



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

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PROS AND CONS OF USING A.I. IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS

Jason Patrick Hilburn

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming increasingly prevalent in many areas of people’s lives, including business, education, and even religious discussions. AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, can provide quick access to Biblical information, answer various questions, and assist in Bible study. With this new technology at our fingertips, many are beginning to ask: Should AI be used in religious matters? If so, how can it be used responsibly?

While AI offers certain advantages, it also presents significant dangers, including the potential for misinformation. This article will address both the benefits and risks of using AI in religious matters, highlighting how it can be a useful tool while also emphasizing the importance of personal Bible study and critical thinking.

THINGS TO NOTE IN GENERAL

Different AI chatbots provide different answers. Not all AI systems are equally reliable. After testing several, I found that ChatGPT reasoned better than others, and it was consistently ranked as the highest-performing AI chatbot by various sources.

AI is an uninspired source. It is not inherently wrong to quote uninspired sources when used correctly. Paul did in Acts 17:28 — “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said...” A Christian might quote an

atheist on certain subjects (e.g., “Atheist John Doe concedes that the morals of Christianity are good for society”), just as one might cite a historian or scientist, provided the information is accurate and relevant. However, an uninspired source must never be treated as the ultimate authority — only God’s word holds that distinction.

AI draws from online data, which can be both good and bad. AI has access to vast amounts of information, meaning it can pull from both reliable and unreliable sources. This reinforces the need for careful evaluation of its responses (1 Thess. 5:21).

PROS OF USING AI IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS

Accessibility & Convenience — AI is available 24/7 and can quickly retrieve Scriptural references, historical context, and insights from various perspectives.

Logical Reasoning & Evidence-Based Responses — Unlike some sources that merely state opinions, ChatGPT typically supports its conclusions with logical reasoning. However, it is ultimately up to us to verify the accuracy of its reasoning.

Bible Study Assistance — AI functions similarly to Bible software but is more user-friendly and capable of answering complex questions. It can search for words, phrases, or concepts in the Bible quickly and efficiently.

Unbiased Scripture Analysis — AI can provide non-denominational perspectives that may help people understand the Bible without denominational biases. However, its responses depend upon its sources, so complete impartiality is not guaranteed. Users must always compare AI-generated answers with the rightly divided Word of God to ensure accuracy (Acts 17:11; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:15).

Evangelism & Teaching Aid — AI can assist in preparing written teaching materials in a logical, orderly way, helping the user organize his thoughts in a structured manner. It can generate relevant illustrations or Bible study guides that can be used in teaching or preaching, and it has the potential to do much more.

Testing Doctrinal Consistency — I have tested ChatGPT’s answers while logged in and while logged out, using browsers in anonymous mode. While responses were generally consistent, I did notice variations, often in how AI initially worded its answers to avoid offending any group. For example, it was initially hesitant to recommend any religion or religious group, but after pressing it for direct objective answers it recommended Christianity and said the churches of Christ align most closely with Biblical teachings. Even so, this does not automatically validate its conclusions. As with any

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Using AI...



Editorial...

WRESTING THE SCRIPTURES #1

Garland M. Robinson

God revealed his Word through inspired men. A curse is upon anyone who changes it in any way.

The only begotten Son of God came into this world to save sinful man (Luke 19:10). There being nothing greater to offer as a sacrifice, He offered Himself to die on the cross for the sins of man. He did this one time for all time. Hebrews 9:24-29, *"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation."* (see also Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10; 1 Peter 3:18).

The Lord ordained that His Gospel should be proclaimed throughout the whole world to make man aware of His sacrifice and to inform them of what to do to access the benefits of His grace. This information is recorded in His eternal Word, the Holy Scriptures, the New Testament. In the days before the cross of Christ, God spake *"...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"* (Heb. 1:1-2).

His holy word was *"...given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It was signed, sealed and delivered — one time for all time (Jude

3). The all-inspired word of the New Testament is the means by which man can have forgiveness of sins and be saved.

