

This is the Gospel

A while ago I told you the true story of the time I was asked by a previous pastor to explain 'Christmas' to two elderly women. I duly did so and by the time we had finished our very short discussion, they huffed and puffed and said they would never bother with Christianity again because I had 'destroyed' their 'faith'!

What did I say to bring about this sad reaction? I simply told them the REAL facts about 'Christmas', and because I didn't confirm their 'touchy-feely' ideas about 'Baby Jesus meek and mild', born on December 25th, visited by three kings when He was new-born, and so on, I was accused of ruining their beliefs!! But, there was more to it than that, because I included in my explanation the reality of the Gospel, rather than 'Smile, God loves you'.

More lately, this same real Gospel was rejected by a Roman Catholic I know, who prefers Rome's lies to genuine truth. The connection is simply that 'Christmas' comes from Roman dogma.

The real Gospel is nitty-gritty. It is hard-core truth and is ONLY found in God's word. It ruffles feathers. And it is the ring of death to all who reject its call. It is not about human beings feeling loving towards baby Jesus. It is far more than that. The REAL Gospel offends many. It is hated by them, because it doesn't fit their idea of Who God is and what He does.

God's Gospel came through the life and death of the Son, Jesus Christ, born a baby, but grew to be a real man in a real, tough world. We have no idea what He did as a child, though it is likely He played with his siblings, as all children do. But, his childhood is not recorded for us, because what mattered was his adulthood and sacrifice.

His childhood was all about growing towards a goal - His death. Christians who celebrate his birth are free to do so in sincerity, but his birth is not the point of the Messiah, our Saviour. It was necessary for Jesus to grow normally, and to reach manhood, so He could be as we are, but without sin. Only as a man could He suffer and die AS a man.

Written by K B Napier
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The Gospel is about the Son of God entering His Creation to save the elect (NOT for everyone). It was His sole purpose in coming. NOT to provide a false peace, or harmony between sinners, or to give dinner to the unsaved homeless on December 25th! Nor did He come to give us a fuzzy feeling about the baby Jesus.

He came to die. For you and for me, and for anyone whose name was written in the Book of Life before anything at all was created. Those NOT in the book of Life cannot know salvation, and will not respond to the Gospel. Some might have a knee-jerk reaction because of their emotions, but there will be no real response, because the Gospel is too hard for sinners to bear unless the Holy Spirit first prepares them. Indeed, those not elect cannot even comprehend what the Gospel is all about!

God brings about the correct response in the elect by causing the sinner to be 'born again'. Without this, any initial reaction will just die, reflecting the person's true nature – black and sinful. This is what the parable of the sower is all about.

I have heard many Christians despise those who reject the Gospel. This is the product of arrogance! A man cannot boast he is saved, any more than a man can boast he prefers hell to salvation!

Salvation is a gift, and NONE of us would seek God unless He firstly caused us to be born again! Those who reject the Gospel do so because they have not been chosen by God in eternity.

Thus, we should only have sadness not pride, that they are never going to know salvation. It is true that the majority will never see Heaven, and that some of these will act in a despicable way, because Satan is their father and controls their darkened minds and hearts. However, the majority of those not elect can be described as 'very nice'. Even so, their fate is the same.

As such these folks never 'seek' God – God Himself tells us they are incapable of doing so, because they are not born again This means we should thank God for His amazing gift of life, given to us freely, and for His mercy towards those who are elect - we should not spend time thinking depressingly of all who are lost.

No matter who is not saved, it is God's will and nothing to do with our desires or emotions. And throwing out a challenging complaint about all who are never going to be saved is godless and fruitless. God has chosen who will be saved, and that number is final. We cannot argue over it.

I drove past an Elim church a few days ago, and sure enough its posters declare how everyone will receive help and benefits by attending the church! The message is not the Gospel, but is a social services angle, typical of all charismatic churches, who feed on the needy, who become their pool of future members (though they don't usually stay members for long).

The true Gospel is not about what we can get from God if we attend a church... it is about God telling Man he is doomed to hell if he remains unsaved and does not heed the Gospel! Getting 'benefits' is not the point!

What's the News Got to Do with Doctrine?

