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*"She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because he will save his people **from their sins.**" -The Gospel Of Matthew 1:21*

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What Is The Gospel Message?

There are many “gospel” messages being circulated today. I want to tell you the TRUE gospel message. In some circles one would believe that if we simply say “I accept Jesus into my heart,” we are saved. This is “not the gospel.” They do not teach the whole gospel. And, it is critical to know the difference because many people who believe they are saved are not. They have been given a false gospel and are still on their way to hell.

When presenting the “gospel” message some leave out the cross and resurrection completely. They don’t tell us we are sinners and we need a Savior. They don’t tell us we will either spend eternity in Heaven or hell and our destiny depends on what we believe about Jesus. They don’t tell us that now is the time to make that decision and after we die it will be too late. The gospel is sometimes presented as something we do, like going forward in church, or having some kind of emotional experience, so we can find peace, happiness, wealth, and good health. The emphasis is not on the fact of how we are all dreadful sinners and in desperate need of a Savior. There is no talk of repentance which

is clearly taught in the scripture by Jesus Himself. And, they hardly ever tell us there is a cost to following Christ.

The True Gospel And The False

Christians are generally speaking, categorized into two groups as follows:

- (1) "Roman Catholics" and "Protestants" - depending on birth.
- (2) "Episcopal" (conformist) and "Free church" (non-conformist) - depending on church-pattern.
- (3) "Born again Christians" and "Nominal Christians" - depending on an "experience";
- (4) "Evangelicals" and "Liberals" - depending on doctrine.
- (5) "Charismatics" and "Non-charismatics" - depending on "speaking in tongues".
- (6) "Full-time Christian workers" and "Secular workers" - depending on profession.

There could be other such categorizations too. But none of these categorizations deal with the root of the problem that our Lord came to solve.

Many know that "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor.15:3). But many do not know that the Bible says that Christ also died "that we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him" (2 Cor.5:15). A more Scriptural way of categorizing Christians therefore would be as follows: "Those who live for themselves" and "Those who live for Christ"; or "Those who seek their own" and "Those who seek the things of Christ" or "Those who seek earthly things first" and "Those who seek the kingdom of God first"; or "Those who love money" and "Those who love God". (Jesus said it was impossible to love both -Lk.16:13). But I have never heard of such a categorization being used. This categorization deals with the Christian's inner life and private walk with God, whereas the methods mentioned earlier deal with the external details of his life. Yet it is in this latter way that heaven categorizes Christians. And if that be the case, then this is the only categorization that matters! In this method, others cannot categorize us. We have to categorize ourselves -

for no one but we ourselves know our inner motivations and desires. Even our wives may not be aware what we are living for. Our Lord did not come primarily to give people a doctrine, or a church-pattern or to make them speak in tongues or even to give them an experience!

He came to "save us from sin". He came to lay the axe to the root of the tree. And the root of sin is : Being centered in ourselves, seeking our own and doing our own will. If we do not permit the Lord to axe and uproot this "root" from our lives, we will be Christians only superficially. Satan may however deceive us into imagining that we belong to a higher class than other Christians, because of our doctrine or our experience or our church-pattern! Satan doesn't care even if we have the right doctrine, experience and church-pattern, so long as we continue to "live for ourselves" (This, by the way, is just another phrase for "living in sin"!!). Christendom today is filled with Christians who seek their own and live for themselves, who are yet convinced that God views them as superior to other Christians, merely because of doctrinal differences or church-pattern

or "experiences". This shows what a great work Satan has succeeded in doing in Christendom.

In John 6:38, our Lord said that He came from heaven to earth: (1) To deny His human will (that He had acquired, when He came to earth as a Man), and (2) To do the will of His Father, as a Man. Thereby He became our example. Throughout Jesus' earthly life -- during all His 33½; years - He denied his own will and did His Father's will. And He told His disciples clearly that those who wanted to be His disciples would have to go the same way. He came to hit at the root of sin in our lives - "doing our own will" - and to deliver us from that.

In the realm of science, for thousands of years, man made the mistake of imagining that the earth was the center of the universe. It looked like that to human eyes - because the sun, moon and stars did indeed appear to be revolving around the earth once every 24 hours. It took the courage of a man like Copernicus to question this popular notion, just about 500 years ago, and to show that it was utterly false and that the earth was not

even the center of the solar system, leave alone the universe. The earth, he showed was created to be centered in the sun. As long as man had the wrong center, his scientific calculations and deductions were wrong - because his center was wrong. But once man discovered the right center, then these calculations and deductions turned out right.

