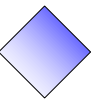


The Voice of Truth



November 28, 2010

The Bible Is the Blueprint for Human Conduct By Jimmy Pettigrew

The word of God, the scriptures, offers to mankind principles to help them make decisions in all areas of human conduct. For many years, atheistic, pagan philosophers have assumed the duty to teach what they feel is right for human conduct. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). These men have failed every time because they have failed to consider what God has said in His words on a given conduct pattern. "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8:9). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; But the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). The Bible offers a clear voice, and throws light on how we are to live.

Listen carefully: there can be no morality without God! Why? Because God is the absolute standard of good (Matthew 19:17; 1 John 1:5; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 147:17; Isaiah 45:19; Hosea 9:11; Habakkuk 1:13). We are told that the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men, "teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (Titus 2:11-12). Peter added: "According as his divine power hath given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Man cannot know right and wrong by reasoning on his own: "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). "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" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The world about us makes little effort to follow the blueprint of the word of God. People have rejected God's standard. We are living in a time when little attention is given to the word of God and much attention is given to doing what pleases the desire of men. Many have no regard for the moral teachings of the Bible. There is simply too much

of "Hell" in the world today. The sinful world has always condoned evil practices, such as dancing, immodest dress, profanity, gambling, fornication, and the use of alcohol. We must return to the teaching of God's standard found in His word (Galatians 5:19-21). It must be taught what God has said about the sins of adultery, homosexuality, fornication, immodesty, drinking and any form of loose living. People believe they have the right to act as they wish. Wrong! What we do in word or deed we are to do all in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).

The word of God provides us with righteousness (Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 33:12). "Every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 30:5). There is a standard of behavior that God expects men to follow, and it's in His word, the blueprint of human conduct. All men everywhere need to return to the wholesome purity Jesus stressed in Matthew 5:8. God's word is man's light, lamp and path (Psalm 119:105); it is man's hope against sin (Psalm 119:11); it sanctifies (John 17:17); it cleanses (Ephesians 5:26); it gives us understanding (Psalms 119:130); it has the power to produce godliness (2 Peter 1:3); to produce a new life (James 1:18; Romans 6:17-18).

Notice what Ezekiel told the children of Israel, "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezekiel 44:23). God's word does that for us today; it is our blueprint for human conduct. The Bible moral code is wonderfully practical; every moral rule that God has given is for our good. The gospel changes the heart or thinking; the mind is renewed (Romans 12:1-2).

Man is incapable of directing his steps in life. The Israelites had attempted to direct their lives; they had

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We need to develop the habit of assembling with the saints (Heb. 10:25). Sunday is the "Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). It is the only day in the week to which we can attach any significance concerning Christ. It is the day of His resurrection (Luke 24:1, 13, 21). It is the day upon which He appeared alive to His disciples (John 20:1, 11; Luke 24:30-43). The gospel was first preached on Sunday (Acts 2:1, 14). The first baptism was performed on that day (Acts 2:41). It is the day of the week upon which the church came into existence (Acts 2:47). The worship of the saints upon this day of the week should inspire their hearts with love for Jesus, confidence in their salvation and zeal for the souls of men.

Do you have this habit of assembling with the saints?

They Ate The Lord's Supper In An Assembly

They "came together" to eat the Supper. These saints did not regard the Supper as a private devotion. Neither did they care so little for it that they carried it with them wherever they went like a sack lunch. Furthermore, Paul's determination to remain in Troas is proof this is the arrangement the Lord desires for the His Supper. The apostle could have eaten on the road, by himself or with those of his company. However, he chose to eat with disciples in their assemblies (cf. Acts 21:4).

They came together to break bread in order to preach Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:26). The Christians at Troas understood the importance of the memorial feast. They could see in it a perpetual reminder of the promise of Christ's return and the assurance of their own resurrection by virtue of His atoning death and triumphant resurrection from the grave. This message of hope had to be shared. They were truly "one bread" and "one cup," even as they were one body (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Assembled together they could all eat that bread and drink that cup in remem-

brance of Christ (1 Cor. 11:27-28).