Those familiar with our website will know it usually has many references to news items. And those on our general email list will receive a lot of reports on current affairs. So, why do we write on news items, and still say our task is to teach doctrine?

It is part of apologetics – showing Christians how their beliefs are linked to what happens in this world. We try to show how to respond to life. Doctrine on its own is just a dead letter. It needs to be applied to our mind and to what we see happening in the world. Without this ability, Christians are sitting ducks for Satan and any of his followers.

The news can also be examples of prophecy coming true in our lifetime. We need to be aware and 'join the dots' of apparently random events, until we see what is really going on. The news, then, can be doctrine in action. Learn how to join those dots!

And Calvinists, too, should remember that John Calvin was himself a politician, and his duties included everything from licencing laws to wartime responses.

Is Israel The Church?

Lots of Christians are confused about Israel. Some think it IS the Church. Others think it is not. Yet others say Israel has nothing to do with the Church of Jesus Christ. And the majority splash about in the shallows, not knowing what to think. So, what's the truth? Has Israel anything at all to do with the true Church of Jesus Christ?

We can easily sum it up in a basic truth: In God's eyes Israel is defunct as a national entity to be protected by Him, but Jewish people of national Israel who believe are part of the true Church. Right now there are very few of these, who Jesus refers to as 'true Israel'. And 'true Israel' is used to describe both pre-Christ and post-Christ believers, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. That is, ALL who believe are 'true Israel'. So, all of Israel is NOT 'the Church'. But, those within Israel who believe are PART of the true Church, along with all Gentiles who believe. When it comes to salvation, there is no national distinction.

It is also worthwhile to study what 'church' means, because the word does not just apply itself to Christian congregations (also look up 'congregation').

In the New Testament 'church' can have one of several meanings. At a basic level it refers to people who gather together in a public place (for any reason), even if that meeting is riotous! It can refer to a group of local Christians who gather for worship.

It can also mean a group of people, such as a council or special interest group, who meet. It also points to Christians who die and will enter Heaven. And perhaps a surprise to many – it also can refer to an assembly of the Israelites... such as in the Temple, synagogue, or elsewhere. And, in a greater sense, it refers to the True Church or gathering of Jesus Christ; a spiritual grouping.

Thus, *ekklesia* can apply to the meeting together of either Christians or Jews! In either case the gathering can be called a 'church', or an 'assembly', or a 'congregation'. In the Old Testament the comparable word for 'church' is congregation, or *'edah*. Perhaps you can now see why I draw your attention to the real meaning of 'church'?

Is Sunday the Sabbath?

Some become quite nasty about certain things they say we should not believe in or act out when we don't believe exactly as they do! Christmas is one such issue. Basically, it is the Holy Spirit Who can persuade men and women not to celebrate Christmas, not us. We can only provide information. Similarly, I know of one or two whole websites that 'specialise' in 'proving' that Sunday is not the same as the Sabbath. This is not the way to tackle the whole Gospel, but is the kind of basis sects are founded on.

If these zealous folks did not speak so harshly and nastily I would just ignore it. But, I thought I'd give just a few words on the subject, given the sinful attacks some make on fellow believers who think Sunday is the Sabbath.

Firstly, a distinction must be made – by 'the Sabbath' we usually mean the 'seventh day sabbath'. We should bear in mind there are many Sabbath days or holiday periods in the Jewish calendar, so a definition is needed. The seventh day of rest, commanded by God, was given BEFORE there was a Jew or Hebrew on earth. For this reason I would suggest (no more than that) that this command is both universal and for all of time.

On the other hand, Sunday was chosen because it was the start of a new week, the first day of the week, not the last, or seventh day. That most Christians treat it as the Sabbath does not really do much. The first day of the week symbolises the new era under the risen Christ.

Even so, does this mean the seventh day of rest is now invalid? No, it does not. It is a universal, all-of-time law of God instituted before all other laws were uttered. Like the ten commandments, it is a law that still stands. But, Sunday as the 'new day' also stands.

I see no problem referring to it as a day of rest as well. (This could do with much more theological and biblical input). What I would hope is that those who have tended to concentrate on this one issue should beware not to become divisive. As I have said elsewhere, only the Holy Spirit can persuade fellow Christians of ANY truth... but, they are STILL our brethren.