It is the same with us when we remain "self-centered" instead of being "God-centered". Our understanding of the Bible and of God's perfect will (our calculations and deductions) will then be wrong. But just as men were convinced for over 5000 years that they were right (as we saw above), we too may imagine that we are right! But actually, we will be 100% wrong. This is what we see even among many "good Christians" today. They have so many different interpretations of the same Bible - and yet each one is convinced that his interpretation alone is right and everyone else's is wrong. The others, they will say are "deceived". Why is this so? Because they've got their center wrong. Man was created to be centered in God and not in himself. And when Christians have got their center wrong, their "gospel" will be wrong too. Basically, there

are only two gospels being preached today - one man-centered and the other God-centered.

The man-centered gospel promises man that God will give him everything he needs to make his life on earth comfortable and will also give him a seat in heaven at the end of his life. Man is told that Jesus will forgive all his sins, heal all his diseases, bless and prosper him materially, solve all his earthly problems, etc., etc. Self still remains at the center of such a man's life, and God revolves around him - as his servant - to answer his every prayer and to give him whatever he wants!! All that he has to do is "believe" and "claim every material blessing in Jesus' Name"!! This is a false gospel, because no mention is made of "repentance". Repentance is what John the Baptist, Jesus, Paul, Peter and all the apostles preached first of all. And repentance, unfortunately, is what is not preached today, even last of all!!

The God-centered gospel, on the other hand, calls upon man to repent. It explains that "repentance" means: Turning FROM Self as the center of one's life, from doing one's

own will, from walking along one's self-chosen way, from loving money, and from loving the world and the things in the world (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life), etc., and Turning TO God, loving Him with one's whole heart, making Him the Centre of one's life and doing His will henceforth etc., Faith in Christ's death on the cross can forgive a man his sins only when he has repented. Then he can receive the power of the Holy Spirit empower him to deny himself daily so that he can live a God-centered life. This is the gospel that Jesus and the apostles preached.

The false gospel makes the gate wide and the way broad (easy to walk along, because one does not have to deny one's Self or stop living for one's own interests or stop seeking one's own gain). Millions attend meetings where such a false "gospel" is preached. And many enter through this gate and walk along this way, imagining that it leads to life. But it actually leads to destruction. The evangelists of this gospel however gloat in, and report about the large numbers of people who "raised their hands and made decisions for Christ" in their meetings!! But it is all a deception. Although some are indeed

genuinely converted in such meetings, because of their sincerity, many such "converts" end up becoming "twofold children of hell" (Matt.23:15) - deceived about their true state.

The true gospel however, makes the gate small and the way narrow - not smaller or narrower than Jesus Himself made it, as some "super-spiritual" cultists do, but just the same size as Jesus made it. Few there be, that find this way to life. There is not much for the evangelists of this gospel to report about, and the statistics are not impressive. But this gospel leads people to the Lord Jesus and to heaven. "Be careful how you listen. Whoever obeys what he has heard, to him more light and understanding will be given. But whoever does not obey what he has heard, even what light and understanding he thinks he has will be taken away from him." (Paraphrase of Luke 8:18).

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.

The Gospel Message

In this article, I want to explain what it means to be "born again" - or to be "saved".

Repentance is the first step to this experience. But in order to repent (turn from sin) you must first know what sin is. There is a lot of false understanding of repentance among Christians today, because there is a lot of false understanding of sin.

The standards in Christianity have come down greatly in these past few decades. The "gospel" being preached today by most preachers is a highly diluted version of the truth. People are being told only to believe in Jesus. But believing in Jesus alone will not save anyone, if they do not repent.

Being born again is the foundation of the Christian life. If you live a good life, without laying this foundation, then your Christianity will be just like all the other religions in the world - that also teach people to live a good life. We must certainly live a good life.

But that is the superstructure of Christianity - not its foundation. The foundation is being born again. We must all begin there.

