

DETECTING GENUINE RELIGIOUS TEACHING

By Danny Tunnell

Christians today are exposed to a myriad of religious teaching via television, computer, and the printed page.

How can we sift through all that we see and hear, and then determine what is good or bad? While we all have to decide for ourselves, perhaps some guidelines will help.

John tells us not to trust every spirit (teacher). "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1 John 4:1.) How can we test or try the spirits?

(1) Does hearing this teaching cause me to love God more? Has it magnified Him in my eyes? Has it caused Him to appear more wonderful than before? Jesus said the first and great commandment is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind. (Matthew 22:36-38.)

(2) How does this teaching affect my attitude toward Jesus Christ? "God has made that same Jesus, whom you have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36.) There

is salvation in no one else; no other name under heaven is given unto men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12.)

(3) How does this teaching affect my attitude toward the Bible? If the teaching is contrary to the Word of God it should be rejected. No matter how emotionally it is presented, unless we can find chapter and verse authority from the Scriptures, it is not genuine. "If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:20.)

(4) How does this teaching affect me personally? Does it humble me in the eyes of God? Or does it give me a feeling of self-satisfaction? Nothing that comes from God causes us to feel proud or self-congratulatory. Nothing from God causes us to be complacent or to feel superior. It should help to bring us to our knees in repentance. Jesus said, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and he that humbles himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11.) Peter tells us that God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble. (1 Peter 5:5.)

(5) How does the teaching affect my relationship and attitude toward other Christians? Does it cause me to develop a spirit of fault-finding? Make me feel superior? Any teaching that fails to deepen our love for fellow Christians should be suspect. John said, "Let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God." (1 John 4:7.)

(6) How does the teaching affect my attitude toward the world? John tells us the world system of evil includes: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. (1 John 2:16.) How does the teaching affect my attitude toward the pursuit of sin and godless pleasures and entertainment?

(7) How does the teaching affect my attitude toward sin? Does it help me to live a godly life? A righteous life? Or does it make me more worldly and lustful? Does it weaken or strengthen my hatred of sin? Does it make holiness more attractive and sin more intolerable?

— Miami, OK

A LESSON YOUNG MARRIED COUPLES NEED TO LEARN

By Wayne Robbins

Over the course of my ministry I have counseled many couples with marriage problems and I have conducted many, many funerals. As I reflect back on these occasions, I wish I could get one point about funerals across to troubled couples. In all the terminal illness cases that I have been associated with, the only thing in that person's mind has been the spiritual. That is the point that I would like to drive home to young couples today.

It seems that married couples today involve themselves in so many material and social things. They are working so hard in trying to maintain a certain lifestyle that they do not have time for the basics that make for a strong marriage and family. They are chasing elusive rainbows of happiness - things that are temporal in nature. Thus, happiness is always in the future.

Worldly pursuits burden today's homes with so many difficulties and problems!

If husbands and wives could only see that the most important things in this life are spiritual and not material! When the spiritual is lived and maintained, it brings happiness and peace now. But it provides so much more - eternal blessings.

The desire for material things and social status never brings real joy. In fact, pursuing temporal things robs us of the time needed to build a strong spiritual life. Jesus made this quite clear when He said, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart

will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21.) Paul also wrote that one who pursues material things will pierce themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Timothy 6:10.)

I believe I can prove the point rather easily. Just imagine that tomorrow you received word that you had only three months to live. What would be your most prized possession at that moment? Would it be your car, home, or bank account?

Or would it be your soul?

Solomon spent much of his life indulging in material and social things. His conclusion though, at the end, was that mankind should "fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all." (Ecclesiastes 12:13.)

Understanding life's true purpose will go a long way in making marriages stronger.

— Arkansas City, KS

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

JUST PASSING THROUGH

By Milton Smith

Albert Brumley wrote a hymn some years ago entitled, This World Is Not My Home. This beloved and popular hymn begins with the words, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru."

Truer words were never written!

In reference to those faithful saints of old, the Hebrew writer tells us, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Hebrews 11:13.)

We are all strangers in this world! Both Paul and Peter described our physical bodies as nothing more than earthly "tabernacles"; in other words, temporary, earthly dwelling places for our eternal spirits.