God did not reveal His saving word through angels, but through inspired men. This is clearly revealed in the account of the conversion of Cornelius in Acts chapters 10-11. Cornelius is described as a devout man and one who feared (reverenced) God with all in his house. Through him, the Gospel was introduced to the Gentiles. When we read the full account of his conversion we learn that He did not receive a "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" to save him. Nor did he receive an "irresistible working of grace." God did not talk to him nor send him a vision that he might learn what to do to be saved. Angels weren't dispatched to teach him what to do to be saved or to save him. That is not how salvation came about in the first century and it's not how salvation comes about today. Men must "hear" the word of God and "learn" what to do (John 6:45).

THE KEY TO SALVATION

We are not left to wonder about Cornelius and how he received the forgiveness of sins. We learn exactly what he was told to do. He revealed to the apostle Peter that *"...he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (Acts 11:13-14). This reveals the process by which every sinner is converted to Christ. **Men must hear WORDS to be saved.** Not just any words. Not the words of men or of angels. Men must hear divinely inspired words from heaven.

Notice what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth: *"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer*

of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:20-24). *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

There is no other means to receive the forgiveness of sins than to **HEAR** the all-inspired word, the holy Scriptures. Upon **hearing** the word (Rom. 10:17), **believing** the word (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), **repenting of sins** (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), **confessing faith in Jesus** as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32-32; Acts 8:37) and being **baptized into water for the forgiveness of sins** (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16), sinners can be saved from the guilt and penalty of their sins.

Paul wrote, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"* (Rom. 1:16). When the Scriptures are taken away, God's power to save is taken away because He placed His saving power in the Word. Even if God's word is not taken away, it can be ignored; and/or, it can be distorted (which in effect is the same as taking it away). When the Scriptures have been perverted, men can't be saved. Error (false doctrine) can not and will not save. It never has and it never will.

THEY PREACHED THE WORD

On Paul's first missionary journey, he preached the Word of God. Everywhere he went, the necessity and distinctiveness of his preaching was made clear.

• “*They preached the word of God*” (Acts 13:5).

• “*Sergius Paulus...desired to hear the word of God*” (Acts 13:7).

• “*To you is the word of this salvation sent*” (Acts 13:26).

• “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*” (Acts 13:38).

• “*The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath*” (Acts 13:42).

• “*The next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God*” (Acts 13:44).

• “*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles*” (Acts 13:46).

• “*When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord... And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region*” (Acts 13:48-49).

• “*Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace*” (Acts 14:3).

• “*And there they preached the gospel*” (Acts 14:7).

• “*Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God*” (Acts 14:15).

• “*And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch*” (Acts 14:21).

• “*And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia*” (Acts 14:25).

• “*The Gentiles by my mouth [Peter] should hear the word of the gospel, and believe*” (Acts 15:7).

• “*Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also*” (Acts 15:35).

• “*Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do*” (Acts 15:36).

PERVERTING THE WORD

On Paul's second missionary journey he preached throughout the regions of Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16:6).

Some years later he was inspired to write the book of Galatians, a book which is addressed to the congregations that were established throughout the region of Galatia. Note these stern words written to them in Galatians 1:6-9: “*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*”

Paul was amazed how quickly these brethren had been persuaded to accept a different gospel than what he had preached to them. Why do people do that? What is so appealing in a perverted message? I don't know that I can answer that unless it be that men are always looking for something more than what God says. Men look to themselves. They're always looking for something filled with feelings and emotion. It's all about what they like, what they think, how they feel, what they believe. We need to understand that man's existence in this world is not about me or you. It's not about us. It's about what God wants, what God says. But that's not good enough for many. They want more!

There's a point made in the passage of Galatians 1:6-9 that does not come out as clearly in English as it does in Greek. The word “another” in verse 6 (*heteros*) is a different Greek word from the word “another” in verse 7 (*allos*). In verse 6, the word describes “another of a different kind.” In verse 7, the word describes “another of the same kind.”

The brethren in the churches of Galatia had exchanged the pure unadulterated Gospel that Paul preached to them for “another” gospel of a completely different kind. This so-called gospel they accepted was not of the same nature, not of the same form, nor of the same class as the Gospel Paul preached and they had obeyed. It was of a completely different quality. There was no saving power in a “different gospel” because it was a message that did not come from heaven. It came from men.