Jesus used the expression "born again" in John 3:3, when speaking to Nicodemus who was a religious leader and a God-fearing man who lived uprightly. Yet Jesus told him, "Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). So we see that to enter God's kingdom you need to have a spiritual birth, even if you are a very good man! Jesus then told him that He (Jesus) would be lifted up on a cross to die and that those who believed in Him would receive eternal life (John 3:14,16).

Jesus went on to tell him that men loved darkness more than light, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19). But those who are honest would come into the light and be saved (John 3:21). To be born again, you must come into the light. That means being honest with God and confessing your sins to Him. Obviously, you cannot remember all the sins that you have committed. But you must acknowledge that you are a sinner and tell God whatever sins you remember.

Sin is a very big thing and you can see only a very small part of it in your life, at first. That is something like your living in a large country of which you have seen only a very small part. But as you turn from the sins that you know, you will gradually see more and more of this "country of sin" in your own life. As you walk in the light, you will see more of your sin - and you can then cleanse yourself more and more from it. So you must walk in honesty before God all the time.

To use another illustration: You are living in a house that has many dirty rooms. You want the Lord Jesus to come and live in your house. But He cannot live in dirty rooms. So He helps you to clean up each room - one by one. Little by little, the whole house is cleaned up. That is how we grow in holiness in the Christian life.

The apostle Paul once said that everywhere he went, he preached the same message to everyone: Repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:20). These are the two requirements to lay a good foundation in your life and to be born again. God has joined repentance and faith together. But most Christian preachers have

separated them. Repentance has been left out from most of today's gospel-preaching. Only faith is being preached by most preachers.

But if you have only faith, you cannot be born again. That is like saying that a woman cannot have a child, all by herself, no matter how hard she tries. A man also cannot have a child all by himself. A man and a woman have to come together for a child can be born. Even so, it is when repentance and faith come together that a spiritual child is born - that the new birth can take place in your spirit. This spiritual birth is just as real as physical birth - and it also takes place in a moment. It is not gradual.

There may be months of preparation for the new birth - just as there are months of preparation for physical birth. But the new birth itself (just like physical birth) takes place in a moment. Some Christians do not know the date of their new birth. I do not know the date of my own new birth. But that is just like not knowing the date of one's physical birth. That is not a serious matter - if one is alive!! In the same way, the important thing is to know for certain that you are alive in Christ today.

Are we being narrow-minded when we say that Jesus is the only way to God? Let me answer that with an illustration: Someone who has never seen my father (or even a picture of my father), cannot know what my father looks like. In the same way, we who have never seen God cannot know anything about Him or the way to Him. Jesus Christ however, came from God. And so He alone can show us the way to God." He said "I am the way. No one can come to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

When we think about Jesus' claim to be the ONLY WAY to God the Father, we have to say that either what He said was true or He was a liar and a deceiver. Who would dare to say that He was a liar and a deceiver? It is not enough to say that Jesus was just a good man or a prophet. No. He is God Himself - and not just a good man. He couldn't possibly be a good man if He were a liar or a deceiver! So we conclude that Jesus was indeed God in human form.

All truth is narrow-minded. In mathematics, $2 + 2$ is always 4. We cannot be broadminded and accept 3 or 5 also as possible answers. We cannot even accept 3.9999.

If we accept such variations of the truth, our mathematical calculations will go wrong. In the same way, we know that the earth revolves around the sun. If we decide to be "broadminded" and accept some theory that says that the sun also revolves around the earth, our astronomical calculations will go wrong. Likewise, in chemistry, H₂O is water. We cannot be broadminded and say that H₂O is also salt!! So we see that truth is absolute in every area and very narrow-minded. It is so, even in the matter of God. Broadmindedness can bring serious errors in mathematics, in astronomy and in chemistry - and also in knowing the truth about God.

The Bible teaches that all human beings are sinners - and Jesus died for sinners. So, if you come to Jesus as a "Christian" , He will not forgive your sins, because He did not die for Christians! He died for sinners. The only person who can be forgiven is the one who comes to Jesus and says "Lord, I am a sinner" . You cannot come to Jesus as a member of any religion and be forgiven, because He died for sinners. If you come to Him as a sinner, then your sins can be forgiven immediately.

