

Truth and Reason

Speaking the Words of Truth and Reason ♦ Acts 26:25

Volume I

July 2005

Number 2

Does God Approve of Religious Division?

THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS REVEALED the will of God to man in the inspired Scriptures. "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10). They make known what people must do to be pleasing to God and to stand justified in His sight. In essence, they state that which is approved of God.

What, then, do the Scriptures, the word of God, say about religious division? Men say such division is approved. They say, "*One church is as good as another*" and that you can "*Attend the church of your choice.*" But does God give approval in His word to such ideas? Is religious division pleasing to Him? What, exactly, does the Bible teach concerning religious division?

Division At Corinth

In 1 Corinthians, chapter one, the inspired writer, the apostle Paul, was aware that religious division existed in the city of

Corinth among those who were supposed to be servants of God and Christ. He addressed the situation in this way: "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul, or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

The state of affairs at Corinth was very similar to today's conditions. Though all at Corinth were supposedly serving God, they were calling themselves by different names. Some were saying they were of Paul, some of Apollos and some

of Cephas (Peter). Did Paul, inspired of God, say this was all right since they were all trying to do what they thought was right? Did he say it did not matter whose name they wore because they could wear the name of their choice? NO! He condemned them for their practices and attitudes. He beseeched them to be of the same mind and judgment and to place all their hope and trust in Jesus, the one who had died for them and in whose name they had been baptized, so that there would be no divisions among them. For them to divide religiously was wrong. They needed to unite with that oneness based on the Christ and the truth of His gospel.

Modern Ecumenical Movements

Many desire unity today. Ecumenical movements and similar ideas have been and continue to be formulated and forwarded by men to promote unity in the religious world. The problem with such efforts, ☛

though, is that they epitomize the philosophy that *“one is as good as another”* because they are based on the premise of unity in diversity.

Unity in diversity is a unity wherein each distinct group unites with other groups to form an alliance or interfaith group while retaining its own beliefs even though they are contradictory to the beliefs of the other groups with which it seeks to unite. It is an attempt to unite while still divided in doctrine, practice and belief.

In Spirit And In Truth

Unity in diversity is of the wisdom of the world because its origin is with man, not God, for no such idea can be found anywhere in Scripture. 1 Corinthians 1:20 says the world’s wisdom is foolishness to God. God’s word, along with an appeal to reason, an application of logic, and a little common sense, will show why such ideas of men are folly.

All differing religious groups claim to be teaching the truth, yet their beliefs and practices not only contradict the Bible but also the teachings of other religious groups. When the practices and beliefs of one religious group contradict those of another, someone has to be wrong

because truth does not contradict truth. When such contradictions occur, someone must be believing, practicing and worshipping in error.

Jesus said, in John 4:24, that acceptable worship must be offered in spirit and in truth. Those who worship in error must be worshipping in vain. Since their worship is vain, they are lost and so is anyone who joins with them while condoning their error. To condone, encourage or partake in another’s sins is to sin yourself (2 John 9-11). To unite with those teaching false doctrine—doctrine other than that which is revealed in the Bible as God spoke by His Son in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:1-2)—not only gives encouragement to the teachers of false doctrine but also encourages others to submit to their error.

Unity in diversity stands opposed to Scripture and to the principle of worshipping in spirit and truth. It also wars against the unity of the Spirit and oneness of faith found in Ephesians 4:1-6.

Our Plea

The only proper way to unite religiously is to have the truth of God’s word as the basis for that unity. As long as the doctrines,

philosophies, creeds and traditions of men are included in religion, there can be no true unity. Jesus said those who teach the precepts of men as doctrine make their religion vain (Matthew 15:7-9). He called such people “hypocrites.” The apostle Paul, in his second letter to Corinth, said righteousness and iniquity have no fellowship with one another (2 Corinthians 6:14). A believer, a true worshiper, should never be unequally yoked with an unbeliever or false worshiper.

For unity to exist, people must abandon all beliefs and practices which are not in the Bible or which are contradictory to it. In John 17, Jesus prayed earnestly for such unity. He desired that all be one as He and the Father are one (vv. 20-21).

We offer that same prayer. We harbor that same desire. We, therefore, teach and practice only those things authorized by God’s word. We urge all to look solely to the teachings of Jesus and obey them so that all will be one and all might be saved.

