

A Sign of the Times

One of the more pressing issues in the on-going judgment of the United States and all its people, is the blatant hypocrisy in which they engage. Rather than be a sharply noticeable departure from the norm, it is endemic to the extent it is not even noticed by the vast majority of people. It is certainly not noticed by the major media. Rather, they traffic in hypocrisy. Under the guise of reporting news, they routinely advance agendas, all the while swearing they are presenting “unbiased news.” This occurs in both the liberal and conservative media.

However, it sells. The reason it sells is because the American people want it. It doesn't seem to bother the electorate unless... This “unless” has to do, not with the fact the individual engaged in blatant hypocrisy, but with the fact they did so while belonging to the opposite political party. This “conditional hypocrisy” is one of the major reasons for the judgment of America.

It should be understood that hypocrisy involves lying and deceit, both of which are an abomination to the LORD God and are cause for Him to bring judgment:

Lying lips are abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are his delight. (*Proverbs 12:22*)

He that speaketh truth sheweth forth righteousness: but a false witness deceit. (*Proverbs 12:17*)

Those who engage in hypocrisy do so to the destruction of those around them:

An hypocrite with his mouth destroyeth his neighbour: but through knowledge shall the just be delivered. (*Proverbs 11:9*)

Thus it becomes of interest when those who profess to be the

messengers of the LORD God and are supposed to be guardians of the truth of the Gospel, themselves engage in hypocrisy. While this behavior deserves rebuke and admonition from other pastors and elders, ultimately it is up to the church they belong to to censure them and remove them from positions of trust.

Normally, I wouldn't be concerned about what happens in a church halfway across America. But this isn't a normal situation, and it threatens the perception of all who encounter this situation as pertaining to the actual duties and calling of pastors, particularly Baptist pastors. The creator of this situation is Raphael Warnock, a "Baptist pastor" at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia. There is reason why Baptist pastor is in quotation marks. It is simply due to the man's doctrine. Unsurprisingly, it isn't standard Baptist doctrine. Yes, he indeed holds the position of pastor in a church that labels itself as Baptist. While the church is free to call themselves whatever they want, they are not free from scrutiny concerning their doctrine and practice.

So what is it that generates so much attention? It is a statement that is, at best, poorly worded. At worst, it's condemning of a group of individuals that the Lord Jesus Christ, John the Baptist, Peter, or Paul condemned. When we realize that none of the above condemned the military of that day (which were far worse in behavior than the American military), we have to consider why Mr. Warnock stated what he did in a sermon back in 2011:

"America, nobody can serve God and the military," Warnock said at the time. "You can't serve God and money. You cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. America, choose ye this day who you will serve. Choose ye this day." – Raphael Warnock, April 2011

Now, the statement that you cannot serve God and mammon is

indeed in the Scripture and the Lord Jesus Christ stated it more than once. However, he never stated you could not serve in the military and serve the LORD God. The Lord Jesus Christ certainly had many opportunities to make such a condemnation. He certainly knew of the excesses military members engage in from time to time. In fact, John the Baptist expressly admonished the soldiers that came to him asking what they should do:

Luke 3:1-14

(1-2) Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.

(3-4) And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

(5-6) Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

(7) Then said he to the multitude that came forth to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

(8) Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

(9) And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

(10) And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?

(11) He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.

(12) Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

(13) And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.

(14) And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.

We should note that he didn't tell them to stop being soldiers. He didn't tell them they were being disobedient to God by being soldiers. A careful study of all the New Testament reveals that none of the apostles ever advised any Roman soldier to stop being a soldier, or that they were in disobedience to the LORD God for being a soldier. When the Lord Jesus Christ encountered a Roman centurion who desired the LORD to heal his servant, the LORD made the following observation:

And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. (*Matthew 8:5-10*)

If there were ever an opportunity to rebuke a soldier for being a soldier, this would be it. Instead, that is not what happens at all. Because the centurion displays remarkable

faith in the LORD, it is pointed out by the LORD as the example all Israel should follow.

Hence, it is strange that a Baptist pastor would do something the LORD never did:

Lump military service in with worshipping and serving money.

As a rule, Baptist pastors should have the attitude of the apostle Paul:

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. (*Galatians 1:10*)

This is because there is no higher calling than to be entrusted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Only the Gospel has the power to convert a child of iniquity to a child of God. It only has the power to change the soul, and thus the eternal destiny of the individual. Christ, and Christ alone is the Savior of all persons, regardless of where and when they are born and what station of life they occupy, if only they will place their complete reliance in Him.

But that doesn't seem to be the message Mr. Warnock is preaching here. Rather, in looking at the totality of Warnock's public testimony, something else seems to be the focus.

What that focus is becomes glaringly obvious when it is considered what Mr. Warnock seeks to do:

He seeks to be a US Senator.

The only position that is more powerful in the US Government is that of the President, although a single senator can stop certain actions of the President.

Moreover, US Senators get compensated handsomely for their

time in office – even if they only do a single term. There are many worldly benefits, not the least of which is public recognition. After all, you are one of an exclusive club of 100, making decisions (or not), but certainly getting the recognition. And, while single term senators won't get a fantastic pension, getting any pension after only five years of service is quite the deal. Making \$174k a year isn't a bad gig either.

Hmmm...

Who is serving mammon here: US Senators or the members of the US military?

Now, whether or not any particular senator happens to be serving only for monetary gain is a question only the LORD God and that individual can answer. However, it is quite obvious no one goes into the military to "make money." While it cannot be said about everyone in the military, it's going to be a tough sell to promote the idea that any significant number of military members seek to make the United States into a "god" and worship it. Rather, the vast majority of US military simply want to keep the United States free, and if possible, better themselves while they do it.

Hence, Warnock's comment in the sermon from 2011 now becomes an hypocrisy that he must own. It is after all, utterly hypocritical to condemn individuals in the US military by lumping them in with those who love money, and then turn around and seek a worldly position in that same government, that has financial benefits far beyond anything anyone in the military receives.

Perhaps Mr. Warnock should acquaint himself with the writings of the apostle John:

I John 2:15-17

(15) Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is

not in him.

(16) For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

(17) And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Mr. Warnock, go bury yourself in your hypocrisy.

If Americans expect to do better as a nation, they must begin by recognizing hypocrisy and rejecting it, both in themselves and in the people they elect to office to represent them. It has to start somewhere.

Mr. Warnock, you speak of repentance, but you, yourself have refused to recognize that you are in need of repentance. If you want to be a US Senator, fine. Resign your pastorate and quit calling yourself a Baptist pastor. You're divorced anyway, which disqualifies you from the pastorate.

But be advised, if the people of Georgia elect you, it is only because they, themselves are utter hypocrites.

A Tactic of Satan – Stealing Time

As I have worked and studied over the last 19 years as a child of God, that is, as one who has believed in Jesus Christ, I have come to realize a few things about how Satan works. Some of the things I realized were monumental in their implications. Others, not so much. But, all are significant in that Satan uses them to ensnare men in such ways as to keep man from ever coming to the truth.