We must get across to people everywhere that the Gospel of Jesus Christ must not be *perverted, twisted, changed, or modified* in any way. We must not accept “another gospel” of a different kind. We need to realize that a gospel of a different kind is not the Gospel of Christ at all. It may sound good. It may sound reasonable. It may sound pleasing. But unless it's the same Gospel delivered by the apostles and inspired penmen of the first century, it is a false gospel and cannot save! Men must not be duped by another so-called gospel.

Do you recall that Balaam had the sentiment and attitude of always looking for something more? While he acknowledged God's word, he kept on searching for a loophole to get around it. The servants of Balak tried their best to get him to curse the Israelites. Yet, listen to what Balaam says in Numbers 22:18-19, “*...Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the LORD my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the LORD will say unto me more.*”

In verse 18 Balaam makes one of the greatest statements that a mortal could ever make: “*I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord!*” But, in the very next verse he expresses the desire to see if God might say something “more” than he had already said. He wasn't content to accept God at his word. He wanted more. He goes down in history as one “*who loved the wages of unrighteousness*” (2 Peter 2:15). His way was the way of error because he was always seeking a reward (Jude 11). He was seeking a bribe! He was willing to sell his soul for money. He desperately tried to “get around” God's word.

Though he couldn't curse the Israelites, he figured out another way that would insure their condemnation. He knew God was a righteous God and would not tolerate corruption, so he devised a plan that would entice the Israelites to commit idolatry, sacrilege and whoredom. His scheme was to convince “*...Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication*” (Rev. 2:14). That's exactly what he did!

The world is filled with people just like Balaam who are always trying to

circumvent God's saving word! They have an agenda of what they want and one way or another they're going

to have it. They will "make it happen." They will pervert the word of God to suit their desire so they can feel good

about what they're doing. They will be smiling all the way to the torment of hell.

THE RELIGION OF MAN OR THE RELIGION OF GOD?

Marvin L. Weir

The Bible makes it very clear that there are only two religions from which man can choose: the religion of man or the religion of God! The statement Jesus made in Matthew 12:30 will haunt many people in the Day of Judgment. Jesus warned, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*" To choose a man-made religion (any denomination) over the church of Christ (Christ's church), places one in direct opposition to the Lord. The reason it is the church of Christ is because the church belongs to Christ. He promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18) which is His body of which He is head (Eph. 1:22-23).

Man's religion has always been attractive and pleasing to men, but it has never been pleasing to God. Churches founded by men lack the authority that comes from Heaven and are thus of no benefit to one seeking to be a worshipper of God. Let us apply some principles found in 1 Kings 18 that will be of benefit to us today.

The religion of man comes in many forms and has many followers. Elijah was "one" man seeking to serve God, but Baal's false prophets numbered 450. The odds always seem to be in favor of Satan and the world. One reason this is true is because a depraved religion will always attract and pacify an immoral and depraved humanity. It was Barabbas, the notorious murderer and insurrectionist, that the morally corrupt Jews wanted released instead of the Christ (Matt. 27:21). Today, Christ is crucified afresh (repeatedly) as people pledge their allegiance to man-made churches and scoff at the Lord's church.

The false prophets of Baal were zealous to their religion as they "*cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lances, till the blood gushed out upon them*" (1 Kings 18:28). Today, many are zealous to their religion as they devoutly defend worship that is not authorized by the Scriptures. The apostle Paul rightly describes those who refuse to

be guided by a thus saith the Lord as those who "*...have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God*" (Rom. 10:2-3). Earnestness without humble submission and obedience to the Word of God is in vain.

Followers of Baal were deceived, and so are those today who follow men instead of Christ. The disciples of Baal cried out "*but there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded*" (1 Kings 18:29). The Lord will not answer those today who are worshipping in religious error. Christ said, "*Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*" (Matt. 15:13-14).

The religion God authorizes is unique and has few followers. Elijah thought that he was all alone in seeking to do the will of God. It was revealed to him, however, that there were still seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed down to Baal (2 Kings 19:18; cf. Rom. 11:4). Elijah was not alone in his struggle to worship according to God's will, and neither are we alone today in our struggle to worship "*in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24). Compared to the followers of false teachers, however, followers of righteousness are indeed few in number. Being unpopular and in the minority must never deter those who value their souls from doing what is godly and right. Victory does not belong to the multitudes who choose to follow the creeds of men and worldly philosophy but to those who choose to follow the Lord and are guided by His Word!

