

The Way of the Lord

38. Theological Hindrances to The LORDship of Jesus (Part 3)

We mentioned in the previous segment that God takes His Word *seriously*. He doesn't tolerate *any alterations or revisions* of it. That's why He commanded, "*DO NOT ADD to what I command you and DO NOT SUBTRACT from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you*" (Deuteronomy 4:2; see also Revelation 22:18,19). The *Holy Spirit* breathed God's Word into the Bible's writers. Therefore the Revisionist theologians over the centuries who *disregarded* or even *eliminated* key parts of the Bible have actually blasphemed the *Spirit of God*.

The admonition of the first martyr, Stephen, would condemn these men who *changed the intent* of God's Word and *fought against* the Spirit of God: "*You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always RESIST the Holy Spirit!*" (Acts 7:51). If the *full original truth* of the Bible had been honored and maintained by those religious leaders, Jesus followers would gratefully live as His beloved slaves, wholeheartedly serving Him as their LORD. And empowered by His Spirit, our Lord's KINGDOM would be more evident throughout the earth.

We're going to discuss some of the key biblical points which have been altered or even eliminated specifically by *Roman Catholic leaders* down through the ages. We'll also cite vital elements of biblical faith that the *Protestant Reformers* restored and those they failed to restore. *What you believe* about the Bible has been affected by the changes these leaders made. And you may find that some of your *own* faith practices are blaspheming the Holy Spirit. So please pay careful attention and test what we present by both the *Spirit and God's Word!*

As we describe the faith practices that Revisionists have altered or removed from the Bible, picture what they've done as an *eraser* wiping out key parts of *God's Word*.

Roman Catholic Revisions

- They established a Nicolaitan, ecclesiastical hierarchy of clergy. The Lord despises this system He calls "Nicolaitanism," which places men between Him and His followers. Nicolaitan means "to conquer the people." Hear what Lord Jesus says about it: "*Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. REPENT therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth*" (Revelation 2:15,16).
- Young, educated but inexperienced men were recruited to the Roman Catholic priesthood. This was just a repackaged version of the old LEVITICAL priesthood in which certain men stood between God and the people. Jesus became the perfect and final sacrifice for sin, and the Holy Spirit then dwelled within those who embraced the Father's Covenant in Christ. No longer was any human intermediary needed, because JESUS alone is our great High Priest (Hebrews 9:11-15).
- The threefold evil of the Nicolaitan clergy system is this:
 1. It places a human being between Jesus and His followers. (Matthew 20:25-27)
 2. It hinders His followers from trusting the Spirit of Christ within them. (Romans 8:9)
 3. It nullifies the priesthood of all believers. (1 Peter 2:5,9)

Now let's look at those Jesus *called out* of the world's ways to establish His Kingdom. Especially notice HIS purposes for them as they cooperate together:

"It was [Jesus] Who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and teachers, to PREPARE GOD'S PEOPLE for works of service, so that the BODY of Christ may be built up until we ALL reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and BECOME MATURE, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by EVERY WIND OF TEACHING and by the cunning and craftiness of MEN in their DECEITFUL SCHEMING [revisionists]. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the WHOLE BODY, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and BUILDS ITSELF UP in love, as EACH PART does its work" (Ephesians 4:11-16).

When these spiritual anointings which JESUS established were disregarded, people became *passive spectators*, dependent on an *intermediary priest* to approach God on their behalf. A clergy system that began over 1700 years ago has firmly entrenched itself, enabling people to be content with a weekly performance that calls for *no personal responsibility* on their part. Nearly 2000 years since the resurrection of Jesus, only a third of the world claims to be Christian. And sadly, only a tiny fraction of that number lives in the LORDship of Jesus serving HIS Kingdom purposes.

Let's look at what the Reformers did about the Roman Catholic corruption of God's Word and the faith practices of God's people.

The Protestant Reformation

- The Reformers maintained the Nicolaitan, ecclesiastical system of clergy.
- They failed to restore the biblical roles of apostle, prophet and evangelist.
- They ignored the biblical mandate for *older men of wisdom* to serve the followers of Jesus as shepherds and teachers.

Therefore, the Christian unity Jesus prayed for was *not* achieved. Division prevailed, and presently over 38,000 Protestant denominations and offshoots compete for congregational loyalty. The collective priesthood of ALL believers, EACH ONE doing their part in the Kingdom, was not restored. The educated elite, mostly young inexperienced men, still stood between God and the people in the pew.

