

February, 2004

Pause Ponder Profit

The Fellowship Question

by Tom Roberts

What difference does it make if some teach that Jesus failed in His earthly ministry to establish the kingdom? We can still fellowship those who teach premillennialism.

What difference does it make if some teach that Jesus was never fully human? We can still fellowship those who teach Jesus was not really a man.

What difference does it make if some teach that Jesus (the Word) gave up his immortality for all time when he came to earth and will be forever just a man, never regaining His former heavenly glory? We can still fellowship those who teach that Jesus gave up his deity.

What difference does it make if some teach that two people can live in an adulterous relationship? We can still fellowship those who teach error that Jesus condemned.

What difference does it make if some live in an adulterous relationship? We can still fellowship those in adultery.

What difference does it make if some teach that Genesis 1-2 cannot be literal and that the creation took eons (billions) of years? We can still fellowship those who deny the biblical creation account.

What difference does it make if some teach that the serpent in Genesis 3 was not a literal "beast of the field" but only a pagan myth? We can still fellowship those who are willing to make figures out of biblical fact. (Can Jonah be safe from figurative interpretation?)

What difference does it make if some . . . (ad infinitum).

Indeed, what difference does it make?

The difference is that the Bible condemns both moral and doctrinal error and demands that we do not have fellowship with it! 2 John 9-11 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship those who "go beyond the doctrine of Christ," bidding them Godspeed and partaking of their error? *"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds".*

Romans 13:13-14 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship moral sin? *"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts".*

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Romans 16:17 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship doctrinal sin? *"Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them"*.

Mark 9:1 is still in my Bible. How, then, can anyone fellowship those who deny that Christ is King over His kingdom? Either Jesus told the truth or He told a lie: which is it? *"And He said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God come with power'."*

John 1:14 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship those who deny that Jesus was a human? *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."*

Matthew 1:23 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship those who deny that Jesus is deity? *"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God with us'."*

Genesis 1, 2, 3 is still in my Bible. Is it in yours? How, then, can anyone fellowship those who deny the literal creation account? *"And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day" (1:5). "And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (1:31). "Now the serpent was more subtile than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made . . ." (3:1).*

Romans 7:1-3 (along with Mt. 5 and Mt. 19) is

anyone fellowship adultery or those who teach error about adultery? *"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man"*.

In every case cited above, as well as with every other moral or doctrinal sin, the Bible teaches God's people to have no fellowship with sin. *"And have no fellowship with works of darkness, but rather expose them"* (Eph. 5:11). Christians, as children of a holy God are to be holy (1 Peter 1:15). Fellowship with this holy God requires that we walk in light and not darkness (1 John 1:5-7).

The current effort to promote unity-in-diversity with moral and doctrinal sins requires a toleration for error and those who teach it. Thus, error is allowed to be taught, is embraced and practiced if well known and respected brethren are willing to teach and defend positions that are erroneous. Many in the churches of Christ are willing to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that this is not happening! It is beyond dispute that some are calling for a toleration of "contradictory teachings on important moral and doctrinal questions." This is unity-in-diversity. This is fellowship with sin.

What is exceedingly strange about the fellowship question in our generation is that many can fellowship all kinds of error (those mentioned, as well as a host of others) and those who teach them, but will not fellowship those who oppose these sin!

The sound teacher who opposes error is called "watch dog," "brotherhood dictator," "meddler," "busy body," "jingoist," and more, and is ostracized and marked. The sound teacher is demonized and rejected, whispered about and against, all the while, those who accept and promote error are accepted into full fellowship.

What difference does it make?

One is made to wonder how such a thing came to pass. How is it possible that, among churches of Christ, "contradictory teachings on important moral and doctrinal questions" are tolerated?

First, it happens because we are becoming exceedingly ignorant of God's word. As Hosea said a long time ago, "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (4:6). Too many do not recognize error when it is taught and assume that preachers are teaching the truth when they are not. Often, much of the truth is left un-preached and error is no longer condemned. We have become the "feel good church" who does not want to hear error exposed. Brethren are sitting in the pews of churches that have long since quit preaching "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The church has lost its militancy and is satisfied with "smooth things" (Isa. 30:10).

Secondly, many just do not care — they have become indifferent and complacent, unwilling to have their complacency disturbed. All too often, we hear, "What difference does it make" about six days of creation or billions of years. What difference does it make if some teach that Jesus gave up His immortality for all time? What difference does it make if brethren gamble, drink alcohol socially, engage in immodest dress or watch "adult" movies? People are not scandalized by sin or made to weep over error. Elders and preachers alike are willing to "go along and get along" to keep the peace when their spirits should

Some are insulted to have this bulletin come into their homes because it addresses things that many are ignoring. Has your preacher really addressed these issues? Are you aware of the popularity of accepting "contradictory teachings on important moral and doctrinal questions?" Do you really understand the import of such a thing? Do you see where that will lead?

Were you surprised to hear that the Oak Hills church of Christ in San Antonio, TX recently changed its name to a "community church" and began to use instrumental music? Why do you think that happened? Could it happen where you worship? It started at Oak Hills when Max Lucado decided that he could accept "contradictory teachings on important moral and doctrinal questions." But there are preachers in churches in Tampa, Florida and around the country that accept the same premise! Have you asked your preacher where he stands on that? Do you care? What will it take to awaken our sleeping and indifferent brethren? Will it be when someone removes "church of Christ" from the building? Will it be when a piano is rolled into the auditorium? How far are you willing to have your fellowship stretched?

Gospel Meeting

Speaker: Dudley Ross Spears

Sunday, March 7th

9:45 A.M. & 6:00 P.M.

Mon. — Fri., March 8th — 12th

7:00 P.M.

“Ask For The Old Paths”

by Harold Hancock

Through the years, many have drifted far from the teachings of the New testament. They teach a different plan of salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38), wear names invented by men (Acts 11:26), worship as they wish and not as God has instructed (Acts 20:7; Eph. 5:19), and have swapped the old standard of right and wrong for a “new morality.” The word of the Lord, however, does not change. It is “the faith which was once delivered!” (Jude 3).

Good advice for today is the words God spoke to Judah in the days of Jeremiah: “stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). Search the scriptures to see if the things that you have been taught and have done are in the New Testament (Acts 17:11). Accept nothing less than the truth!

A perverted gospel cannot save (Galatians 1:6-9), and those who teach and practice for doctrine the commandments of men worship vainly (Matthew 15:8-9). Such changes may seem good, but they are not (Proverbs 14:12). Only by walking in the “old paths” found in the New Testament will you find “rest for your souls.”

The way of a fool is right in his
own eyes, But he who heeds
counsel is wise.

Proverbs 12:15



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Sunday
Radio 1490 AM 9:00 A.M.
Bible Study 9:45 A.M.
Worship 10:45 A.M.
Worship 6:00 P.M.
Wednesday
Bible Study 7:00 P.M.

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