The Image of God

"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man." (1 Cor.11:7)

In our Article A-559, we ask if homosexuals are made in the image of God. I also outline some thoughts on this 'image'. You will note that a male is called the image of God, whereas the female is called the 'glory of man'.

There is a depth to this topic I rarely see in print. What is your (biblical) view? Is a woman also made in the 'image of God'? Or, homosexuals and murderers, etc? How can someone who is a gross and unrepentant sinner claim to be in the 'image of God', unless we say God allows sin to be part of His image, thus saying that He is Himself a sinner (which is impossible)?? Big question, eh!

Don't guess! Look at the biblical data before committing to your belief, otherwise you might just be devising another error!

Thank you!

She will probably tell me off, but I wish to thank my sister-in-law, Eileen, for her invaluable and generous help. She comes every morning to help get Diane (my wife) up from bed. This involves continence and hygiene care, as well as dressing and getting her to the chair.

Eileen is selfless and very caring, and has helped others in a similar way in the past. More remarkably, she comes to us after working her usual night shift in a nursing home, though she must be very tired. She refuses to let me do these tasks on my own and wait for me to ask for help! I also thank my youngest son, who helps me get Diane back into bed at night – but Eileen even said she'd come to do that, too, before going to her night shift!!

And my brother, John, helps too, by bringing her to our home every morning. He, too, works night shifts at a special unit and, like Eileen, does not get to bed until much later than they usually do, by coming to us.

So, I appreciate both of them for their wonderful help and encouragement and for showing a godly care for others, without stint and every day, regardless of their own needs.

The Murdered Girl...

I was working nights as a nurse in a large hospital, which is set amongst trees and fields on a hill top. About two in the morning several of us were startled when we heard a girl screaming in the grounds. The high-pitched sound told us a female was being attacked or even murdered in the grounds, so a number of us rushed out to look for the unfortunate victim. But, we found no-one and had to report it to the night manager.

Next night, came the same screams! Wait a minute we thought – the same female cannot be killed twice! Or, was this a different female? Only then did we realise the situations was something else.

It took us about a week of these ‘screams of murder’ to discover the spine-chilling sound was emitted by a peacock that had flown into the grounds!

How many are convinced by face-value assumptions? About teachings, opinions, people, fellow Christians? How many times are others dubbed with our personal opinions masquerading as fact and actual truth? In my ministry I have come to learn to stand back and look again, because very often what we assume to be the case is anything but. What we think is a person’s firm belief may only be his borrowed idea, far from fixed.

Don’t be misled by your reaction to someone or something else unless what you see, or hear, is absolutely representative of that person’s actual beliefs and actions. Otherwise, what you believe is spiritual blue murder might very well be just a stray erroneous peacock, and what you assume to be a fixed belief is really only a passing mistake needing gentle help and tuition.

Tough Action: Not Just Tough Talk!

When I worked on the ‘violent ward’ in the psychiatric hospital, staff had injuries every day. One morning my boss and I entered the room of a young man who was ‘kicking off’ violently. He was a ‘skinhead’ wearing the usual shaved head, denim pants with braces, and heavy steel-toe-capped boots. Though he was over six feet tall and well-built we had no option but to tackle him head-on, in a very confined space. As we did so, he unleashed a swinging kick and his boot hit me on my outer thigh, causing a ham-string injury. I fell like a ton of bricks! If my boss had not then fought back furiously, the patient would have succeeded in his attempt to

stomp on my head, which would have killed me. I was caught off-guard by a brief hesitation!

Whether we are talking about terroristic or spiritual enemies, we should go in hard and fast, without hesitation! It is the only way for any Christian to act honourably. Islam, at the moment, is our definite physical enemy. I consistently say the military forces should find and kill every one of them, because left alive they remain a threat to life. In the case of spiritual enemies, we should have the same no-nonsense approach, or let them cause further and worse damage to ourselves and others. Not just nip it in the bud – but crush it without mercy. Hate my ‘war talk’? Well, read scripture and see if I am wrong! 2017 may well be your proving ground!

We are facing serious enemies, both physically and spiritually. Don't be a coward.

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