Roman Catholic Revisions

- They established church authority and religious tradition as on par with and even above the authority of the Bible.
- Through misinterpreting biblical truth, they fulfilled Paul's prophecy and deceived many into following manmade doctrines: *"Even from your own number men will arise and DISTORT THE TRUTH in order to draw away disciples after them"* (Acts 20:30).
- Essential biblical truth about salvation was eliminated:

sola scriptura — the Bible is sole and final authority;

sola fide — by faith alone in Jesus are people justified in God's sight;

sola gratia — by grace alone are people reconciled with our Father through Jesus.

The biblical truth of salvation by FAITH alone and by GRACE alone were replaced with

- keeping the seven sacraments,
- attending Mass,
- submitting to the Pope through the advocacy of a priest,
- observing holy days of obligation,
- doing good works to earn salvation.

The Protestant Reformation

The majority of the Reformers held unswervingly that salvation was by *the Scriptures alone*, by *faith alone*, and by *grace alone* (Ephesians 2:8,9). But the Reformers were mixed when it came to church authority and religious tradition, compared to the authority of the *Bible alone* in the life of *each believer*. Most *claimed* the Bible was authoritative. But in reality they relied on church authority and religious tradition to enforce compliance to their various man-made creeds. They believed that *religious leaders alone* had the privilege to establish these on behalf of all believers.

But from a biblical standpoint, the *authority of the Bible* is recognized when an individual, family or fellowship family *STUDIES* the Bible and *APPLIES* it for themselves as the Holy Spirit directs. This is the authority Jesus gave ALL His followers when He promised this: *“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that IF TWO OF YOU ON EARTH AGREE about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where TWO OR THREE COME TOGETHER IN MY NAME, there am I with them”* (Matthew 18:18-20).

Applying God’s commands to your life through His indwelling Spirit is “doctrine” as the first followers of Jesus understood it. Each time you apply God’s Word to a given situation, you’re reflecting your determination to keep God’s commands. That’s why Paul could define “doctrine” as a WAY OF LIFE, putting sound instruction into practice:

- *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or SEEN IN ME — PUT IT INTO PRACTICE. And the God of peace will be with you”* (Philippians 4:9; see also Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 4:12).

- *“Watch your life AND doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”* (1 Timothy 4:16).

It’s on the the basis of HOW THEY LIVE that biblical leaders are chosen and appraised: *“Remember the ones leading you, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of THEIR WAY OF LIFE and IMITATE THEIR FAITH”* (Hebrews 13:7). Your “doctrine” —what you LIVE by— is reflected in *YOUR way of life*, a way of life that’s pleasing to our Lord and which others can imitate as righteous. “Creed,” on the other hand, is a formal set of beliefs that a person can *mentally agree with* but NOT have their way of life impacted at all.

Over the centuries, *revisionists* who were far removed from the everyday life of the people established creeds for them to obey. Through this method of *control*, church authority and religious tradition *superceded* the Bible as sole authority in the life of the individual Christian. Roman Catholicism exercised both *church AND political authority* to enforce obedience to their creeds and rules. Countless thousands suffered martyrdom at

the hands of a system determined to stay in power using Inquisitions and pogroms. Protestant history is also stained with the innocent blood of those whose consciences wouldn't let them submit to manmade creeds.

In our next segment we'll discuss other Scriptural points that have been altered or eliminated by religious systems. But as we conclude this segment, please consider seriously how important are the biblical roles of *apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers*. And scrutinize your own faith practices. Are you more dedicated to a creed or traditions that *others* established for you? Or, do you take God's Word seriously, applying it to your own way of life and trusting the Spirit of Christ to guide you both individually and collectively? Purpose with your household to *keep* the way of our Lord, and discard *any* beliefs or practices that blaspheme His Spirit.

For Further Study

- *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 11. A Priesthood Change: From Levitical To Melchizedek's
- *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 3. Hellenist Christianity in the US Today
- Book: *Pastoring By Elders*
- Hebraic Article: *I Hate Nicolaitanism*
- Hebraic Article: *God's Clergy-less Kingdom*

Each is a free download on our website: <restorationministries.org>