Does God approve of religious division? No. He never has, never will. He desires that all be one by hearing and obeying His Son. If you have not done so, why not do it today? 🙏

Gene Taylor

***Does God approve of religious division?
NO! He never has and He never will!***



Exodus

I. General Data

- A. Name: Exodus.
 - 1. "Exodus" refers to the principle event found in the book—the departure of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.
 - 2. It is a book of emancipation and redemption for in it an entire nation, with the help of God, is freed from servitude and led to a new country and life.
- B. Author: Moses (cf. 17:14; 24:4-8; 34:27).
- C. Time span: From the birth of Moses to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai.
- D. Theme: Deliverance.
 - 1. In Exodus:
 - a. The Law of Moses is given.
 - b. The tabernacle, a symbolic structure, is erected.
 - c. Moses grows up and begins his God-given task of leadership.
 - d. The transition of the Israelites from being merely a plurality of tribes to becoming a nation of people adopted by God is seen.
 - 2. Genesis begins by making known the origin of the universe, man, and sin; unfolding the development of the Messianic nation; and looking into the future and foreseeing the coming of the promised "seed." Exodus deals with the birth and organization of the nation through which that seed should come.
- E. Key components of the book.
 - 1. The exodus.
 - a. The role of Moses. His life can be divided into three segments each 40 years long:
 - 1) Early life in Egypt as the son of Pharaoh's daughter (Acts 7:23-25).
 - 2) In Midian where he, among other things, learns the land through which he will guide Israel.
 - 3) Period of service to God and Israel as leader.
 - b. The meaning of the exodus to Israel.
 - 1) The beginning of a new life (12:2).
 - 2) New liberty (13:3).
 - 3) New fellowship (12:14).
 - 4) New assurance (6:7-8).
 - c. The meaning of the exodus to Egypt.
 - 1) Exposure of the false nature of idolatry (14:31; 15:14-15).
 - 2) The folly of trying to resist God. Compare 5:2 to 9:16.
 - d. The meaning of the exodus to God. An expression of Divine power, it forever became synonymous with deliverance (Micah 7:15).

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2. The law. It was given to:
 - a. Provide a standard of righteousness (Deut. 4:8).
 - b. Expose and identify sin (Gal. 3:16-19; Rom. 3:20).
 - c. Reveal Divine holiness.
 - d. Be a shadow of good things to come (Heb. 10:1).
 3. The tabernacle.
 - a. The place where God dwelt among His people, in the center of the camp, it was to be the focus of their lives.
 - b. It symbolizes the presence of God in the church.
- F. A Summary: "The book of Exodus, with its backdrop of history, continues the theme of redemption introduced in Genesis. We see redemption displayed in the nature of history itself, and epitomized in Israel's particular history. The great drama shows God's people cruelly oppressed in a foreign territory, without benefit of a land or a human protector. God hears the cries of his people and sends a deliverer, Moses, to be the agent of his divine redemptive power. It was necessary for God to work a series of miracles in order to dislodge the Pharaoh from his tyranny over Israel, which results in Israel's release and equally miraculous passage through the sea made dry.

"The redemption pictured in the book of Exodus is not just escape from oppression. We also see its positive side, as God leads his people through a wilderness, providing for all their needs. Then at Mt. Sinai he renews the covenant he had made with Abraham in Genesis, binding himself to all the people of Israel. Here laws are given, summarized in the Ten Commandments, which are a further evidence of God's love and concern for his people. Rules are given for all of life, and a religious structure (tabernacle, priesthood, regulations) is established.

"The book of Exodus therefore describes a 'going on' as well as a 'going out.' After the Israelites went *out* of Egypt, they went *on* as his people in the wilderness, trusting the promises God gave at Sinai." (*The Shaw Pocket Bible Handbook*, Walter A. Elwell, editor, Wheaton Illinois: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1984).