The evidence of Satan's strategy is contained in the point the Lord Jesus Christ made about the wide gate and broad way versus the strait gate and narrow way:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. (*Matthew 7:13-14*)

Moreover, if someone does come to the truth and believes the Gospel, then Satan has a set of tactics to render them impotent for spreading the truth they have found. Since Satan is the father of lies and a deceiver, the tactics he has are almost endless. It really doesn't matter to him if one tactic seems to conflict with another tactic he uses (or even if it actually does conflict), because the point of his working is to keep man from the truth. In this, we must ever remember that Satan hates man, because man is made in the image of the LORD God, and Satan hates the LORD God. Hence, we must remember that Satan is continually trying to overthrow the LORD God.

Yes, Satan was cast out from being one of the covering cherubs beside the throne of God. Yes, we can be assured that Satan knows he cannot overthrow the LORD by force:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, **Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.** And he said unto them, **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.** (*Luke 10:17-18*)

However, if he can prove the LORD God unrighteous...

Thus, he tries that very strategy – to prove the LORD God unrighteous. All he has to do is succeed once, and he has won. Nevertheless, we can rest assured: He won't win. He can't, because he cannot really understand what it means to be omniscient and to love equity. The LORD God LOVES equity and

is omniscient. Hence, the LORD God is, and will remain righteous. ((Loving equity is loving righteousness, as righteousness is defined in Scripture as being '*equal in all your ways.*' For an understanding of that, you are encouraged to read Appendix A: Righteousness, which discusses righteousness and what it is by the definition of Scripture.))

Nevertheless, Satan works to win. His greatest effort is on this earth, among men. At once and the same time, Satan wants man to worship him (being narcissistic he really wants man to worship him), but he hates man and wants to utterly destroy him because man is made in the image of God. These are two entirely contradictory goals.

As an aside, did you ever notice that tyrants and dictators behave exactly the same way as Satan? They to want the worship of those under them, but they also destroy those under them in a totally arbitrary fashion. In a tyranny and dictatorship, no one is safe. Someone may be the favorite of the tyrant one day, and be killed the next for little to no reason.

So it is with Satan.

Nevertheless, Satan obviously believes that the more men he can get to "turn away" from the truth, the stronger his case against the LORD. Hence, he has several tactics that he uses in his strategy against the LORD. All are directed at man:

1. *False religion*
2. *Focus on knowledge*
3. *Focus on self*
4. *Focus on a "significant other"*
5. *Focus on things*
6. *Stealing time*

Now, we should understand that all the above fall under the auspices of the three things set forth in I John, chapter 2:

Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. (*I John 2:15-16*)

And Satan, by right of conquest:

And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. And there went out another horse *that was red*: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (*Revelation 6:2-8*)

Is therefore the god of this world:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (*II Corinthians 4:3-4*)

We must remember that Satan doesn't care what you do, so long

as you never come to the truth. The reason this works as a strategy is because the default end of man is destruction in Hell, and we have only our time on earth to come to the truth:

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: ... (*Hebrews 9:27*)

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. **Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.** (*Acts 4:10-12*)

Because every single person on earth requires salvation and justification before God, there is a built in advantage for Satan in his efforts to destroy the LORD God by man:

Each and every person on earth has a limited time to come to the truth and be justified before God by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes we, each and every one, only have X amount of time. Our time is limited – and Satan knows that all too well.

Thus, Satan sets about to steal your time and mine – and he uses everything in the world to do it.

You see, we cannot recover our time. Once it is gone, it is gone – for good. This makes what we choose to spend our time on, exceedingly important. If Satan can get us bound up in dealing with this thing, and then with that thing, then we will never spend the time necessary to come to the knowledge of the truth.

We will never take the time to really try to understand what the LORD God is asking of us and requiring of us. We must

understand that the LORD requires that we love the truth, and that we are willing to sacrifice for the truth. That is one of the points raised in Hebrews 11:6:

But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe *that* he is, and that **he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.** (*Hebrews 11:6*)

This takes time. Satan knows this. Therefore, if he can, Satan will get the unbeliever wrapped up in everything in the world so that they have no time at all to learn anything about the LORD God and the salvation offered through the Lord Jesus Christ. After all, Satan doesn't care what you believe, so long as you never come to the truth.

For the believer, Satan wishes to get them tied up in everyday, mundane, but oh so necessary things, so that they never bear the fruit the LORD is desiring of them. They don't learn beyond salvation. They can't witness and tell others. They can't explain salvation, because they don't know it well enough to do so. This is the point the Lord Jesus Christ made to Martha when she fussed about her sister Mary:

Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. **But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.** (*Luke 10:38-42*)

Martha was letting her time be stolen from her. Here she had a once in a lifetime (indeed, once in all history) opportunity to be taught directly by the LORD Himself – and she was stuck

on the mundane, everyday things. She was throwing away a golden opportunity.

Why?

Because the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was only three (3) years. That is all. If she throws it away because she is hung up on being a good hostess... what shall we say to that?

REALLY? Yes, really. It really was more important to Martha to be a good hostess, than to sit and learn at the feet of the LORD.

Nevermind she has the rest of her life to be a good hostess to everyone that enters her house. She could drop it just this once for the wonderful opportunity to be taught by the LORD Himself.

But because she is just like the rest of us, she only sees the necessity of the duties of this life, and misses the necessity of the duties of eternal life. She is letting her precious time be stolen from her because her focus is entirely wrong.

Thus, Satan is successful. Why? Because it never appears that his hand is in it. Because it appears as a necessity of life and the culture we live in. It certainly was for Martha. Culturally, she could not forsake being a good hostess. That would be bad form. What would people say? Oh, can't have it that people are whispering that Martha was a bad host when Jesus came to her house.

So she had to do it – and miss the teaching at the feet of the LORD Himself. You know, it strikes me that the Lord Jesus didn't care. He would rather have her being taught too. She can be a good hostess at some other time. Not being a good hostess just this once is not going to kill her, or her reputation.

Nevertheless, we think just like Martha. We have things in this life that “*have to be done*” and they cannot be shirked.

You know, if you face eternity tomorrow, it won't make one whit's worth of difference for this world – and Satan will have succeeded. But it will make every difference in eternity for you.

Don't allow Satan and the system he has set up in this world, to steal your time.

Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual Warfare: The term brings to mind all kinds of strange ideas that range from “prayer warriors” to “casting out demons” to literally standing face to face with Satan, being a “general in God's army,” to ‘our church is the special forces in God's army,’ etc., etc.. All of which are either partially or totally false. Moreover, where some people find this in Scripture is beyond me. Actually, spiritual warfare is a whole lot like regular warfare in some ways: For a very long time nothing happens – then all of a sudden events occur – then nothing perceptible happens again. Moreover, wars are not won in the flash, glitz and glitter of the demonstration of power and force (This is why the “Shock and Awe” campaign in Iraq was a failure). Rather, wars are won by logistics, discipline and training. That is why history records many instances of small, disciplined forces defeating much larger, yet less disciplined forces time and again. An excellent example of this is the battle of Cannae in 216 BC in which Hannibal defeated a far larger Roman force in the space of one day. An excellent Biblical example of this is Abraham's excursion against the four kings after they defeated the five

kings of Canaan and took Lot, Abraham's nephew, and his household captive. A careful reading of the passage reveals that Abraham's servants were trained in war. Along with Mamre, Aner and Eschol, Abraham and his servants pursued the four kings and defeated them in a night battle. Without doubt, the forces of the four kings were far larger than the force Abraham and those confederate with him could assemble. However, training, discipline and (most of all) the blessing of the LORD carried the day. Thus, there is a lesson for the child of God: That proper biblical training and a disciplined life are necessary in the spiritual war that we all are engaged in. In short, if you don't know the Scripture, how can you possibly use the primary weapon the Lord has given you, which is the Scripture? If you are not willing to live a separated life, how can you be confident in what faith reveals to you from the Scripture? How can you be confident that the Lord is actually guiding you in all that you do? Moreover, since this spiritual war centers around the salvation of souls, if you don't walk the talk, will those whose souls you are fighting for ever listen to you? Will you have credibility in their eyes if you act like the world, but talk like the Bible? You know, it is not enough for a soldier to talk all about weapons and tactics and war – if he never trains for war with his weapons using the tactics he was taught. Worse yet, even if he is trained, what if he never shows up for the battle? In either case, the soldier is a waste of time and effort to the country he is supposedly fighting for. It should not be a shock to realize that it is the same for the born-again child of God. With these things in mind, we should understand that spiritual warfare is also very different from regular warfare. After all, who ever won a battle by fleeing the battlefield? But that is exactly how Joseph won the battle against Potiphar's wicked wife. By fleeing fornication Joseph won a significant victory that enabled the LORD God to use him to save his entire family from starvation in a famine that was, at that time, years in the future. Even though for the moment it seemed that Joseph had lost (after all, it got him

thrown in prison), actually victory was assured and (from the point of view of man) God's plan would go forward. Thus, I leave you with the above thoughts to consider. I pray that the following articles provoke you to consideration of your own effectiveness in the war everyone is engaged in. In Christ,
Paul W. Davis

<i>General Articles</i>	<i>Lessons</i>	<i>Issues of Covenant</i>
Introduction	What Kind of War	Some Hard Questions
Complacency Kills	The Television	Doing It By the Book
Counting the Cost (A Memorial)		A Parallel
When "I'm Sorry" Isn't Sufficient		
The Effects of Television		
<i>Passing the Torch</i>	<i>Discernment</i>	<i>Visual Arts</i>
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Asymmetrical Warfare	Lord of the Rings: Second Letter	Emotional Appeal and Preaching the Gospel
The Hidden Hypocrisy		
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The Lord of the Rings and The Hobbit

Are they innocent, harmless books?

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The following is the first of two letters to brethren concerning the dangers of fiction and fantasy books. Specifically, this addresses J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle Earth series.

Who could hate a hobbit? What is wrong with the good wizard Gandalf? And, why do you hate elves?

Perhaps, these are not the questions to ask when asking whether or not the popular series of books about the fictional Middle Earth is actually a good thing for anyone to read, let alone bible-believing, born-again children of God.

Perhaps a better question to ask is:

How do we, as the children of the living God, judge the acceptability of books, movies, etc, etc... Of course, the answer is virtually axiomatic: Why, the Word of God, of course.

If that is true, then let us look at how J. R. R. Tolkien's works on Middle Earth compare to the admonition of the Lord.

1. Most people do not know that the popular (a virtual cultic following) series of books about the doings of Middle Earth in the Third War of the Rings, does not begin with the book *The Hobbit*. Instead, the story begins in another book, much longer and more difficult to read, called *The Silmarillion*.

The Silmarillion is the ground of the entire series. Without this book, the series has no real beginning, and no real meaning. The setting and seriousness of *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings* is largely lost outside of *The Silmarillion*. But this book appears as virtually another religion to almost everyone, including the lost. One reviewer described it as "*A grim, tragic, powerful book, shot through with heroism and hope ... its power is almost that of mysticism.*" ((*Toronto Globe and Mail*, date not cited))

Of course there is a reason for the power that approaches mysticism. If the reviewer had fully understood the following information presented in the book and repeated on the Wikipedia website, it would have been clear that it is mysticism.

"*The Silmarillion* is a collection of Tolkien's works, standardized and published by his son Christopher, posthumously. It contains these five pieces:

1. *The Ainulindalë* – the creation of Eä, Tolkien's universe.
2. *The Valaquenta* – the Valar? and Maiar?, the deities and angels.

3. The Quenta Silmarillion – the history of the events before and during First Age.
4. The Akallabêth – the history of the Second Age.
5. Of the Rings of Power and the Third Age.

The Silmarillion is a very complex work, employing an extremely wide array of themes, that originate in lore of countries all over Europe, but not adhering to any of them. Thus, the title of Eru Ilúvatar (One who is Father of All) is clearly a borrowed from the Norse mythology; the story of Túrin Turambar is very similar to a motive from Kalevala; and Númenor is obviously reminiscent of Atlantis (in fact, one of the names Tolkien gave that land was Atalantë).” ((Wikipedia website: www.wikipedia.com))

With such detail and arrangement as an alternate creation account, holy places, the reason for evil, gods and how one must attain peace in the afterlife, quite clearly the entire series beginning with The Silmarillion, and including The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings trilogy, is nothing less than a false religion.

2. The entire Middle Earth series employs such creatures as immortal elves, ogres, wizards, mortal men, dragons, and a particular type of physical demon (orcs). Of the above mentioned, only ogres, the demons, and dragons are always evil. Men, wizards (a magican) and elves can be either good or evil. However, elves never lose their immortality unless they willingly give it up – *no matter what they do*.

So what is wrong with this?

First, the Lord commanded that Israel should not suffer a witch to live (this includes wizards being simply male witches).

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live. (*Exodus 22:18*)

Moreover, the Lord stated expressly that witchcraft and rebellion are equally abominable sins.

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (*1 Samuel 15:23*)

So far there is no evidence that LORD is going to change His mind. In fact, we can be certain He will not.

Second, nowhere in Scripture (a true Book) are we told that anyone, man or angel, can do anything they want without consequence before God. Yes, lost or saved, even the most inane, idle word we may speak will be accounted for before the LORD.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned. (*Matthew 12:36-37*)

Third, we are never led to believe in the Scripture that the end justifies the means. If it did, then the Lord Jesus Christ would have never died on the cross for us. Yet, in the entire series on Middle Earth, over and over again deception, outright lies and murder are used for a “good” end, and justified because of the outcome.

Fourth, The entire series is no different than Dungeons and Dragons. The exact same characters, and character types appear in D & D. It simply depends on whose set you buy.

3. Okay, it is just fiction, and I take it that way. It cannot harm me.

That would be nice – if it were true. It simply is not. Going outside of the Lord’s commandments and playing around with

things that the Lord said not to look upon, nor touch; opens one up to the devil in a very serious way – *especially when it comes to witchcraft*. The battlefield wherein we frequently fight is the mind. If the mind is turned away from the reality of this spiritual war in which we are participants, the devil has the greater advantage. No, he cannot possess a saved person, but he can, and will, keep the mind filled with ungodly thoughts and attempt to build a resistance to the things of God, so that the person does not ever properly serve the Lord. Moreover, failure to follow the Lord's will in such matters can result in the Lord allowing Satan to torment one mentally and physically so that a lesson may be learned.

