

The Old Paths

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“That Ye May Believe”

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“Bible Terms”

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In the twentieth chapter of John, the inspired writer said, “*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*” (Jn. 20:30-31). Just prior to this statement, Jesus had told Thomas, “*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” (Jn. 20:29). The statement, “*they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” applies today to everyone on earth. We have not seen the nailprints, nor heard Christ audibly. How then can we believe? John said we can believe based upon what has been written (Jn. 20:30-31, 21:24-25).

In the last two chapters of John, it is stated that not everything Christ did was recorded; but what was recorded was for the purpose of producing faith in men. John went on to say that he supposed if everything was written, “*the world itself could not contain the books...*”. Seeing it is God’s prerogative to tell us what He wants us to know, to delve into the realm of God’s silence is no place for men. The Bible places continued emphasis on our focusing upon what has been written, not on the things not written (Lev. 10:1-2; Deut. 29:29; Rom. 15:4; Heb. 7:12-14; I Pet. 4:11).

While some readily say that they believe Jesus is the Son of God, many are not willing to take the next step, and that is to believe what He says! There are many people who believe in Christ, but they do not believe Christ. If they did, they would not be doing the things that they are doing. Yet, part of the responsibility inherent in believing in Christ is that we believe the words He spoke.

Christ has spoken, and said

1) His Father is God (Lk. 2:49). Christ is not just a “good prophet,” as some people (Muslims, etc.) wish to say. He is the Son of God! (Jn. 9:37)

2) He has a church which belongs to Him (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). It does not belong to man, and ought not wear a man’s name!

3) There is only one way to be saved, and this is through Him (Jn. 14:6). We must follow His plan for salvation if we wish to see Heaven (Mk. 16:16).

4) There is a way men ought to treat others (Matt. 7:12). It is not “survival of the fittest,” but genuine caring, and treating others in the right way (Jn. 13:34-35; Gal. 6:2).

5) There will be a day in which we will resurrect to go to our eternal destiny — life or damnation (Jn. 5:28-29).

Conclusion

The choice of where we end up in eternity is made right now. Therefore, let us make the right decision, believing on Christ (Jn. 8:24), obeying His will in order to be saved (Acts 2:38), and living faithfully for Him all the days of our life (I Cor. 15:58). Do you believe Christ (Rom. 10:16)??

What if I told you that I baptized my children last night as I gave them a bath? What thoughts would come to mind? Would you think I just gave them a bath, or would you think I actually baptized them?

In the truest sense of the word, baptism means to dip or immerse. When people were baptized in the New Testament, they were immersed or submerged under water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38-41; 8:38). In a sense, I may baptize my children while dipping them in water to clean them off, but that is not how the term is used in the New Testament when people became Christians (1 Pet. 3:21). In the Bible it refers to an act of salvation.

Likewise, there are terms we hear today that are applied in ways God never intended.

“Miracle”

How often have we heard the birth of a child or a turn of good fortune as a “miracle”? Is it really a miracle to give birth or find a job? When Jesus performed miracles, was he doing something ordinary and common, as childbirth? Or was He performing the supernatural — things that go above or beyond nature? Causing the blind to see or raising someone from the dead is a miracle (Mk. 5:38-42; Jn. 3:2). Giving birth or finding a good parking spot is not. That is not how God ever intended to use the term miracle. The only exception of course, regarding childbirth, is when God worked contrary to nature to bring for the birth of certain individuals, namely Jesus (Matt. 1:23).

“Sabbath”

When our community was debating recently on the sale of alcohol on Sundays, many of the opponents of alcohol were saying, “We need to honor

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk

the Sabbath by not selling liquor on the Lord's day." A noble effort to say the least (and I'm thankful for the stand against alcohol), but Sunday is not the Sabbath, nor is any other day for that matter. Yes, the Lord rested on the last day in the week of creation. And yes, the Lord taught the Jews to not work on the seventh day for it was their Sabbath (Ex. 16). But in the New Testament there is no such language. In the Christian era, the primary day of worship is the Lord's day—the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). The Sabbath was strictly a commandment for the Jew under the Law of Moses (Ex. 31:16), which is different than the law we are under today (Heb. 8:6-9, 13).

I appreciate the effort to not sell alcohol on Sundays. One day of abstinence is better than none. But the Sabbath was for the Jews, and is not to be followed under the new covenant (Col. 2:16).

"Fellowship"

This is one that probably hits closer to home than the others. Every once in a while, when we're gathered for a meal in each other's home, we might hear (and offer) the prayer, "Thank you for this food and fellowship." Fellowship has become a term to define our social gatherings as Christians. But would you be surprised to learn that the Bible never uses that term in a common or social sense? The truest sense of the word means a partnership, sharing or communion. Yes, we have "fellowship" as we share a common meal together, but we can have that with people at work or at school. That is not the fellowship of God's people as defined in the Bible. In the Bible, fellowship always refer to a spiritual relationship or partnership we have together while performing God's will (2 Cor. 8:4; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5). Eating a common meal together does not produce this fellowship, else we couldn't eat with the world (Eph. 5:11). But I can share a meal with a non-Christian without having fellowship with them because we're

not partaking of anything in a spiritual sense (Mk. 2:16). The only time a meal can be referred to as fellowship is when it is done as an act of worship, to either God or Satan (1 Cor. 10:20, 21). The Lord's supper is our "fellowship meal." The church building is our "fellowship hall." The gospel is our fellowship. There may be times when we are restricted in having common meals together because of a loss of fellowship (1 Cor. 5:11), but that does not mean the social ties are our basis for fellowship. Fellowship in the Bible is a always a spiritual term referring to the bond we have with one another in spiritual things. It is much greater than pizza, baseball teams and potlucks. We can withdraw from Christians for not attending services; we cannot discipline them for missing the potlucks. The difference? God expects a fellowship in the gospel, but the social ties are to be met in other ways, apart from the work of the church (1 Cor. 11:22).

"Pastor"

Probably the most misunderstood word today in religions that profess to be of Christ is the term pastor. Everybody uses it in reference to the preacher, but in the Bible the term has a whole different meaning. Yes, a preacher may be like a shepherd in his concerns for the congregation and efforts to teach God's word, but that does not mean he is a pastor. In the New Testament, pastor always refers to a specific role in the local church that denotes oversight and rule (Eph. 4:11; Acts 20:17, 28). The bishop, pastor and

elder were all the same role (Titus 1:5, 7). And there was always more than one at a congregation (Phil. 1:1) — equal in duty and authority (Heb. 13:7, 17). There may have been preachers who were also pastors (1 Pet. 5:1), but not every preacher could be a pastor (Titus 1:5, 6).

Conclusion

I may give my kids a bath and call it baptism, but that doesn't mean they were baptized in the New Testament sense of the word. Likewise, I may use other Bible terms (without realizing) in ways God never intended. The danger in this is that people depart from God's will when they misunderstand its meaning (Matt. 22:29; 2 Pet. 3:16). It is imperative that we use Bible terms in Bible ways (1 Pet. 4:11).

Editor's Note:

Certainly, the above list could be extended to include other misused words. The longer I live, the more I am impressed with 2 key things: 1) Words have specific definitions which paint certain pictures in the minds of people. 2) Very few people know the specific definitions of the words they use! May brother Thomas' excellent article stir us up to watch our speech so that we will not leave people with the wrong impression. We have a message to communicate to people (Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 2:2). Therefore, let us use proper terminology as we lead people to Christ.

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