Because earth is filled with such unpleasant things like sorrow, sickness, pain, aging, and death, this world is not suited as our eternal home. Even earthly joys and pleasures are transient. This world is unable to provide us with that eternal bliss that the human spirit longs for. Job did not desire to always live in this world. (Job 7:16.) David spoke of someday "flying away." (Psalms 55:6.) Paul desired to depart this world to be with Christ. (Philippians 1:23.) Peter looked to the day when he would "cast off" his earthly tabernacle. (2 Peter 1:14.)

Jesus, Himself, has gone to prepare an eternal abode for the faithful. (John 14:2-3.) What a wonderful thought to know that this eternal home will be free of those things that bring so much suffering to us in this life. Sorrow, pain, darkness, and death will be left outside the gates of our new home. Matter of fact, nothing will be permitted to enter into our future abode that might corrupt it. (Revelation 21:27.) Peter describes our heavenly home as "an inheritance incorruptible, and unfiled, that fades not away." (1 Peter 1:4.)

It is in this future home that the redeemed of all ages will live and eternal life will be possessed. The next time this world might get you a little down, just remember the beloved words of that old hymn:

"This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru."

— Tulsa, OK

"SOMEBODY OUGHT TO DO IT!"

By Hershel Dyer

There is the legend of an ancient king who became weary of the complaints of his subjects. As always, there were many things to be done but each one seemed to feel that someone else should do them. Then, as now, they were always ready to say, "Let George do it!"

To cure his people of this bad tendency, the king had a huge stone placed in the midst of a main thoroughfare leading into the city. All of the travelers passed by it, grumbling and complaining that someone should move the stone. After a time, the king called his subjects together and showed them a bag of gold which had been placed under the stone for anyone willing to have moved it.

In the perpetuation of a church or congregation in any place there are many things to be done. We can nearly always see some things which are needful but are being neglected. It is easy to complain about these and continue to say, "Somebody ought to do it!"

The building in which we meet must be opened and later closed by someone. There are floors to be mopped and carpets to be vacuumed. There are chairs to be set up in the classrooms, the baptistry to be filled and kept ready for use. There are classes to be taught, songs to be led, communion trays to be prepared, etc., etc. There are also the sick and shut-ins that need our loving ministries, the visitors to our services to be called upon, funerals that require singers and grieving families who need our sympathetic attention, etc., etc. The foregoing along with other numerous good works are among the kindly series which require dedicated volunteers. There are generally too few for the many tasks. We can often see and even admit that "someone ought to do it."

When the Lord said to Isaiah, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?", Isaiah immediately responded, "Here and I! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8.)

The church can use a lot more like Isaiah!

— Tulsa, OK

A WAY OF ESCAPE

By Dalton Key

Have you ever been tempted?

If you are human, you have. In fact, life in the flesh is a continuing series of trials and temptations. It is our response to life's temptations which determines our happiness here as well as our eternal home beyond the grave.

None of us lives above temptation. The Bible is clear: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." (James 1:14.)

Even our Lord was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Hebrews 4:15.) At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus was "tempted for forty days by the devil." (Luke 4:2.) He did not yield to Satan's enticements, yet when the devil ceased the temptations, "he departed from Him" not forever, but "until an opportune time." (Luke 4:13.)

Seeing God's own dear Son face Satan's manifold temptations should prepare us to face the clear and certain fact that we, too, will be tempted. And these temptations will continue so long as this life of flesh continues.

But this is not the end of the story. There is more. There is good news. Observe: "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith." (1 John 5:4.) "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4.) Christ taught us to pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." (Matthew 6:13.)

Never forget that God has promised, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." (James 4:7.) As was the case with Christ, he will not leave forever, but he will leave! A firm and unwavering, "NO!" goes a long way in putting the devil to flight.

Temptation is real, Satan appears relentless, but as God's children we have all the help we need. "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13.)

Editorial . . .

QUESTIONS CONCERNING MUSIC IN WORSHIP

By Dalton Key

Why do we consider instrumental music in Christian worship unacceptable? Is it wrong because it is mechanical? or is it wrong because it is not authorized by New Testament scripture?

Upon what basis is worshipping God by singing acceptable? Is it right because it does not involve mechanical instruments? or is it right because it is that form of music which heaven has authorized?