Do you discern the Lord's body and show his death with the saints when they come together?

They Didn't Complain About The Time Involved

Luke says Paul was "long preaching" (Acts 20:9), and that he did not quit even at midnight (20:7). I grant that there are some special circumstances in this situation at Troas. Paul probably had established the church just months earlier on his way into Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12). He was anxious to visit the church and see how they were doing (cf. Acts 15:36). Naturally, there would be things that he would want to say to these special people. This would justify a longer sermon than usual. However, just because Paul came to town their daily responsibilities did not disappear. They still had work to do the next day, children to care for and responsibilities at home. All of this and even more, yet they still managed to work in an all night session to hear Paul preach (Acts 20:11). How unlike some brethren they are. Today many are continually looking for ways to shorten the assembly. In some churches it is worship "by the numbers." We have to start "on time" and quit "on time." We can sing only two songs and not all the verses because we don't want to "go over." Preachers are being forced to confine their sermons to 15 minutes. A twenty-five minute sermon is "long preaching" for some. God forbid that we should have a baptism.

We are living in troublesome times when the value of a sermon is determined by its length. Some folks are chaffing under long preaching because it is poorly prepared and delivered. However, others have a heart and mind somewhere else. They like them short because there is nothing in them. Do you have the Trojan spirit concerning worship? Credit: www.padfield.com

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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Schedule of Assembly

Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com

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forsaken God's way: the result is captivity! The scriptures

must be the foundation of any moral restoration. The Bible alone is our answer! It is past high time that God's morality found its way back into the lives of men and women. ♦

"86,400"

By Jarrod Jacobs

86,400 is quite a large number, isn't it? Imagine someone giving you \$86,400 today. What might you do with it? Might you pay off your bills, your mortgage, and other things with that kind of money? What if someone gave you 86,400 gold bars? Certainly, one would be quite blessed if he had 86,400 close friends.

86,400 is not an arbitrary number, though. It has significance in our lives. What is it that equals 86,400? It is not the number of bones in one's body. It is not the number of days in a year. In fact, 86,400 equals the number of **seconds in one day!!!**

Yes, each day has 86,400 seconds of time in which to live, work, and serve God. Thus, the obvious question is: How are we using this time? Someone once made the observation that it would be very difficult for one to spend \$86,400 each day with the stipulation that he could not save it, nor "invest" it, etc., and at the end of the day, he would lose any money he had not spent. This is similar to God's gift of 86,400 seconds per day. The seconds we have today will be used up in this day with no chance of "retaining", "investing" or "saving" the "unused seconds"! At the end of the day, they are gone forever!

With this in mind, I will say it bothers me to hear someone use the expression, "kill time." Please understand, I don't think that phrase is sinful to speak, but it bothers me because it expresses an attitude that we do not appreciate God's gift of time like we should (**Col. 4:5**). Time should not be "killed," wasted, etc., but savored and used wisely (**Eph. 5:16**). This is stated again and again in the Bible. Moses asked God to, "*teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom*" (**Ps. 90:12**).

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Man's life has been compared in Scripture to a vapor (**Jas. 4:14**). It has also been compared to grass or a flower, which "withers" and "falls away" in time (**I Pet. 1:24**). Job said, "*Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble*" (**Job 14:1**). He also said, "*My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope*" (**Job 7:6**). The apostle Paul recognized the brevity of life when he stressed the importance of obeying God "*now*" (**II Cor. 6:2**). It is also written, "*To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts*" (**Heb. 3:7-8**). Are we listening?

Friends, how are we using our time? There is continued emphasis in Scripture on one doing what is right "*now*" and "*today*"! Why such emphasis? It is because we do not know what will happen in a day (**Prov. 27:1**).