Every person, while in this life, must decide who he will follow. There are two opinions to choose between: God's or man's. The Bible tells us that these two opinions are as wide apart as daylight and darkness. The Scriptures declare, "*For my thoughts*

are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9). How much more clearly can God state that what man "thinks" and "feels" doesn't matter when it comes to acceptable worship and service? It is tragic that so many people value and trust their feelings more than they value and trust the inspired Word of God. The Scriptures do not teach one to cling to his feelings and never part with them, but God's Word does instruct one to "*Buy the truth, and sell it not*" (Prov. 23:23). The Word of God and His Son is such truth (John 17:17).

The question of 1 Kings 18:21 is appropriate to ask of people today: "*How long halt [limp] ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word*" The principle today is this: "If Christ be the founder of **the** church, follow Him; but if men are the legitimate and scriptural founders of **the** church, then follow them."

God's Word emphatically teaches that salvation is **in** Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:10), not some man! All will be judged by the Word of Christ and not by the word of men. Most people today have seemingly decided that John 12:48 reads like this: "It does not matter if one rejects Christ and receives not his sayings, he will be judged by the creeds, opinions, and feelings of men." What a contrast with what the Bible teaches! Jesus says, "*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.*"

The question pertaining to saving one's soul is this: "Will you choose the religion of man or the religion of God?" The eternal destiny of your soul depends on the choice you make!

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Using AI...

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tool, its responses must always be measured against the Bible — the divine Standard. Obviously, if it recommended some other religious group, the answer would need to be scrutinized just as much.

CONS OF USING AI IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS

AI Lacks Biblical Discernment

— AI does not have faith, spiritual maturity, or the ability to apply Biblical wisdom as a mature Christian would. While it can analyze and summarize Scripture, it lacks personal conviction and spiritual understanding. Since the Scriptures are the source of salvation, and Scriptures can be twisted, relying on AI for spiritual guidance should never replace diligent Bible study and learning from faithful Christians (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2, 15-18; 3:15-17; 2 Peter 3:15-18).

Potential for Bias & Error — AI is trained on human data, which may contain doctrinal errors, denominational bias, or secular influences. While it attempts to remain neutral, it can still reflect the biases of its training data. AI also tends to phrase responses carefully to avoid offending any group, which can result in vague or softened answers. This cautious approach does not necessarily mean the most objective or Biblically accurate response will be given. Also, when a user is logged into an account that retains past interactions, AI-generated answers may become subtly influenced by previous interactions, reinforcing the user's preferences or beliefs.

Risk of Over-Reliance — Some may become spiritually lazy, allowing AI to replace personal Bible study. If AI becomes a crutch rather than a tool, it can weaken one's ability to discern Truth independently, making him susceptible to Satan's devices (Psalm 119:11; Matt. 7:15-20; 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 4:1).

Contextual Misinterpretation

— AI sometimes takes verses out of context, misapplies Scripture, or omits parts of verses. I have personally had to reason with ChatGPT several times to get it to recognize its mistakes in handling certain Biblical passages.

AI Does Not Learn Globally from Conversations — If AI provides

an incorrect answer and a user corrects it, AI may acknowledge the mistake in that conversation, but the correction may not apply globally. The same mistake may still appear in responses to other users unless AI's developers update its global training data.

The Way Questions Are Phrased Can Influence Answers

— AI-generated responses depend significantly on how questions are asked. If a question is worded vaguely, AI may provide a misleading or incomplete answer. Users who phrase questions with bias may also lead AI toward certain conclusions, though it often tactfully pushes back against clear errors. Pressing for direct, no-nonsense answers generally leads to more objective and specific answers.

Lack of Personal Connection

— AI cannot replace real human fellowship, mentorship, or the personal aspect of Biblical instruction. Spiritual growth requires relationships with faithful Christians (Heb. 10:24-25), and AI can never fulfill that role.

AI Responses Can Change Over Time — Since AI software is frequently updated, it is possible to get one answer today and a different answer tomorrow based on new programming. Note that updates do not always lead to more accurate responses, as changes may reflect shifts in data sources or biases. Technology like AI is always changing, but the Bible does not change (Psalm 119:89). The Bible should always be considered the ultimate source of Truth.