But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. (*I Samuel 16:14*)

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (*I Corinthians 5:3-5*) (*Somehow, I fail to see this as a desirable way to learn.*)

Additionally, if the mind is filled with such things that strengthen the flesh, and focus one on the things of the world – then one starves and weakens the mind of the soul so that the victories more frequently go to the flesh. The end result of that is a bad witness, or no witness at all. This is expressly why we are commanded to put away the things of the flesh and the world, and dwell upon heavenly things, right things, and things that speak of the truth.

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things

which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (*Colossians 3:1*)

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. (*Philippians 4:8*)

Incidentally, isn't it somewhat of a contradiction for someone who has been born in the truth and of the truth, and knows reality to engage in fantasy (which is by definition not reality and a lie), and fiction (again, a lie), and in escapism (mentally opting out of reality)? If someone is born-again of God, then shouldn't they love things that are true? After all, the following passages of Scripture speak clearly to the fact that God is not about untruth, nor does He abide it. Moreover, He wants His children to set aside such things and focus on the Lord who saved them, rather than on things of fantasy.

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; (*Titus 1:2*)

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (*Hebrews 6:17-18*)

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and

finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (*Hebrews 12:1-2*)

4. J. R. R. Tolkien did not intend to create a false religion.

Whether J. R. R. Tolkien truly understood what he was doing, only the LORD God really knows. However, the understanding of the person involved in perpetrating the evil is rarely, if ever, the issue. The real issue is that there is a real creation, a real reason for evil and wickedness, and a real righteous God of all that insures that all men know that He is there, and what He requires. This is plainly stated in Romans, chapter 1:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (*Romans 1:18-21*)

In closing I would like put forth one final thought for your consideration. I have read the entire series on Middle Earth (even *The Silmarillion*). I did it long before I was saved. However, the power of the books is such that I kept them for years. It was not until I was saved that I put them away – but I could not destroy them. It took approximately a year to come to the point of destroying them. I consider myself very fortunate, and blessed of God that I was able to do so. I have had many friends and acquaintances that Tolkien's series of

books were instrumental in getting them involved in Dungeons and Dragons, and then into witchcraft, and/or drugs. The power and pull that Satan has through these books is tremendous. It is a “nice escape” that is literally playing with fire.

Finis

“The Passion”

Religious Movies and Faith



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Before I get started, I know that my position as stated herein, will be controversial with many. I know that many of those who name themselves as fundamental, independent Baptists have seen this movie. Many, including pastors and missionaries will advocate seeing it. I also know that many have written against this movie and it is not hard to find various reasons stated for not viewing this film. However, I wish to approach this movie from a point of view that I have not seen expounded upon – the point of view of faith. My position is based solely upon the word of God. After careful searching of the sense the Lord gave me about this movie (It is a Catholic movie with a Catholic Jesus, based upon corrupt scripture and writings.), I found that there was actually a stronger reason than the fact that it is Catholic for not seeing it. In fact, what I found was a bit disturbing.

To begin, there are some questions I would like to pose for your consideration.

1. Why does the Scripture not describe the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ in graphic detail?
2. Why does the Scripture not describe the Lord Jesus Christ's physical features in detail (or enough to positively identify Him were He to appear in front of us)?
3. Why did Abraham, who had seen the Lord Jesus, not make an image (drawing or painting) and tell his son Isaac what the Lord looked like?
4. Why did John the Apostle not describe the physical features of the Lord Jesus in both the Gospel and in Revelation?
5. Is the Lord Jesus Christ Almighty God? Really?

To begin answering these questions, and see the perspective that I am coming from, I have included a number of passages from Scripture that are all linked by a particular commonality.

In the 20th chapter of the Gospel of John, the challenge to Thomas is related to us. Apparently, Thomas had a common problem – he would not believe unless he saw in person – the Lord Jesus Christ and the peculiar identifying marks of His suffering.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it*

into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (*John 20:24-29*)

Please note in the above passage the rebuke the Lord gives Thomas when He told him "and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas' problem was one of failure to exercise the faith he had been given by the Lord. However, we should also note what the Lord said immediately following His rebuke of Thomas, and Thomas' confession to the Lord: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and yet have believed." It is this statement that should frame any desire we have to see any depiction of the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ outside the confines of the Scripture.

A failure to identify the Lord Jesus Christ and who He is, is nothing new on this earth. When the Lord Jesus was in the midst of His earthly ministry many people did not know who He was, and expressed it to the Lord quite plainly. One such incident happened at the feast of the dedication:

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand. I and *my* Father are one. (*John 10:22-30*)

There are many things I use this particular passage for: I frequently use it to demonstrate that salvation is eternal and cannot be lost because the Lord holds those who are born again in His hand and no one (including that person) can remove them from the Lord's hand. I also use this passage to demonstrate that only those who belong to the Lord can 'hear His voice' in the Scripture. However, this particular time I would like to focus on the question and challenge raised by the Jews:

"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly."

It is apparent that the Jews were looking right at the Lord Jesus, but could not discern that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. The reason why is given in the Lord's answer to them, and by extension – to us:

"Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you."

The terrible thing about this is that He had told them repeatedly who He was, and had proved it by His life and work – yet they could not believe that the man they were looking at was indeed the Son of God.

Why not? Is it strictly because they would not believe? To whom is it given to be able to identify and know the Lord Jesus Christ? Shouldn't everyone be able to identify the Lord Jesus Christ? Doesn't the Lord want to save everyone? Of a certainty the Lord does desire the repentance and salvation of everyone. However, he will not reveal who He is to just everyone, and he does not use worldly methods to provide that revelation.

One of the most important passages in Scripture about the foundation of the church also contains a very important spiritual truth about knowing who the Lord Jesus Christ is. In Matthew, chapter 16, the Lord challenges His disciples as to His identity:

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say *that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. (*Matthew 16:13-17*)

The key in the above passage is the fact that Simon Peter knew who the Lord was because God the Father had revealed Jesus' identity to him by faith. This provides quite a contrast to the witness of the Jews in John, chapter 10, who could not at all discern who the Lord really was. To understand this dichotomy, it is necessary to note the exact wording of the Lord's reply to Simon: "for flesh and blood hath not revealed *it* unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." Of all things, this is the practical description of the operation of the instrument called faith. It is essential to understand that nothing earthly, or worldly is at all able to reveal to anyone who the Lord Jesus Christ really is. No, that understanding and knowledge is strictly confined to the operation of faith.