86,400 seconds is all we have been given for this day. How will we use this precious time? Will it be used in selfish pursuits, or in godly efforts? If the Lord wills, and we wake up to a new day tomorrow, how will we use the 86,400 seconds given to us on that day? The world has given us far too many distractions wherein we are encouraged to waste our time. (I say this as one who has been, and is, guilty of wasting time, too!) Yet, let us resolve today to stop wasting time and "redeem the time" we have left on earth (**Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5**)! There are too few seconds in a day the way it is!

If the Lord is willing for us to have them, I challenge you with this question: How will we use the 34,560,000 seconds that are left in this year? Will they be "redeemed" in the Lord's service, or will they be wasted? Choose wisely because they are quickly passing away!!! (**Jas. 4:14; I Jn. 2:17; I Pet. 1:24**). Credit: The Old Paths - November 21, 2010 ♦

Don't Just Go to Church, Be the Church

By Jonathan L. Perz

The mind and heart of one who merely goes to church differs greatly from the mind and heart of one who realizes he is part of the church.

One who merely goes to church sees church as a place. He knows the church is the people, and not a building, yet church is still someplace he goes. Spiritually and physically, he arrives at church and leaves church. It is a place with expectations, conduct and qualities that differ from his day-to-day existence. In his mind and even in his speech, church is a "where" and not a "who."

He sees church as a temporary activity, an appointment to keep, an obligation to fulfill. It has a start time and an end time and fits neatly into a block in his datebook. It might even be a priority, but it still must compete with other comparable items on his calendar. When an item is completed, he can check it as done, at least until the next scheduled event.

While church may be an enjoyable experience to him, it is just that—an experience. He goes, feels good about it and comes home. He treats church much like he would treat a movie or a concert. The experience might touch him in a deeper way than other activities, but ultimately, it is tantamount to a feeling that comes and then is gone.

Though "church" in our modern culture has in many ways been belittled to this superficial reality, it is simply not treated in this manner in the Bible.

Jesus died for more than a place, an activity or an experience. A Christian must accept and realize his re-

deemed status as part of the blood-bought church! Paul told the elders of the church in Ephesus, "*to shepherd the church of God which he [Jesus] purchased with His own blood*" (**Acts 20:28**).

A Christian must begin to see the depth of his relationship to Christ as part of the bride of Christ (**Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17**). Illustrating the marriage relationship, Paul told the Ephesians, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*" (**Eph. 5:25-27**).

Jesus told Peter, "*on this rock I will build My church*" (**Matt. 16:18**). In light of Peter's admonishment to us as Christians, "*Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*" (**1 Pet. 2:4-5**), realize that Jesus did not have a physical building or place in mind, but a spiritual people in mind. Peter wasn't suggesting that we go to church. He was telling us to be the church.

Being the church is far more encompassing and requires a far greater commitment than simply going to church. So, the next time you "go to church" ... challenge yourself with the question, "What have I done during the rest of the week to be part of the church?"

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

Proper Attitudes About Worship

By Jeff Asher

The history of the church at Troas is sketchy. Very little is known except what we read in **Acts 20:7-12**. Evidently Paul established this congregation near the end of his third preaching journey (**2 Cor. 2:12**). At some point they had an evangelist who worked with them by the name of Carpus to whom Paul had loaned some books (**2 Tim. 4:13**).

While little is known about their history, **Acts 20:7-12** reveals a lot about their enthusiasm and zeal for the worship of Jesus. They are a positive example of a proper attitude toward the worship of the saints for all Christians in

all times.

Assembly For Worship

The Christians at Troas assembled every first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper and engage in other acts of worship (**Acts 20:7**). Luke observes, "*the first day of the week when the disciples came together*" indicating it was their habit to do so. The fact that Paul remained in Troas for seven days further proves that this was the usual day when Christians met (cf. **Acts 20:16**).

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