

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Newsletter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 KJV)

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THE FIFTH GOSPEL

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The fifth gospel? What is that? We all know that the Scriptures contain only four Gospels. That is true. The four Gospels present Jesus from four perspectives--each a presentation of Jesus in a particular way. These are represented in Ezekiel 1:10. (As a matter of fact, there is a major denomination which bases its name on this four-fold presentation of Jesus).

<i>GOSPEL</i>	<i>DEPICTION OF JESUS</i>		
Matthew	the King	the Lion	genealogy starts with Abraham
Mark	the Servant	the Ox	no genealogy for a servant
Luke	the Man	his humanity	genealogy starts with Adam
John	the Eagle	the Son of God	genealogy starts with God

We know that there should not be more than four Gospels because of the various symbolic representations in the Old Testament, the most significant of which is the testimony of Jesus in the construction of the Tabernacle. Jesus said that He is the Door. He also said that He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The Tabernacle had three "doors" or curtains which separated the sections and allowed entry. Each of these doors is a presentation of Jesus. You must enter by The Way into the outer court to approach the altar; by The Truth to enter the Holy Place; and, by The Life to enter the Holiest of Holies. The doorway of the outer court had four posts--these are the four Gospels by which we enter and approach the altar. These four posts represent Jesus' ministry as depicted in the table above. (While it is not a part of the purpose of this newsletter, to complete the thought, we need to mention the symbolism of the other two doors. The doorway to the Holy Place had five posts, which represent the ministry of Jesus through His headship gifts of the 5-fold ministry. The doorway to the Holiest of Holies had two posts, which represent Jesus'

ministry as Priest and King.)

Now we can see that the addition of a "fifth gospel" would not be consistent with the prophetic symbolism of the Old Testament. Paul spoke of those who preached another gospel, which is what a fifth gospel would be.

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is *really* not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!
(Galatians 1:6-9 NASB)

There are grave consequences to distorting the Gospel of Christ or preaching a "fifth gospel". Yet, in many ways, this is what the Church is doing! In many cases, the Church is presenting Jesus as a head butler or as Santa Claus, pleading with people to decide on receiving Him into their heart so that He can give them all of the gifts that He has for them. Did Jesus present Himself this way? I can't find it in the Scriptures if He did! Jesus' first public message of His ministry began with "Repent..." just like the message of John the Baptist. The scriptures have always emphasized repentance when coming to the Lord, yet, when was the last time that you heard or preached a salvation message that exhorted the unbeliever to repent?

We have changed so many key elements of the message that is presented in the Word:

"Repentance" has become "a decision for Christ";

"Born Again" has become "ask Jesus into your heart";

"Public Confession" has become "with every eye closed, just quickly slip up your hand. . .";

"Saved, healed, delivered" has become "you can go to Heaven when you die";

"Kingdom of God" has become "the Church".

Salvation is presented as a way out of our troubles--come to Jesus and He will make your troubles go away. He will make you healthy and wealthy. You become a King's kid--demand all of the benefits. See--we have just twisted the Gospel a little bit, but enough that it doesn't resemble the Gospel preached by the Apostles.

Somehow, we have come to a mentality that says it takes desperate circumstances to drive us to the Lord. While circumstances can get our attention, desperation is not a requirement to come to the Lord--repentance is. But, as a result of thinking this way, we have changed the salvation message from "Jesus saves us from our sins" to "Jesus saves us from our troubles". This is a serious foundation error because the truth is just the opposite--we are not delivered *from* tribulation but we are delivered *through* tribulation.

strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith,

and *saying*, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:22 NASB)

When we present Jesus as all benefit and no cost we are saying what people want to hear. When people hear what they like and receive what they want, it is easy to follow. Crowds followed Jesus because they saw miracles and were fed with loaves and fishes.

A large crowd followed Him, because they saw the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. (John 6:2 NASB)

Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. (John 6:26 NASB)

Jesus challenged them with His Words.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. (John 6:53-56 NASB)

Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard *this* said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60 NASB)

As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. (John 6:66 NASB)

The goal is not to get the multitudes to follow Jesus but to get them to partake of Him. Preaching power and provision will get multitudes to follow but it doesn't address the heart issues; it doesn't teach us how to partake of Him and to abide in Him. Jesus made it hard to follow and easy to leave. We have reversed this principle and made it easy to follow and hard to leave. The result is a Church of "fair weather" Christians who fall away when trouble comes just like the seed with shallow roots shriveled with the heat in the Parable of the Sower. Without repentance we lack endurance.

There is nothing wrong with the power or the provision of God, but people need to be told that the first step is repentance, a turning away from the sins of the flesh.. There is a cost. Our flesh was crucified with Jesus--we walk the narrow way that leads to life.

Then, what is the Gospel that we should preach? We, too often, accept shallow definitions for important words. Sure, the word translated "gospel" means "good news", but how does Scripture define it? Paul gives us a definition of what is included in the "gospel".

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, (1 Corinthians 15:1-4 NASB)

Paul says of the gospel which he preached the primary importance was 1) Christ died for our sins, 2) He was buried, 3) He was raised on the third day, and from Romans 14:9 we can add the reason, 4) that He might be Lord. These four facts encapsulate the gospel and it certainly is good news.

Jesus died as our savior, but He was raised as Lord. We have to preach both sides. You can never know Him as Lord until you know Him as savior. Jesus told Nicodemus that unless we are born again we can't see the Kingdom of God.

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3 NASB)

The Kingdom of God has to do with the government of God--the Lordship of Jesus. It is the gospel of the Kingdom which is to be preached to all the nations. We have only preached half--a gospel of salvation, and have neglected the gospel of Lordship (in practical terms).

It is time to throw away the "fifth gospel" and preach the gospel the way Jesus did and the way the Apostles did. It is not the number who make "decisions for Christ" that matter but rather the number who become disciples of Christ, living in His Kingdom under His Lordship.

. . . And how will they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14 NASB)

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