What constitutes singing as commanded in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16? Is singing defined as anything musically performed by the person of the worshipper so long as mechanical instruments are not involved? Should singing be understood as including any or all sounds that may be produced by the human voice box, just so long as no mechanical instruments of music are employed?

Joseph Henry Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, defines the greek word which we have translated "singing" in these passages as "the lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful soul." Webster defines "lyric" as "the words of a song, as distinguished from the music."

What, then, is authorized by the New Testament with respect to music in Christian worship? The answer appears obvious. Singing, the musical uttering or chanting or words, is authorized. Through the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" we make melody in our hearts as we teach and admonish one another.

Is it possible to make sounds with the body (such as clapping) and sounds with the voice (such as those imitating the sounds of mechanical instruments or drums) which are not singing? Are these sounds approved in worship, as worship, any more than musical instruments? If so, in what way? and by what New Testament authority?

The reason the organ, in worship, is wrong and singing is right, is not merely because the sound of one is produced mechanically and the sound of the other is not. The organ is wrong in worship because it does not fulfill the scriptural command to sing, and the command to sing is the sum total of New Testament authority concerning music in worship for the New Testament church.

The question is not: "Is it mechanically or humanly/vocally produced." The question should be: "Is it singing or is it not?" Again, the fact is clear: the only musical form authorized in Christian worship by New Testament teaching is singing.

And by the way: what biblical argument allows clapping, grunting, whistling, and myriad examples of instrument-like, vocally produced sound effects, while at the same time prohibiting mechanical instruments in our worship? It would appear these all stand together - or they fall together.



WHAT ABOUT FAITH ONLY?

By Bobby Key

Sometime ago I ran across a religious tract with these words staring up at me: "Faith, plus nothing and minus nothing, is the way of salvation. Man has eternal life the minute he believes." Millions of people both believe and teach that one is saved the moment he believes.

The Bible teaches no such doctrine! Please observe the following scriptures:

Faith Without Works is Dead. "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20.)

Faith Alone is Dead. "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead." (James 2:17.)

Faith Without Love Will Not Profit. "And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and

though have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Corinthians 13:2.)

Faith Without Works is Like the Body Without the Spirit. "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." (James 2:26.)

Faith Only Can Not Justify. "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." (James 2:24.)

Faith Only Can Not Save the Demons. "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe - and tremble!" (James 2:19.)

Faith Only Could Not Save the Cowardly Rulers of Jesus' Day. "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because

of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." (John 12:42,43.)

Faith Must Work to Avail. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love." (Galatians 5:6.)

"He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36, ASV.)

Faith and obedience go together. My friend, one does not have eternal life the minute he believes! Faith must move us to obey the Lord.

Obedient faith is the faith that saves.

— Miami, OK

"FAITH" AND "THE FAITH"

By Joe Slater

Salvation is by grace, as opposed to being something we merit or earn. Yet not everyone will be saved. Why? Because not everyone chooses to access the grace of God. Faith is the divinely appointed way for us to have access to God's grace. (Romans 5:2.) Contrary to popular opinion, biblical "faith" is not simply believing something, but extends to trusting obedience (see examples in Hebrews 11).

Why would anyone trust Jesus Christ? And what is involved in obedience to Him? These two questions have the same answer: "The Faith." No, I am not talking in circles here! "The faith" is not the same as "faith." Our own personal trust in the Lord is faith in the subjective sense - that is, it is characteristic of our inward being. "The faith," on the other hand, is objective in nature. Scripture uses the expression "the faith" to refer to the gospel of Christ. For example, Jude exhorted his readers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."

(Jude 3.) In other words, "proclaim and defend the gospel." In Acts 6:7, "a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." To put it another way, they obeyed the gospel!

We are compelled to trust in Jesus because of the evidence presented in "the faith" (the gospel). "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17.) Since the word of God is "the faith," we could accurately say that "faith" (subjective faith, our personal belief and trust) comes by means of "the faith" (the gospel).

Since "faith" comes from "the faith," then those who are "saved by faith" must be saved in the way God has put forth in the gospel. Those who are "walking by faith" must be living the way the gospel teaches. Otherwise they are not being "saved by faith" nor are they "walking by faith" at all. Rather, they are simply charting their own course according to what makes them feel good at the moment.

Walking by feelings is not the same as walking by faith.

— Justin, TX

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as He walked." (1 John 2:3-6.)

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