The necessity of faith and its effectiveness in revealing spiritual truth is given in Hebrews, chapter 11. For the sake of brevity, only the first six verses of the chapter are shown as they particularly pertain to this discussion.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good

report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (*Hebrews 11:1-6*)

Even though none of us were there, if we use the faith the Lord imparts to us upon the hearing of His word, we will understand and know the truth of how this world, and the surrounding universe were made. Through the instrument and operation of faith, Abel knew that the proper means of honoring the Lord was by offering a blood sacrifice from the flock to show a picture of the sacrifice of the Lord that was to come in the then distant future. Cain, not having faith, offered a sacrifice that pleased him, instead of the Lord. Cain, by earthly reason, offered what he thought would honor the Lord, not discerning the reason for a specific blood sacrifice. Though we are not told much about Enoch, it is clear that faith, and its operation were essential to his ability to please the Lord. Finally, we are warned, if we do not use faith to know and understand the truth that God has put before us in His word, we cannot please Him at all. Rather, without faith and its operation, it is impossible to please God, no matter how good it looks to men.

In the following passage, we find that faith is essential, even for the believer, to discern when the Lord is telling us something through His word, and to know that it is indeed the Lord who is revealing things to us, and putting verses in our mind. After all, Satan knows the Scripture far better than we

do, and has no problem using Scripture to deceive us into doing things for him, and to the detriment of the gospel.

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem *about* threescore furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. (*Luke 24:13-16*)

It is interesting that these two are disciples that walked with the Lord for quite some time prior to His crucifixion. Now, only three days later, they cannot identify Him when he walks up to them on the road to Emmaus. The Scripture plainly states that their eyes are holden, and they cannot not perceive who He is. Instead, they are somewhat incredulous at the question posed to them by the Lord Jesus about the reason for their dispirited attitude. In the verses following this passage, we are told that The Lord upbraided, or rebuked them for their hardness of heart.

It is this hardness of heart that prevented the Lord's disciples from discerning who He was at that moment. Thus, we can see the Lord is under no obligation to reveal Himself to those who will not believe. More than that however, what is also shown here is that the Lord's appearance was something that was not readily discerned, or remembered. I tend to find it somewhat strange that only three days after the Lord was crucified that His own disciples that walked with Him virtually every day for three years, could not identify Him.

What this tells me is that any depiction of the Lord Jesus Christ, whether drawing, painting, play, or cinema is going to be inaccurate – in the extreme. Moreover, it is not going to help people identify and come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Why?

Because of the following testimony of Nathanael.

The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. (*John 1:43-49*)

We must ask the question: How did Nathanael know it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God? The answer is simple, and has nothing to do with appearance or emotion. Rather, it has everything to do with the instrument of faith. Nathanael discerned the identity of the Lord Jesus by the instrument and operation of faith.

It is faith that will reveal the person of the Lord Jesus Christ – from the Scriptures. What Abraham told the rich man in hell is vital to understanding why so many “revivals” and evangelistic efforts based upon emotional appeal never work, nor do they seem to produce any long-lasting effects.

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they

will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (*Luke 16:27-31*)

The rich man's logic is typical of what most everyone thinks – that a powerful emotional experience will shake up his brothers and they will repent and believe. However, the disapproval of that method by God (and thus Abraham) is readily apparent. Abraham's reply is critical to those wishing to "shake someone up" and thus "get them to believe" the gospel – it won't work. God may use certain events that He has brought about in a person's life to move them to hear the gospel. However, for us to manufacture emotional events to attempt to achieve a certain state in a person so that they will listen, is not given to us by the Lord. Only the Lord knows what will properly move a person towards Him, and what will not. We do not.

What the children of God are given to do is preach the word, live godly and holy in this present wicked world, and be obedient to the Lord. That is all. The Lord's children are ambassadors, not actors. It is the Lord that will use His word that we preach to move the hearts of people. As He has plainly stated in the Old Testament:

For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it. (*Isaiah 55:8-11*)

Thus, the power is in the word, not us. The only thing we can do is hinder the person from hearing the word if we do not

present a right and proper witness. It is imperative that we remember that Moses and many (if not all) the prophets were long dead when Abraham told the rich man "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

There is a final thought from the word of God before addressing how doctrine is built, and the witness of three godly men; it is centered on the fifth question at the beginning of this (now lengthy) article: Is Jesus Christ Almighty God?

If He is, is it permissible to make any image at all of Him, even when He has taken the form of man? After all, His earthly ministry of being born in the flesh was not the first time He had appeared to men, in the form of a man. Yet, nowhere in Scripture do I find any detailed description, or depiction of His appearance that would enable anyone to make any model, painting, drawing, or any other depiction of Him that would be at all accurate. Why not?

Perhaps the following passage explains and sums up the reason why.

And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; (*Exodus 20:1-5*)

Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (*I Corinthians 10:14*)

Building Doctrine

And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day. (*John 6:40*)

The above passage from the mouth of the Lord Himself is very express, "every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:" Thus, it is clear that the early church erred in not making drawings and paintings of the Lord Jesus so that everyone would see "him" and believe.

Really?

No, not really. One can, and the Catholics do, misinterpret passages such as this (as in the case of foot-washing) to build doctrines that are not at all pleasing to God. In fact, much of the doctrine that exists in "Christianity" today, does not please God. Why? Because it is built upon some other foundation that was not laid through the operation of faith. The operation of faith confirms what is written in the word of God, and for those things that are not express, faith will reveal the Scriptural principles that direct us in the way we should go. Faith tells us that the Lord will not ever violate His word.

Thus, we can see that the passage of verse 40 is not literally, physically telling us that someone must "see" the Lord Jesus Christ, or His image (Does the Scripture really give us His description?) So they can be saved. No, far too many passages reveal that looking directly at the Lord Jesus in the flesh was not, and is not a guarantee that anyone would know who He is. This is also plainly illustrated in the same incident as verse 40.

The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? (*John 6:41-42*)

Even though the Jews knew the history of Jesus and had seen the miracles done by Him, they could not discern who He really is. Thus, the crux of the whole issue of building doctrine comes down to this:

The reason why the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ did not, and would not make any images of Him, or use anything to represent Him in any way – despite the fact that the Lord made the statement He did in verse 40, is because it would not guarantee that anyone would come to know Him personally. Instead, it would lead only to idolatry.

Abraham's Example

And the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day; And he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw *them*, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: And I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do, as thou hast said. (*Genesis 18:1-5*)

It is noteworthy that Abraham never described the physical appearance of the Lord to his son Isaac. Neither did the Lord find it prudent to have Moses put any description of Himself in the first five books of the Scripture.

Isaiah's Example

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. (*Isaiah 6:1*)

Neither did Isaiah ever describe the physical appearance of

the Lord, though he undoubtedly saw Him.

John's Example

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send *it* unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks *one* like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and *his* hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I *am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (*Revelation 1:10-18*)

Again, John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, gives no description of the physical features of the Lord. Rather, he does describe the glory of the Lord and His humility – both of which can be spiritually discerned.

Satan's Deception

This is what I fear: That in this late hour many are being deceived and led astray by emotion. Television and movies (in fact all visual stimulation) can be emotionally powerful. The individual that stated "A picture is worth a thousand words." never quite told the whole story. Indeed, if the picture is

distorted, the story it will convey will be distorted as well. I am very familiar with the use of propaganda and the fact that photojournalists are frequently used by one side or the other to create emotional upheaval and sway persons to support one side or the other in a conflict. Why? Because pictures have the power to stimulate the emotions, and can be used to selectively illustrate a wrong. It is easy to isolate a subject and remove it from the proper context with photography. The same applies to cinema.