It's easy for all of us to know that we are sinners - because God has given us all a conscience. Children have a very sensitive conscience, that makes them aware of wrong very quickly. But as they grow up, that conscience can become hard and insensitive. When a 3-year old child tells a lie, his face looks guilty because his conscience is guilty. But 15 years later, he can tell a lie with a straight face, because he killed his conscience by repeatedly ignoring its voice. The soles of a baby's foot are so soft that it can feel even the stroking of a feather. But the soles of the feet of adults are so hard that they don't feel even the poke of a pin until it is pressed in hard. This is what happens to their conscience too, as they grow up.

Conscience is a voice that God has placed within us, that tells us that we are moral beings. It gives us an elementary understanding of right and wrong. And so it is a wonderful gift of God. Jesus called it "the eye of the heart" (Lk.11:34). If we don't preserve this "eye" with care, we will become spiritually blind one day. Ignoring the

pricks of conscience can be as dangerous as ignoring the particles of dust that enter your eye - one day you will become totally blind, spiritually.

When babies are born, none of them have any religion. They are all the same. Two years later, they are still the same - selfish and quarrelsome. But as time goes on, their parents indoctrinate them into different religions - and that is how they end up in different religions. In more than 90% of cases, a person's religion is what his parents chose for him.

But God doesn't look at us as people of different religions. He sees us all as sinners. Jesus came from heaven to earth to die for the sins of all humanity. He didn't come for those who consider themselves good enough to enter God's presence, but for those who acknowledge that they are sinners and unfit to enter God's presence. Your conscience tells you that you are a sinner. So why should it be difficult to come to Jesus and say, "Lord, I am a sinner, I have done many wrong things in my life"?

A question that some may ask is, "Can't a good God overlook our sins and forgive us, just like a father would forgive?" If a son broke (or lost) something valuable, and was sorry for it and apologised to his father, his father would forgive him. But these matters are not moral issues. If all our sins were just like these matters, then God would forgive us immediately. But sin is not like these matters. Sin is a crime.

If a man were a judge in a court and his own son was standing in front of him, accused of some crime, can he tell his son, "Son, I love you. I forgive you. I won't punish you"? Any earthly judge with the slightest sense of justice, would never do such a thing. That sense of justice that we all have is a small part of the perfect justice of Almighty God, in whose likeness we have been made. So when we have done something seriously wrong, God as a judge, has to say to us, "I love you very much but you have committed a crime - and so I have to punish you." In that court, however much the son may be sorry for his crime, his father still has to punish him, as a judge. Let us suppose that the boy had robbed a bank. The father fines him the full penalty of the law - say, one million rupees.

Since the boy does not have the money to pay the fine, he has to go to jail! The father then steps down from the judge's chair, takes off his judge's robe and comes down. He takes out his personal check-book and writes a check for one million rupees (his entire life's savings) and gives it to his son to pay the fine. Can his son accuse him now of not loving him? No! At the same time, no-one can accuse him of not being a just judge either, because he gave his son the full punishment that the law demanded. That is exactly what God did for us too. As a Judge He declared that we must all die for our sins. Then He came down as a Man and took that punishment Himself.

The Bible teaches us that even though God is One, He exists in Three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If God were just One Person, He could not possibly have vacated His throne in heaven and come down to earth as a man in the person of Jesus. Who would run the universe then? But because God exists as Three Persons, the Son could come to earth and die for our sins before the Father in heaven Who was the Judge. Some Christians baptize people in the name of "Jesus only" saying that there is only One

Person in the Godhead - Jesus. This is a serious error. 1 John 2:22 says that anyone who denies the Father and the Son has the spirit of the antichrist. Because he then denies that God the Son came in human form as Jesus Christ, and denied his own human will and did the Father's will and then took the punishment for our sins, before God the Father (1 Jn.4:2,3).

Jesus was fully God and fully man when He came to earth. When He died on the cross, He took the punishment for the sins of all humanity. The punishment for our sin is to be separated from God for eternity. And when Jesus hung on the cross, He was separated from His Father in heaven. Such separation is the most terrible suffering that any human being can ever suffer.

Hell is the only God-forsaken place in the universe. God is not there. And so in hell, all the evil in the devil manifests itself fully. That evil is what makes things so miserable for all who go to hell. Jesus experienced that punishment when He hung on the cross. He hung on the cross for 6 hours. But in the last 3 hours He was forsaken by God. The sun

became dark and the earth shook. His connection with His Father in heaven was cut off. The Father is the head of Christ (1 Cor.11:3) - and when Christ was forsaken, it was like having His head wrenched off. We cannot understand fully what an agony that was for Him.

