritual reproduction that brings forth souls that have been born again (John 3:3-7; 1 Peter 1:23). When sinners hear and obey God’s word, it accomplishes a great work (Rom. 1:16,17).

It is the power of the Gospel and obedience to it that leads to the multiplication of souls being saved (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 10:8-17; John 6:44-45). The early church went about preaching the word and reaped the harvest of multiplied souls (Acts 5:42; 9:31; 12:24). “*And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied. ... And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*” (Acts 6:1,7).

The Lord was behind all this growth as Paul explained, “*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase*” (1 Cor. 3:6; cf. 2 Cor. 9:10).

THE LORD DIVIDES

Students often struggle with long division. The Lord, on the other hand, has no difficulty dividing the sheep from the goats (Matt.

25:31-33).

Generally speaking, the Lord hates division (Prov. 6:16-19). Yet Jesus foretold that His disciples would experience division. He taught, “*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division*” (Luke 12:51).

Unity in the church is the divine ideal (Eph. 4:1-6). But Satan works hard against that end. He loves to divide the kingdom of God knowing such leads to its downfall (Matt. 12:25). When Paul learned of division in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11), that issue was the first thing he addressed in his first epistle to them. The first four chapters are devoted to resolving the problem of division by addressing the underlying cause.

Later in the same letter Paul once more touches on the trouble of division within the congregation. He said, “*...I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*” (1 Cor. 11:18,19). Clearly, some were approved while others were not. In this case, man’s sin was the cause of the division but the Lord recognized one of the factions as being right regarding the matter.

The Lord tells us to separate (divide ourselves) from sinners. “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols*” (2 Cor. 6:14-16)? “*Blessed [are] they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without [are] dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*” (Rev. 22:14-15).

Christians have the responsibility to “rightly divide” the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). What does this mean? The ASV says “handling aright.” It literally means to make a straight cut, that is, to dissect. The imagery conveys the idea of correctly expounding and understanding God’s word.

CONCLUSION

Young students may struggle to learn basic math. Sometimes they do not understand the concepts and therefore get wrong answers. However, the Lord has none of those problems. He knows exactly when and how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. He always gets the proper results too.

Has your name been added to the Lamb’s book of life (Rev. 21:27)? If not, obey the Gospel to be saved (Acts 2:38). Then, live faithfully to the Lord and His word and you will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). This requires adding certain qualities to our faith (2 Peter 1:5-11).

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HEROD THE KING

Victor M. Eskew

May God help us to seek good, honest, wise, and righteous men and women to lead our nation. May they have a fear of God and a deep respect for His holy Word.

In Matthew two we are introduced to a king named Herod. In fact, his name appears ten times in this one chapter. Herod was the king over Judea, a province of the Roman Empire. In reality, he was a puppet king of the Roman Emperor. Herod began his reign 34 years before the birth of Jesus. He was known by many as *Herod the Great* “because he had distinguished himself in the wars with Antigonus and his other enemies, and because he had evinced great talents in governing and defending his country, in repairing the temple, and in building and ornamenting the cities of his kingdom” (e-sword, *Barnes*).

Herod was known to be a cruel king. This aspect of him is manifested in Matthew 2. Many lessons are to be learned about this brutal ruler. Let’s look at some things we learn about him.

Herod is said to be a king. “*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king...*” (Matt. 2:1). As a king, he received his power from the Almighty God. In Daniel 2:21, we learn that the God of heaven “*removeth kings, and setteth up kings.*” In Romans 13:1, we are taught that “*there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.*” In this position of power, Herod was accountable to God. He was supposed to be a terror to evil works (Rom. 13:3) and “*a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil*” (Rom. 13:4). Sadly, this king forsook his responsibilities. His wrath was directed upon innocent children and toward the sinless Son of God.