In the context of the above discussion, I would like to pose a question for consideration:

Outside of the fact that Jesus is God (and thus depicting Him is questionable), what Jesus is Mel Gibson depicting in this movie?

The reason I pose this question is due to the following passage of Scripture:

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in *my* folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present *you* as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*. (II Corinthians 11:1-4)

Why was the apostle Paul so concerned? In the following passage from the same chapter, he clarifies:

But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we. For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles

of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Corinthians 11:12-15)

We must remember that Satan is all too willing to imitate the Lord for the express purpose of leading people away from salvation. The most effective means of doing that is to get them to believe in a false Jesus – one that only enables you to do the “good works” necessary to get to heaven. Instead of preaching the true Jesus that totally paid the price for our sin on the cross. When the Lord Jesus stated “It is finished.” and gave up the ghost, that meant that I did not need to do any works at all for salvation (not that I could anyway) (By the way, did Mel leave that line in the movie? Did anyone even notice in the emotion of the moment?).

For those who are believers, it is essential to remember that Satan has counterfeited virtually everything about the Lord’s work – including redefining faith to make it a work only. As believers we should also remember that Satan knows the Scripture far better than we do. (After all, he attempted to use the Lord’s own words against Him.)

The Lord’s Commandments

As a child of the Lord, I am aware that the Lord has instructed me that if I love Him, I am to keep His commandments (John 14:15, 21) and he will manifest Himself to me. One of His commandments is found in II Corinthians concerning unclean things. In understanding this particular commandment, I looked up the word “clean” so I would know what “unclean” was (after all, if something is not clean, it must be unclean). What I found is that “unclean” meant that something is impure, tainted, unclear, or sullied. In other words, we could say that an unclear, or distorted gospel is unclean. Even more so, a deliberately distorted gospel is

unclean.

In the Scripture, it is very express what the gospel is. Thus anything that does not adhere strictly to the Scripture's description of the gospel is an unclean gospel, an thus an unclean thing. It is very cut and dried, so to speak.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (*II Corinthians 6:14-18*)

Now, what is touching? If we sit and absorb a message into our minds, that is certainly more than touching, isn't it? How then, can the Lord be pleased with me if I disobey His direct commandment? Do you think the Lord should bless anyone for their disobedience?

Conclusion

For me the Scripture is quite express and clear concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. I know who He is by faith. I knew who He is the night I was saved by Him and His work on the cross. How did I know? By the instrument and operation of faith. I know of His sufferings by faith, and I do not need a movie to "make it real" to me. I know that in the Scripture I am told that to walk by faith and not by sight, as it is written: "(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)" (*II Corinthians 5:7*)

I also know that I am to flee idolatry, not tolerate it. I am told by implication that I will not be strong enough to

withstand the temptation of idolatry; that is why I must flee it, as it is again written: "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." (*I Corinthians 10:14*)

Finally, I am told not to glory in anything save the knowledge of the Lord. I am to be humble, and not proud of the knowledge and understanding of His word that He has given me, as it is also written:

Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty *man* glory in his might, let not the rich *man* glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I *am* the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these *things* I delight, saith the LORD. (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*)

Thus, this movie, and religious films in general are injurious to faith and its operation. Because of these things I cannot see this movie, or any other movies or plays depicting the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it is plainly displeasing to the LORD.

Finis

The Effects of Television

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Of all the things that can be said about television, one of the most outstanding things that is apparent is that television is really not necessary. Nice to have, but not

necessary. For the child of God this is a very important distinction that needs to be always kept in mind.

Television is much like a drug that one might take for "recreation," except that it is a mental and spiritual drug that gives no external evidence of its usage. Nevertheless, there are certain cases where the person is easily swayed to "act out" the things seen and heard. Television affects every person's heart and mind regardless of the outward show. How can I say this? Consider the following evidence from a study on the effects of denying a family television, even for a limited time. The subjects of the study were asked to do without the television for a time. They had not, of their own volition decided to put away the television, rather they were asked to do without for a time.

Nearly 40 years ago Gary A. Steiner of the University of Chicago collected fascinating individual accounts of families whose set had broken—this back in the days when households generally had only one set: "The family walked around like a chicken without a head." "It was terrible. We did nothing—my husband and I talked." "Screamed constantly. Children bothered me, and my nerves were on edge. Tried to interest them in games, but impossible. TV is part of them."

In experiments, families have volunteered or been paid to stop viewing, typically for a week or a month. Many could not complete the period of abstinence. Some fought, verbally and physically. Anecdotal reports from some families that have tried the annual "TV turn-off" week in the U.S. tell a similar story. ((Television Addiction, Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Scientific American, February 2002, <http://tv-addiction.blogspot.com/2007/01/television-addiction-is-no-mere.html>))

Now, for the born-again believer this ought to be a red flag concerning the potential for destruction of one's witness,

especially if we remember what happened to Lot and his family when they heard and saw the wickedness that was continually around them. ((The Holy Bible, King James Version, Genesis 19:all, II Peter 2:7-8)) This is not to say that all television is like Sodom and Gomorrah, but even a swift glance at it today reveals much ungodliness and a vast amount of "information" that is direct opposition to what the word of God states is true. Thus we are given a choice to make: Are we, if we continue watching, going to continually say "no" to the ideas and concepts that come from the television, or, are we at some point going to quietly concede that particular battleground and not even protest, just so we can keep watching?

Again, I do know this is a bold thing to state. However, it is not said out of ignorance of the power of television. Researchers do know that every one responds to stimuli in a certain way. It is our automatic response to stimuli that causes many to concede this particular battleground.

In 1986 Byron Reeves of Stanford University, Esther Thorson of the University of Missouri and their colleagues began to study whether the simple formal features of television—cuts, edits, zooms, pans, sudden noises—activate the orienting response, thereby keeping attention on the screen.

The orienting response may partly explain common viewer remarks such as: "If a television is on, I just can't keep my eyes off it," "I don't want to watch as much as I do, but I can't help it," and "I feel hypnotized when I watch television." ((Television Addiction, Robert Kubey and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Scientific American, February 2002, <http://tv-addiction.blogspot.com/2007/01/television-addiction-is-no-mere.html>))

Now the researchers do not understand that God put that response mechanism there. However, just because they

misidentify the source of the response does not negate the fact that the response is there. What it does mean is that we must learn to rule over our flesh and its desires and not concede this battleground. If we fail in this area, what will ultimately occur (and sooner than we think) is the insidious slide into worldliness and the forsaking of the witness and testimony that we, as members of the Lord's church, are in covenant with the Lord about.

There are additional effects of television that are documented. These effects also contribute to difficulty in maintaining our witness and testimony. One of them is significant in its contribution to the ultimate downfall of this society as well.