If Jesus were merely a created being, He could not possibly have taken the punishment for the billions of human beings who have lived since Adam! For one man cannot be hanged in place of one billion murderers! But Jesus could take that punishment because He is the Infinite God.

Further, because He is infinite, He could also take an eternal punishment within three hours.

If Jesus Christ were not God, and God the Father had punished Him for our sin, that would have been a great injustice. God cannot punish one person for the crime of another, even if the person is willing to take the punishment. Your friend cannot take your punishment and be hanged in your place. That would be unjust. So if Jesus were

merely a created being, and He was punished for our sins, that would have been the greatest injustice.

So it is clear that no created being could possibly have taken the punishment for our sins. God alone could take that punishment, because He is the Judge of the universe. He has the right to punish us - and He has the right to take our punishment Himself. And that is what He did, when He came to earth in the Person of Jesus Christ. The foundation of the Christian faith lies in two great truths: First, that Christ died for the sins of humanity. Secondly, that He rose from the dead after three days.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, there would have been no proof that He was God. His rising from the dead was proof that all that He had said was true. No religious leader has ever claimed that he would die for the sins of the world. And no religious leader has ever risen from the dead. These two facts alone make Jesus Christ unique.

All religions may teach us to do good to others and to live in peace. But the Christian faith has an unique foundation: Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead. If these

two truths are removed from Christianity, then Christianity becomes just like any other religion. These two truths are what make Christianity unique.

We were all created by God to live for Him. But we have all lived for ourselves. So, when we come to God, we must come as repentant thieves who have stolen for many years, what belonged to God. We must come to Him with thankfulness for Christ dying for us, and believing that He rose from the dead and is alive today. We could not possibly pray to Jesus if He were not alive today - for you cannot pray to a dead person. But because Jesus rose from the dead, we can converse with Him.

After Christ rose from the dead, He ascended and returned to heaven. Then the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead came down to earth. The Holy Spirit is a real Person like Jesus Himself. He has come to earth to fill our lives with His presence. If we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He can make us holy. When the Holy Spirit fills you, you will be enabled to live a life of victory over sin. No-one could live like that before the Holy Spirit came to indwell man - on the day of Pentecost. Before that, people could

only improve their external lives. Their inner lives remained defeated by sin and unchanged. When the Holy Spirit fills you, God Himself lives inside you and He can enable you to live a godly life inwardly too.

The wonderful message of the gospel is that your heart can become totally clean when God forgives you and then Christ can live in you through His Spirit making your body the house of God.

I was speaking to a Christian once who was smoking cigarettes. I asked him if he would ever smoke a cigarette inside a church building? He said he would never do that because a church building was the house of God. I told him that it was his body that was the house of God and not some church-building. You would not commit adultery inside a church-building, would you? You would not watch internet pornography inside a church either. Your body is the house of God, when Christ lives within. So be careful what you do with the members of your body. Habits like smoking, drinking, taking harmful drugs

and allowing impure thoughts to enter your mind will gradually destroy your body and your mind.

The Christian life is like a race. When we turn our back to sin and are born again, we come to the starting line of this race. Then begins a marathon race - until the end of our life. We run and run and run. And thus we get closer and closer to the finishing line each day. But we must never stop running.

Or to use another illustration: When we are born again, we lay the foundation for our house. After that we slowly build the superstructure - and this consists of many floors.

This is the best life you can ever live, because you gradually eliminate everything bad from your life and become more and more like God as each year goes by.

So what must you do to be born again?

First of all, acknowledge that you are a sinner. Don't compare yourself with others and find any comfort in imagining that you are better than them. Sin is like a deadly poison.

Whether you drink one drop or a hundred drops of poison, you still die. So, if you want to make a good start in your Christian life, acknowledge that you are no better than the worst sinner in the world. Then decide to turn from all known sin in your life.