II. An Outline of Exodus

- A. Israel in Egypt (ch. 1-12).
 1. Egyptian bondage (ch. 1).
 2. Moses the deliverer (ch. 2-4).
 3. The struggle with Pharaoh: the ten plagues (ch. 5-11).
 4. The passover (ch. 12).
 - B. Israel in the Wilderness (ch. 13-18).
 1. The exodus and the pursuit (13:1 - 15:21).
 2. The journey to Sinai (15:22 - 17:16).
 3. The visit of Jethro (ch. 18).
 - C. Israel at Sinai (ch. 19-40).
 1. The giving of the Law (ch. 19-20).
 2. Social and ceremonial laws (ch. 21-23).
 3. Ratification of the covenant (ch. 24).
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4. The tabernacle and priesthood instructions (ch. 25-31).
 5. Worship of the golden calf (ch. 32).
 6. Renewal of the covenant between God and Israel (ch. 33-34). The face of Moses shines (34:29-35).
 7. Erection of the tabernacle and institution of the priesthood (ch. 35-40). The cloud of God's presence leads them (40:34-38).

III. The Lessons of Exodus

- A. God cares for His people.
 1. He heard the cry of the Israelites (2:23-25).
 2. He sent them a deliverer (ch. 4).
 3. He gave them a cloud by day and fire by night to lead them (13:21).
 4. He provided them with food in the wilderness (ch. 16).
 5. He protected them from their enemies (ch. 17).
 - B. Jesus, our Passover (ch. 12; 1 Cor. 5:7).
 1. The blood of a perfect lamb shed (12:5). Jesus is a spotless Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:18-19).
 2. The lamb was not to have any bones broken (12:46). The legs of Jesus were not broken on the cross (John 19:31-36).
 3. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled over the door (12:7,13). The blood of Christ is our covering, propitiation, for sin (Rom. 3:25).
 - C. The deliverance from Egypt: a type of our salvation from sin.
 1. As God delivered the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt, He delivers us from our bondage to sin and Satan
 2. Consider 1 Corinthians 10:1-4.
 - D. The Sabbath.
 1. Exodus clearly reveals **when** the Sabbath was given and for **whom** it was intended.
 2. It was revealed on Mt. Sinai (Neh. 9:13-14).
 3. It was only given to Israel (Ex. 34:27-28) for it commemorated their deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:15).
 - E. The symbolism of Exodus. Full of symbols, types, and shadows which point to their spiritual substance in Christ (cf. Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 8:5; 10:1), Exodus helps us understand the message of the gospel.
 1. Israel's bondage in Egypt compares to man's bondage in sin (Rom. 3:23; 7:13-25; Eph. 2:1-3; Acts 26:18).
 2. Moses as deliverer corresponds to Jesus as the deliverer from sin (Rom. 11:26-27; 1 Thes. 1:10).
 3. The passover (ch. 12) is one of the clearest pictures of our salvation through Jesus, the Lamb of God (1 Cor. 5:7-8).
 4. The Tabernacle: God's dwelling place among men (ch. 25-27) is a type of the church: God's dwelling place among men (1 Cor. 3:9,16-17; Eph. 2:19-22).
 5. The priesthood and its garments (ch. 28-29) is seen in the priesthood of saints (1 Pet. 2:4-5,9; Rev. 1:6).
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Exodus Study Questions

1. Why did the new king of Egypt begin to afflict the Israelites? Describe the measures taken against them.
 2. Why was it necessary for his parents to hide Moses at birth?
 3. Why was Moses brought up as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter?” (Hebrews 11:24) What would be the effect of being brought up that way?
 4. How did Moses learn who he was, who his people were, and about the true God?
 5. Why did Moses have to flee to Midian? How were the Midianites related to the Israelites? (cf. Genesis 25:1-6)
 6. Who appeared to Moses in a burning bush? Why would he appear in this manner? What was the reason or purpose for this appearance?
 7. How does God respond to the excuses Moses gives for obeying God? What assurance of success is given to Moses? What would be the “token” given Moses that would show that God had sent him? What would it show?
 8. List the plagues God brought upon Egypt.
 9. What was the purpose of the plagues?
 10. What was the Passover? What did it symbolize?
 11. How many Israelites left Egypt? How long had they been there? Who went with them?
 12. Why did God not want the children of Israel to go by the way of the Philistines? By what means did God lead the people?
 13. Why do you think God deliberately brought the Israelites to a place of encampment where they seemed to be entrapped at the mercy of the Egyptians? What was Moses’ response to the despairing people?
 14. Describe the deliverance of the Israelites and the destruction of the Egyptian army. What was the twofold effect of these things upon the children of Israel?
 15. What problem did Israel face at Marah? How did the people react? How was the problem solved?
 16. How did God respond to the complaints of the children of Israel over lack of food?
 17. As seen in chapter 17, what is peculiar about the way in which Israel gained victory over the Amalekites? What was the significance of Moses holding up his hands? How was it assured that Moses would be able to keep his hands raised?
 18. Who was Jethro? Who did he bring to Moses? (ch. 18)
 19. What conclusion did Jethro reach when told of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt? What did he do in response to this conclusion?
 20. Describe the situation when the law was given to the children of Israel. What impression was evidently intended to be made upon the people? (cf. 20:18-21)
 21. What purpose did the ten commandments serve to Israel? Are any of these commandments binding in any way on Christians?
 22. Describe the reaction of the people to the phenomena at Sinai when the law was given. What request did they make? (cf. Deut. 5:22-27) Why do you think God revealed Himself in such a terrifying manner?
 23. What did Aaron make for the people while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the law from God? Why did he make it? What was Moses’ reaction upon seeing what the people had done?
 24. What punishment did Moses inflict upon the people for their actions while he was on the mountain?
 25. What was the tabernacle? Briefly describe it.
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The OT Has No Authority Today