Jerome L. and Dorothy Singer of Yale University, among others, have suggested that more viewing may contribute to a shorter attention span, diminished self-restraint and less patience with the normal delays of daily life. More than 25 years ago psychologist Tannis M. MacBeth Williams of the University of British Columbia studied a mountain community that had no television until cable finally arrived. Over time, both adults and children in the town became less creative in problem solving, less able to persevere at tasks, and less tolerant of unstructured time. ((Ibid))

Of course, we have seen and heard in the news many times in recent years where people have lost patience with one another over the most trivial of things and the result was either grievous bodily harm, or murder. If we say, 'So what, big deal. That has always happened,' we ignore a time in United States history when television was not present, and a national economic crisis occurred. The result was not the kind of lawlessness that we see today. During the Great Depression so many people had little to nothing, including food. Yet, the vast majority of individuals willingly worked for what they could get, and were very patient concerning the conditions

that they had to endure. Crime, especially assault and murder was rare at that time. I know, as I have spoken with many older people that lived through that time in America's history, and none of them experienced what we, as a nation, are going through today.

Now, we know the nature of man has not changed. So what has? How about the stimulus to man's nature? Is it possible that man can be encouraged to do evil by the things continually placed in front of him; especially if they are shown to be acceptable, even approved actions to take? God has much to say about looking upon evil and the effects of it, even on the believer. Think about it.

Finis

Introduction

The following articles were written primarily for the church I attended for several years. They were formatted for the church bulletin, and were an attempt to have my brethren (including my pastor) understand the primary ways the spiritual war which we are involved in, is fought. The articles focus on our actions and the effect they have on others in influencing them either for, or against the Lord and His gospel. These articles also focus on attitudes we have and how they are a detriment to our effectiveness as a witness for the Lord.

I speak of these things from experience. You will find that many of the articles are written from a personal experience point of view and the examples are incidences that have spiritual parallels. My experience is a military experience. I was in the USAF and Arkansas ANG long before I was saved. I retired from the Arkansas Air National Guard after 9 years

service. Prior to that I served as active duty Air Force for 11 years, for a total of 20 years service. I was an NCO with the rank of Staff Sergeant, and a line supervisor for years. I have been (not so much now) an avid student of history, particularly of war and its consequences. Even today, I keep tabs on events in the world, principally of events that have significance for the Lord's church and its effectiveness in the world. In addition, I keep watch on the Lord's judgement of the United States for forsaking Him and His commandments.

Please read these articles with an open heart and mind. They are meant to exhort all of us (including me) to do far better than we do. Our separation from the world and its wickedness are not light things to the LORD God.

Sincerely in Christ,

Paul W. Davis

Emotional Appeal and Preaching the Gospel

One of the things I have noted over the last several years is the increasing trend among fundamental Baptists toward an emotion-laden presentation of the Gospel. This comes in the form of plays or dramas, puppet shows for children, and movies about Christ. All of these are emotional appeals that seem to move otherwise unmovable individuals to salvation in Christ. However, this method and its fruit need to be seriously examined in light of the only standard that exists for judging any and all our actions and methods of presenting the Gospel:

The Scriptures.

While there are many who argue that Scripture does not restrict us from presenting the Gospel in whatsoever manner that we deem effective, their claims must be checked against the Scripture to determine the actual validity of their statements. Now, on its face the claim may appear to be true: but if we take a deeper look at what the Scriptures actually state, and the principles contained in those Scriptures, a different picture does emerge: one that is not so approving of the use of emotion in presenting the Gospel.

The most emotional appeal we have in Scripture concerning the Gospel comes from the rich man in Hell. It is plain that this man does not like being where he is, and does not want any of his family to come there. The essential portion of the account, as applicable to this article, follows:

Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.(Luke 16: 27-31)

It is the last statement made by Abraham in response to the (former) rich man's plea to send Lazarus back from the dead that is telling. Abraham would not even entertain the idea of sending Lazarus back from the dead to testify of the Gospel. Instead, Abraham states: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." This response is recorded for all who read to understand that, as powerful a witness it is for one to rise from the dead, it does not impact the heart the way the Scriptures do. In fact, every indication is that the emotional impact of such an event may not do anything but further harden the heart against the Gospel. At a very minimum, if someone

has such an experience, they may become “inoculated” against the Gospel as they substitute the emotional experience for actually believing Christ in faith and repentance.

However, since there are those who protest this conclusion, and those who cannot understand why Abraham would set forth such a restriction on the presenting of the Gospel (after all, it certainly appears that Abraham is stating that the Scriptures and the plain preaching of the Scriptures are the only approved means of presenting the Gospel), it is necessary to apply the rest of the Scriptures that address this issue.

If we begin in the Old Testament, we find that the LORD made it very plain whose word the Scripture is, and to what purpose it exists. Specifically, in Isaiah, chapter 55, the LORD is clear and express about His salvation and the role His word performs in the salvation of a soul:

Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.(*Isaiah 55:6-11*)

This statement is reinforced in the New Testament in Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 12 where it speaks of the word of God as well:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (*Hebrews 4:12*)

Moreover, in I Corinthians, chapter 1, the following statement is given by the apostle Paul under inspiration of the Holy Ghost:

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.(*I Corinthians 1:17-21*)

Notice what is stated above: that “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching . . .” and that to those who will perish, the preaching of the cross, and preaching as a method and means of convincing people, is foolishness. This implies much about the current generation of ‘Christians’ who think that plain, old-fashioned preaching is not capable of moving people to accept Christ as their Saviour. It is quite clear that the vast majority of ‘Christendom’ does not believe that the plainly spoken and preached word of God is sufficient for much of anything at all. Rather, they believe that it takes plays, music, movies and rank entertainment to cause people to come to Christ.

Clearly, by the aforementioned Scriptures, those things are the means and methods of the world, and have nothing of God in them. Instead, they are the product of man’s reasoning and

man's methods, which are foolishness to God. These methods address the emotions, and move the emotions of man, but do nothing to the heart. It takes the Scripture, the word of God to penetrate the heart and lay bare the wickedness that lies within. The proof of this is manifest when you approach someone who has seen the plays and movies about Christ, and you begin to preach the Gospel to them – and they get very angry and tell you they do not want to hear it. Or, after they have seen a play or drama about where they will end up without the salvation that is in Christ, they say they want to know more, but when visited a couple of days later, they express little to no interest in the Gospel or the things of God.

In the final analysis, what is really going on here borders on rank heresy. Why? Because those individuals involved in and promoting such means and methods have set aside the plain word of God in favor of their own way. Granted, there are those who claim that these methods are simply a different form of presenting the word of God. However, that is manifestly untrue, since plays, music and movies present actions and emotion more than words. Moreover, instead of being mentally engaging, the tendency is to shut off thinking altogether and let the emotions have free reign when watching, or listening, to plays, music and movies. Even though a person may do this when someone is preaching, it is generally not the case, as they must engage the mind to listen to the words, since the words are where the attention is focused.

Secondly, and much more distressing, the reality is that presenting plays, drama, music, movies, etc., relieves the individuals participating in such endeavors of the personal burden of presenting the Gospel to those around them. Instead, the burden is shifted to the 'group.' This is a very convenient way of avoiding a bitter reality for many professed 'Christians': that they have no real message of Christ to bring, because they do not know Him personally.

Looks Like We're There Already



The above message is a prime example of how not to fight the spiritual war we are all involved in.

Why?