Then believe in Christ. That means to commit yourself to Christ - and not just to believe something about Him in your mind. You can believe in someone without committing yourself to him. A bride is asked at her wedding, "Are you willing to commit yourself to this man?" Supposing she replied saying, "I believe he is a very good man. But I am not sure whether I want to commit my whole life and future to him". Then she cannot be married to him, because she does not have faith in him. When a woman gets married, her whole life's direction changes. She changes her last name to the man's last name. She leaves her parents' home and goes to live with her husband. She may not know where he will live, but she trusts her entire future to him. She has faith in him. That is a picture of what it means to have faith in Christ.

The word "Christian" (to put it reverently) means "Mrs. Christ"! My wife could take my name only after she married me. In the same way, you can take Christ's name and call yourself a "Christian" only if you are married to Him. If some lady took my name without being married to me and called herself "Mrs.Zac Poonen" , that would be a lie. In the same way, anyone who calls himself a Christian, without being married to Christ is also telling a lie.

A marriage is forever and not just for a few days. In the same way, being a Christian also is a lifetime commitment. Total commitment to Christ, does not mean that you have become perfect. When a woman gets married, she does not promise that she will never make a mistake in her life. She will make many mistakes, but her husband will forgive her. But she promises that she is going to live with her husband forever. That is a picture of our union with Christ.

The next step you must take is water-baptism. Getting baptized is something like getting a marriage certificate. You cannot get married by just getting a marriage certificate.

Neither can you become a Christian by getting baptized. It is only after you are married that you can get a marriage certificate. Even so, it is only after you have given yourself to Christ that you can take baptism. In baptism, you are testifying that you have finished with your old life and have made Jesus Christ Lord of your life.

Good husbands and wives talk a lot to each other. So you too must talk to Jesus and listen to Him as He talks to you through the Bible, every day.

A good wife will never do anything that makes her husband unhappy. She will want to do everything in fellowship with him. A true Christian also will not do anything that displeases Christ - like watching a movie that Jesus would not watch. He would not do anything that he cannot do along with Jesus Christ

Can you be certain that you are born again? Yes. Romans 8:16 says that when you are born again, the Holy Spirit of God will bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God.

This is a wonderful life - because we are living with the best Friend anyone can ever have. We will never be lonely, because Jesus will be with us always and everywhere. We can share our problems with Him and ask Him to help us solve them. It is a life full of joy and one that is freed from anxiety and fear - because Jesus holds our future in His hands.

If you want to be born again, say these words to the Lord in sincerity from your heart, right now:

Lord Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God. I am a sinner who deserves hell. Thank You for loving me and dying for my sins on the cross. I believe You rose from the dead and are living today. I want to turn from my sinful life right now. Please forgive me all my sins and give me a hatred for sin. I forgive everyone who has harmed me in any way. Come into my life Lord Jesus, and be the Lord of my life from today onwards. Make me a child of God right now."

God's Word says, "As many as received Christ, to them He gave the right to become the children of God" (John 1:12). The Lord Jesus says, I will never reject anyone who comes to Me" (John 6:37). "

So you can be certain that He has accepted you.

Then you can thank Him saying, "Thank you Lord Jesus, for forgiving me and receiving me. Please fill me with your Holy Spirit and give me power to live for You. I want to please You alone from today onwards."

You should now read God's Word every day and ask the Lord to fill you with His Holy Spirit daily. You also need to fellowship with other born-again Christians. Only thus will you grow in the Christian life and have the power to continue following the Lord. So ask the Lord to direct you to a good church.

May the Lord bless you richly.

Counterfeit Revival

Jesus and the apostles repeatedly warned that the last days would be characterized by widespread deception and a multitude of false prophets (Matt.24:3-5,11,24; 1 Tim.4:1) - and we have seen plenty of them in the last few decades.

Why are millions of Christians deceived by these false prophets and these counterfeit "revivals"? And why are so many preachers falling prey to immorality and greed?

Here are what I see to be some of the main causes:

1. Most Christians today are not aware of what the New Testament teaches, because they have not studied it carefully; and so they follow the teachings of their leaders and not the teachings of the New Testament.
2. Miracles (supernatural gifts) have become more important to them than their character (a supernatural life).

3. Material wealth has become more important to them than spiritual wealth.
4. They are unable to distinguish between soulish frenzy or psychological manipulation, and the genuine moving of the Holy Spirit; the cause again is ignorance of the New Testament.
5. They are unable to distinguish between psychosomatic healing (healing that comes by right attitudes of the mind), and supernatural healing in Jesus' Name.
6. Emotional excitement and strange physical manifestations have become more important to them than the inward joy of the Lord.
7. For the leaders, their ministry to people has become more important than their inner walk with God.
8. The approval of men has become more important to these leaders than the approval of God.