God has always made His will known through His word. In previous dispensations, during the Old Testament era, He spoke through prophets (Hebrews 1:1) but in this present age God speaks exclusively through His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). The Father has given all authority to the Son (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22-23). Therefore, since Jesus is God's only spokesman today and since He has all authority, all teaching must be "of Christ" if it is to have the proper authority behind it (See 2 John 9-11; 1 Timothy 6:3-5).

From this we must conclude that we are not to be guided today by the law of Moses or any of the other laws found in Old Testament. The Old Law served its purpose to bring the nation of Israel to Christ (Galatians 3:24-27). Since Jesus fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17), He took it out of the way (Colossians 2:14).

Since God has never had two different laws or covenants apply to the same people at the same time, we must look to the "perfect law of liberty," the law given by Jesus (James 1:25).

No practices or doctrines of the Old Law are to be used today to justify what one does in religion. To do so causes one to be severed from Christ and to fall from the grace of God (Galatians 5:4).

Why a Change in Covenant?

The Bible tells us that the old covenant has been changed because:

- Of its weakness (Hebrews 7:18-19; 8:7-9; 9:9).

- A change of priesthood demanded a change in law (Hebrews 7:12). The covenants changed when the priesthood changed. The priesthood changed with Jesus who could not have been a priest under the Old Law for He was of the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14).

- The old covenant was only to serve until the "Seed" came (Genesis 22:15-18; Galatians 3:5-19). The "Seed" which was prophesied was Jesus Christ.

- It was only intended to bring the Jews to Christ (Galatians 3:24-27).

The Old Law Abolished Entirely

Some try to say the Ten Commandments were not abandoned. They make a distinction between what they call the *moral law* and the *ceremonial law*. There is no such distinction or division made in the old or new covenants. The Ten Commandments and the covenant are one and the same (See Deuteronomy 9:9-11; 10:4; Exodus 34:28).

The covenant, given by God to Moses, written or engraved on stone which also included the Ten Commandments, was:

- Made old (Hebrews 8:13).
- Blotted out (Colossians 2:14).
- Done away (2 Cor. 3:4-11).
- Abolished (Ephesians 2:13-16).

The Folly of Binding the Old Law

If we attempt to justify practices in religion today by the old covenant, we bind upon ourselves things which:

- Were a ministration of death (2 Corinthians 3:7).

- Were against those who tried to keep it (Colossians 2:14).

- Were faulty (Hebrews 8:7).

- Could not make the worshiper perfect (Hebrews 9:9).

- Cannot produce righteousness (Galatians 2:21).

- Can justify no one (Galatians 2:16; 3:11).

- Are a curse (Galatians 3:10).

- Sever one from Christ (Galatians 5:4).

Our Authority: New Testament

The New Testament is our authority today because it contains the word of Christ (John 12:48; Hebrews 1:1-2). Since He possesses *all authority* (Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:22-23), His words provide all things necessary for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3) and thoroughly furnish us to every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, all is to be done in His name or by His authority (Colossians 3:17). 🙏

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