CONCLUSION

Using AI is not inherently wrong, just as it is not inherently wrong to study the Bible using online videos, Bible software, or uninspired commentaries. However, it must be used with great caution because it can mislead. As with other uninspired sources, AI can often be a useful tool in various contexts, offering logical analysis and assisting in research. It can help organize thoughts, retrieve information, and enhance Bible study efficiency; but it lacks the discernment, consistency, and depth of human understanding that comes from diligently studying God's Word.

AI will hopefully continue to improve, becoming more consistent as a tool to learn, teach, and defend the Truth, but no technology, no matter how advanced, can replace the perfect

wisdom found in the Bible. AI may be a tool for study, but God has already given mankind the complete and sufficient guide for Truth — the inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3). As with any tool, AI should be used wisely and always tested against the unchanging Word of God.

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Contributions	\$5,610.00
Debits	
Postage	\$2,361.60
Supplies	\$216.67
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Ending Balance	\$25,234.94

"WORSHIP WITH INSTRUMENTS IS NOT A SIN"

Tommy J. Hicks

The quotation marks surrounding the title of this article are there because it is a direct quote. It is quoted from a "Church of Christ's" website, under the subheading, "What We Believe." Here is the quote in its immediate setting:

"We believe singing is an integral part of our worship to God. Therefore our leadership agrees to these 3 points: (1) Singing in worship assemblies will be acapella, (2) Worship with instruments is not a sin, and (3) Instrumental music may be used in other areas of worship; such as videos, illustrations, and announcements."

To say the least, these pronouncements raise a number of questions. If that congregation's "leadership agrees" that "(1) Singing in worship assemblies will be acapella," why did the leadership deem it necessary to say, "(2) Worship with instruments is not a sin, and (3) Instrumental music may be used in other areas of worship..."? An objective observer might suspect that someone is trying to have it *both ways*. However, the question begging for an answer is: "By what authority did that congregation's leadership determine that 'Worship with instruments is not a sin'?"

Those leaders, as well as all men, must respect "The Authority Principle," which is presented in a number of different words and ways throughout the Bible. Interestingly, one of the plainest expressions of that principle

is found in a context in which applies to the subject at hand. "To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse" (Col. 1:2), Paul wrote: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:16-17).

Here, Paul is saying that whatever is preached or taught (i.e., whatever is **said**), and that whatever is **done** in regard to the singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," that *all must be authorized by the Lord*. Matthew Henry said it this way: "And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, according to his command and in compliance with his authority" (*Commentary on Colossians*).

Has the Lord authorized the use of instrumental music (*in any shape, form, or fashion*) in any aspect of the New Testament church's worship? No! If one thinks otherwise, let him provide *book, chapter, and verse* where it is authorized in God's Word! If "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), and if "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23), how is it that the use of instrumental music in worship is not a sin? If that conclusion is correct, then church leaders who would *pontificate* that "Worship with instruments is not a sin" need to be corrected (cf. 1

Tim. 5:19-20).

Even though God has not authorized the use of instrumental music in the church's worship, some have concluded that instrumental music in worship to God is "No Big Deal." Their idea is, "Use it if you want to. God does not care one way or the other." Many examples, such as the "strange fire" offered by Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1), and the sacrifice of King Saul (1 Sam. 13:13), prove that others have made that same fatal mistake.

Consider Cain and Abel. Hebrews 11:4 states, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Commenting on that verse, Burton Coffman noted, "It is a Biblical precept that 'faith comes from hearing God's word' (Romans 10:17), and in the light of that it may be definitely concluded that Abel acted in accordance with God's command, whereas Cain did not" (*Commentary on Hebrews*). In other words, God told Cain and Abel how He wanted them to worship Him, but because Cain failed to do so, God "had not respect" for his offering (Gen. 4:5).

Unfortunately, many today are following "in the way of Cain" (Jude 11). Like Cain, without compunction they disrespect God by adding and/or substituting something in their worship which He has not authorized (*instrumental music for instance*).

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A DIVIDED HEART

Tracy Dugger

The book of Hosea pictures the Northern Kingdom of Israel just before the Assyrians are let loose, punishing them for their false religion and immorality. In this graphic and rich writing, there are many figures of speech describing their spiritual ailment. One very simple statement is found in Hosea 10:2, "Their heart is

divided; now shall they be found faulty."