Herod became a troubled king when he heard that wise men were inquiring about the birthplace of the “King of the Jews.” “*When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him*” (Matt. 2:3). The word “troubled”

means “to be agitated and disturbed in mind.” Herod was anxious and distressed by the news of this newborn King. His spirit was filled with fear and dread. Herod’s response was a natural reaction. Kings of that day did not like rivals. They were not tolerant of anyone who would oppose their rule. Note, Jesus is called the King of the Jews. The Jews were in Roman bondage at the time. The Romans had taken control of Judea in 63 B.C. If a Jewish king arose, he might seek to rebel against the Roman authorities. Herod did not want this to happen. Therefore, his troubled reaction was quite natural. The problem, however, is that Herod was ignorant of the nature of the kingdom Jesus came to establish. It was to be a spiritual kingdom and not a physical kingdom (John 18:36).

The Hebrew Scriptures had predicted the birth of a Governor (Micah 5:2). They also foretold the name of the town wherein the ruler would be born, Bethlehem Ephratah. Herod only needed one more piece of information. He needed to know the approximate age of the child. To make this determination, he called a private meeting with the wise men, and “*inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared*” (Matt. 2:7). The term “diligently” means “to know assuredly.” Once Herod knew this, he knew the child’s approximate age. He knew the child was a male, that he was born in Bethlehem, and that he was under 2 years old. This information armed him against his adversary.

To make his plan to destroy the child easier, he gave an order to the wise men before they left Jerusalem. “*...Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also*” (Matt. 2:8). If the wise men complied with this order, Herod’s search for the

child would be easier. We do not realize it at this point in the narrative, but Herod’s words were a lie. He had no intention of worshiping this baby. The only intent he had was to kill him. Evil men will use any and all tactics necessary to carry out their evil schemes.

The wise men made their journey to find the Christ. As they started home, they were “*warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod*” (Matt. 2:12). The men obeyed the voice of God and “*departed into their own country another way*” (Matt. 2:12). Herod waited for the return of the sages, but they did not come. “*Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth*” (Matt. 2:16). Herod did not like being disobeyed. Too, he appears to have been a man with a hot and heavy temper. Anger is a very dangerous thing. It is an emotion, which, if left unchecked, can do horrible things to others. In Proverbs 27:4, the wise penman tells us “*wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous.*” In this case, when Herod’s evil schemes combined with his anger, a tragedy of mass proportions occurred.

We have seen the evil of Herod in his scheming, his lying, and his hot temper. His evil now erupts upon the most innocent of society, babies and toddlers. “*Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men*” (Matt. 2:16). To protect his throne from this one child, Herod was willing to commit genocide and kill all the innocents in the region, perhaps hundreds of little ones. Remember, his duty to God was to protect the innocent and to punish the evil. He acted

completely contrary to his divine duty.

The story is not finished. There are two phrases about Herod that are often overlooked. Matthew 2:19 records one of these phrases: *“But when Herod was dead....”* The other is found in verse 15: *“...and was there until the death of Herod.”* Herod did not live to see that his evil scheme was a flop. He did not live long enough to hear the words of God’s anointed, Jesus the Christ, the Savior. He died. He suffered the fate that eventually comes to all men. *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Heb. 9:27). Herod passed into the hades realm. He learned ‘there’ the seriousness of his actions ‘here.’ The fate of this evil king was sealed.

Sadly, Herod’s legacy of evil continued in his son Archelaus. After Herod’s death, Herod’s kingdom was divided into three sections. Archelaus ruled in Judea and was as blood-thirsty as his father. On one passover, he had three thousand people put to death in the temple and in the city of Jerusalem. Matthew hints of his murderous disposition in Matthew 2:22. *“But when he (Joseph) heard that Archelaus did reign in Judea in the room of his father, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.”* Sadly, in these two men, Herod and Archelaus, the phrase “like father like son,” came to pass.

Not all men get the privilege to reign in the kingdoms of men. Those who do, need to recognize the awesome and solemn responsibility they have. It is deeply troubling when evil rulers take the throne. Their evil dispositions and evil behaviors lead to actions that bring great harm to the innocents under their rule. Sometimes this evil continues in their children.