9. The number of people attending the meetings has become more important to these leaders than whether those people are totally committed to Christ.

10. Building their personal kingdoms and their financial empires has become more important to these leaders than building a local church and making themselves servants in that local church (Jeremiah 6:13).

All this is the VERY OPPOSITE of what Jesus taught. The opposite of Christ is called the "anti-Christ" in the New Testament. If Christians do not see this clearly, then when the Antichrist turns up on the world's stage, with his false signs and wonders (2 Thess.2:3-10), they too will blindly accept him. To be led by the Spirit of Christ is to have the very opposite spirit to that mentioned in the points above.

Here is a paraphrase of Jesus' words in Matthew 7:13-27 (read in the context of Matthew Chapters 5 to 7):

"Both the gate and the way to ETERNAL LIFE are very narrow - as I have just described (Matt. 5 to 7). But false prophets will come along and tell you that the gate and way are not narrow but easy and broad. Beware of them. You will be able to identify them easily by observing the fruit of their character: Do they live a life free from anger, free from lusting after women, free from the love of money and free from anxiously seeking after material wealth (as worldly people seek)? Do they preach against these things as I have done here? (Matt.5:21-32 and 6:24-34). These false prophets may exercise many supernatural gifts and do miracles and actually heal people in My Name, but I will still send them all to hell in the final day, because they did not know Me (as THE HOLY ONE) and they did not give up sin in their private lives (Matt.7:21-23). So if you want to build a church on a rock that will never shake or fall in time or eternity, be careful to do all that I have just spoken to you (Matt. 5 to 7) and teach your people to do all that I have commanded you too. Then I will be with you always and My authority will always back you (Matt.28:20, 18). But if you only hear what I say and don't do it, then what you

build may look like a large and impressive church to men, but it will surely crumble and fall one day (Matt.7:25)."

How then shall we build an unshakeable church in these last days?

1. We must live the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5 to 7) and preach it constantly.
2. We must live in the new-covenant and not in the old-covenant. For this, we must know the difference between the two covenants clearly (2 Cor.3:6). We must also preach the new covenant.

When preachers fall into serious sin today, they justify themselves by (and find their comfort in) the examples of Old Testament saints who also fell into sin. And then they re-commence their ministry after a period of silence. They quote the examples of David who committed adultery, and Elijah who got depressed, and they say "But God still used them"! But they won't quote the example of Paul who lived in victory and purity until the end of his life.

What these preachers (and most Christians) have not seen is that the Old Testament saints are NOT our examples today. We have been given much more in this age of grace - and "to whom more is given, more is required" (Luke 12:48). Jesus is the Mediator of a NEW covenant and HE is our Example and the Author of our faith today - not David or Elijah. The distinction between the Old Testament saints (listed in Hebrews 11) and Jesus, is made very clear in Hebrews 12:1-4. But very few live in the reality of this. Very few have seen that "God has provided something BETTER for us" in the new covenant (Heb.11:40).

Any of us can fall in the way that many preachers have fallen, if we are not watchful and alert - for Satan is a cunning enemy. Our safety lies in obeying New Testament teaching exactly and in submitting to godly leadership. (And by "godly" leadership, I mean those who do not have even one of the wrong values listed in the ten points I mentioned earlier). If we learn from the mistakes of others, we can avoid making the same mistakes ourselves.

So let us keep our faces in the dust before the Lord at all times - for it is there that we will receive Divine revelation, as John did (Rev.1:17). If we humble ourselves, we will receive grace to be overcomers (1 Pet.5:5). And when the Holy Spirit shows us the truth in God's Word and the truth about ourselves, let us be totally honest and "love the truth, so as to be saved" from all sin. That way we will be protected by God Himself from all deception (2 Thess. 2:10,11). Amen.

About the Author:



Bro. Zac Poonen was formerly an Indian Naval Officer who has been serving the Lord in India for the past 40 years as a Bible-teacher and elder having responsibility for a number of churches. Like the other elders in CFC, Zac Poonen also supports himself and his family through "tent-making" and does not receive any salary for his services. More information: cfcindia.com.

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