This passage reveals Israel's main problem — a divided heart. Simply, they were trying to worship the Lord and false gods at the same time. There is no success in that. It is all about **loyalty to God**. They had professed allegiance to the Lord even though they were clearly unfaithful. They had

convinced themselves otherwise. Thus, they were deceived. It is a human tendency to convince ourselves of being loyal to God even when we are not.

A simple study of the Bible reveals that **Satan will allow divided loyalties, but God will not!** God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5). He will not share loyalties nor tolerate divided

allegiance.

This is what Jesus meant in Matthew 6:19-24. In verse 22, He stated, "...if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." By "single" He meant "simple, whole, clear, sound." The idea is single-minded — not divided. This is why He said in v.24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The inspired James takes this up in James 1:8 and 4:8 by referring to the "double minded man." This term is also a reference to disloyalty to God. And if we are going to make application, we must examine the statement, look deep inside ourselves, and examine our attitudes and actions, and repent or in the words of Hosea, "break up" our "fallow ground" (Hosea 10:12).

The reason that sound preaching exhorts and admonishes that a Christian cannot "put one foot in the world and one in the church" is because of this principle. You will never serve and worship God acceptably when you are trying to ride the fence; when you try to dabble in the world and in the church at the same time. You become double-minded. All it will produce is anxiety and misery in us or in the words of James, "unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8b).

As a result of Israel's "divided heart," Hosea says, "they shall be found faulty" (10:2). The ASV and NKJV translates it "guilty." They were at fault because they were guilty. And as a result, they will be punished.

Later in verses 10-11, Hosea uses an agricultural theme of plowing a field. He speaks of how Israel would "bind themselves in their two furrows" (v.10), which may be a reference to their divided loyalties in which they tried to serve the Lord and the world at the same time. It simply cannot be done!

Now remember, this was written for our learning (Rom. 15:4). What do we learn from this? God demands our "all" (Matt. 16:24-26)! We must have the proper priorities. God must come first in our lives (Matt. 6:33). There is no middle ground between serving God and serving the world (Matt. 6:24; 12:30). And, there is no compromise with error (Gal. 2:5). The prophet from Tishbeh, Elijah (1 Kings 17:1), who gathered enough courage within him-

self asked the same question we must ask today of ourselves or of others, "How long halt ye" ("go ye limping" ASV) "between two opinions" ("the two sides" ASV)? "if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21)?

Never forget that although God challenges us and requires much, He first gave much (1 John 4:9,10,19). Jesus requires much from us but He too gave much (John 10:15). The rich blessings we will receive cannot even be fully comprehended in this life (Mark 10:30). Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, "but though our outward man perish, yet the inward

man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Let us resolve not to have a divided heart but a heart that gives all to the Lord. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37).

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GOD'S PEOPLE ARE DISTINCTIVE

Jim Lewis

The great thrust of liberalism is to make the church to become like the world around us. In a world so filled with sin and indifference to godliness, it is refreshing and uplifting to notice the distinctiveness of a faithful Christian.

A true follower of Christ is:

Distinctive in speech. The Christian's speech is "sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (Titus 2:8). There is a noted void of profanity and vulgarities. He calls Bible things by Bible names (1 Peter 4:11). His language is the language of godliness, not worldliness.

Distinctive in doctrine. His consent is only to "the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness" (1 Tim. 6:3). The Christian is greatly concerned about abiding only in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), and will teach no other doctrine than that which is authorized by the Lord (Gal. 1:6-8; Col. 3:17).

Distinctive in worship. Historically, apostasy makes its inroads by changing the way in which man worships God. A true follower of Christ avoids the vain worship of teaching man's doctrines (Matt. 15:9). He also refuses will worship (Col. 2:23), and he rejects the idea that man can worship God in ignorance (Acts 17:23). The Christian distinctively worships God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

Distinctive in manner of life. A true follower of Christ always conducts himself in a manner which "becometh the gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). The Christian's modest apparel is distinctive from the world's dress (1 Tim. 2:8-10). His entertainment is unlike that of the world's. His priorities in all matters place Christ first. What this world needs is more distinctiveness! "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness" (2 Cor. 6:14)?



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