May God help us to seek good, honest, wise, and righteous men and women to lead our nation. May they have a fear of God and a deep respect for His holy Word.

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BUT THINK OF ALL THE GOOD IT COULD DO!

Bill Boyd

I think the first time I heard the line in the title was during the rage over a new version called “Good News for Modern Man.” This “Good News Bible” was a mass marketed version of the New Testament that came out in the late 1960s. It was supposed to be more appealing to that age. It was illustrated with artful sketches, but in my youth I thought they were cartoons and they seemed out of place in a Bible. As I recall it was supposed to read like a newspaper, which I suppose it did, and which is probably why people soon tired of reading it. It lacked the simple elegance we had come to expect from the Bible. I have not seen one for years.

Being “dynamic” in their approach, the translators preferred to call Mary a “girl” rather than a “virgin.” They thought the apostle’s choice of the word “blood” was too graphic so they created substitutes. They freely incorporated their own ideas into key verses like Acts 2:38 where they wrote “...you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit,” which is what they believed, but which is not what the text says.

Good News For Modern Man was part of a new translation precedent that broke from the careful Tyndale tradition and gave the translators more freedom to express themselves. Some preachers exposed its errors, but others dismissed their warnings saying, *“But think of all the good it could do.”*

Those words have been heard many times before and since. They were heard when a “Christian celebrity” took up with Oral Roberts and started “speaking in tongues.” They were heard when celebrity preachers were holding “Campaigns for Christ” and telling the crowds to accept Jesus as their personal savior, pray the sinner’s prayer, sign a card, and join the church of their choice. They were heard when people were reading rapture books like, “The Late Great Planet Earth.” They are still heard when Hollywood incorporates their own brand of cultural correctness into their stories of Noah and Moses. I recently heard these words in defense of a young lady from **David Lipscomb University** who was preaching before a church in Franklin, Tennessee; “But think of all the good she could do,” they said, dismissing 1 Timothy 2:12. The use of the word “but” as a contrasting conjunction is revealing in that line. “It could do a lot of good” in contrast to what? In contrast to all the evil it could do? Verily! What shall we say? Let us do evil that good may come? Perhaps we should go back and chew on Romans 3:8 a while.

When Paul and his companions were preaching in Philippi, there was a slave girl with a spirit of divination following them and crying out, *“These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation”* (Acts 16:17). She was preaching the truth, and she was good at what she did. She had already brought her masters great gain by her soothsaying. But Paul was not thinking about all the good she could do. He was grieved. *“But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour”* (Acts 16:18). Remember this story the next time you hear someone talking about all the good that error can do.

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Formal Worship...

(Continued from page 57)

with God hearing or rejecting our prayer. We are reminded that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:21).

Oppression Of The Helpless! God has always been concerned with the widow, the fatherless, and the poor (Zech. 7:10). To take unfair advantage of these people

insults God. He delights in compassion and mercy (Prov. 14:31).

Evil Thoughts! One who devises evil in his heart against his brother will not incur God's favor (Zech. 7:10). Evil thinking will poison our prayers. The wise man said, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so [is] he" (Prov. 23:7).

Refusal To Obey God's Words! Zechariah was clear in saying, "it is come to pass, [that] as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. 7:13). Many people are concerned only with their own lusts and thus their selfish prayers to fulfill such lusts will not be heard by the Heavenly Father (cf. James 4:3).

Pitiful Lives! Religious formality and powerless prayers will lead to living pitiful lives. God will not accept "will worship" — worship that comes from the mind of man and is designed to please man! The Lord will not sanction His House being turned into a "den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13). Robbery has occurred when the Lord has been stripped of the glory that is rightfully His!

We are to assemble together to worship God. We are to praise God. We are to glorify God. We are to stand in awe of God and reverence His name. When man seeks attention for himself, God sees one who is living a pitiful life!

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