Because the doctrinal implications of the message run quite contrary to the Scripture, and sends an, at best ambiguous and at worst flat wrong, message.

Now, I know that the people that put up this message mean well. I am relatively certain that they do not intend harm to the message of salvation, or to its Author. However, if we consider what the Scripture has to say, versus what the sign says, we will find a distinct dichotomy. Why do I see it this way?

Consider the following:

The message of the sign is thus:

If we are to avoid spiritual foreclosure, we need to bank with Jesus.

This is reworded, but the meaning does remain the same. Since that is the message of the sign, its plain implication is that we are by default, spiritually solvent. What that would have to mean doctrinally is that we are already justified before God, and that if we do not “bank” with Jesus, we will experience “foreclosure.”

Assuming that the word “bank” as it is used here, means that one is trusting Christ for their salvation, and that the word “foreclosure,” as it is used here, must mean to lose one’s salvation, or to be cast into Hell, then we must conclude that the implied meaning is that, at some point, we might fail to trust Christ and thus be found wanting before God.

However, that is not what the Scripture declares to be the case. Perhaps the most famous passage of Scripture is John 3:16, which declares the wonderful and lovely message of salvation that is available to everyone.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (*John 3:16*)

However, everyone seems to stop there as well, and absolutely go no further in the passage. The problem is, is that the imperative of believing the gospel is lost if one stops at the 16th verse. If we continue on, we find that verse 17 is very much like verse 16. But, verse 18 contains a very strong warning to those who refuse to believe:

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not

is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (*John 3:17-18*)

Verse 18 tells us two very important things:

- Those who have believed in Christ for their salvation are not condemned.
- Those who have not believed, ***are already condemned.***

You see; we do not have to do anything to be sent to hell. If we just live out our lives and ignore God, or play the religious game and never actually come to Christ for our salvation, we are already condemned and our destiny is set – we will go to Hell. In short we are, in the vernacular of the sign, in foreclosure already. Spiritually, our foreclosure happened a long time ago and we never noticed. If it is possible to put it this way (and I'm not certain it is) what we need to do is get out of spiritual "foreclosure."

But, this does raise another question as to the viability of the message of the sign. What is meant by the term "bank with Jesus?" Whatever they meant by the use of the phrase, is not all that clear to me. In fact, it really could be taken at least two ways for sure, and more if we think about it.

If we take it the most obvious meaning of the term, it means that one is to allow Christ to carry something in trust. Taken with the rest of the message, and the fact that a church put up the message, it definitely means something spiritual, but really is unclear as to what that spiritual thing is. We can assume that it is one's soul, but we really cannot be certain.

The second meaning is more akin to buying fire insurance. If we want to avoid foreclosure, let's "bank with Jesus" and that won't happen.

However, neither one of the above meanings even comes close to explaining what salvation is, and why it is imperative that one come to Christ for salvation. Nothing is spoken of, or

even implies, that faith has to be operative, and that one must repent. However, the Scripture declares that both are required before one can be saved.

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (*Hebrews 11:6*)

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. (*Luke 13:2-5*)

Thus, two vital elements for coming to Christ for salvation are not even hinting at in the sign. Instead, we are told that we should “bank with Jesus” if we are to avoid “spiritual foreclosure.” Moreover, we are not told what in the world the phrases “bank with Jesus” and “spiritual foreclosure” actually mean. Rather, we are left to draw our own conclusions.

When it comes to fighting this spiritual war, unfortunately the individuals at the church which posted this sign have little to no understanding about the critical need for getting the message correct. Without an accurate message about what the gospel is, and what one must do to be accepted in the sight of the LORD God, they will, without ever realizing it, condemn individuals to an eternity of unimaginable suffering in Hell.

How Trite Can We Be?



In this spiritual war we are all involved in, there is a need to insure that the message preached is perceived as being serious. One of the greatest detriments to that is the sad fact that many churches and “Christians” out there do not perceive this to be the case at all. All they are focused on is how they appeal to the larger population so as to gain members, without regard to how they get those members. Thus, there is a solid reason for the title. Look at the picture above and be honest with yourself about the seriousness of what they are stating. The question must be asked:

How trite can we be?

It is obvious that the whole attitude of the sign trivializes a very real issue.

If we were to do a comparison, it would not be difficult to compare the issue of salvation to a defect or malfunction on an automobile. Almost everyone understands that brake failure

on an automobile is a serious issue. If you had a friend that had a car with brakes which were in imminent danger of failing, you would be utterly serious and earnest in telling them to get the brakes on their automobile fixed, unless you just did not care about them. You certainly wouldn't make light of it or joke about it. Rather, you would tell them what is at stake, and would contend with them about getting it fixed.

In comparison, how serious is the issue of the destiny of each of us after we die? Certainly, it is far more serious than the condition of the brakes on an automobile. After all, you may experience brake failure and survive quite well. It is not so with the issue of salvation and eternity. Once we depart off this earth, we will find ourselves in eternity with no recourse as to where we are. Moreover, we will be there a very long time, even forever. I say that, as it does not quite impinge upon people that eternity is forever – that it is truly unending and does not cease to be.

Hence, where one will spend eternity is a very critical issue. It is express from Scripture that there are only two places man will go: heaven or hell. There are no other options. The Lord made that very plain when he spoke of a judgment to come:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: . . . (*Matthew 25:31-34*)

Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: . . . (*Matthew 25:41*)

It is inescapable that there are two, and only two very distinct divisions the Lord makes here. Clearly there is only a left hand and right hand, and everyone is placed into one of the two groups. Everyone on the right enters into heaven, and everyone on the left is cast into hell. Since there is such a clear division, it is reasonable to ask: What is the dividing line? The answer is very succinct:

The Gospel

Since this is the case, just how serious is the message of the Gospel? How serious is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ had to die for our sins, seeing that it was the only way that the judgment of God could be satisfied? And yet, how serious is the message put forth by Osage Assembly of God church on their sign?

Simply put: It isn't.

In fact, the message is nothing but trivial and trite, and cannot be seriously taken any other way. Isn't a church supposed to be about preaching, not only the gospel, but the seriousness of the gospel? Isn't a church supposed to bring the message that the price for our sin is extremely high? In fact, the Scripture is express that the wages of sin is death. For any of us to have salvation made available to us, it was essential for the Word to come in the flesh and die in our place. Outside of the salvation that is in Christ, there is no escape from the spiritual death and subsequent suffering in the lake of fire for all eternity.

Unfortunately, what is displayed by the above sign is at best total ignorance of the seriousness of the Gospel, and at worst a mockery of Christ's sacrifice on the cross on our behalf. Sadly, no one will tell this church and its leadership that they are mocking Christ and giving the Atheists justification for their mockery of Christianity. Is it any wonder that people reject the Gospel message in this society? After all,

all the above sign tells me is that I need (at best) fire insurance. However, I am assured that those who are responsible for this sign will hear about this again – from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Moreover, I am absolutely certain that He is not now pleased, and will express His displeasure when they stand before Him.

I leave you with a question that must be considered:

If you are unwilling or unable to deliver the message in a serious manner, do you honestly expect anyone to respond to that message in any serious manner?