

PERILOUS EXCHANGES

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie...” (Romans 1:25). Since in the beginning when Satan exchanged the truth of God “you will die” into the lie “you surely will not die” (Gen. 3:4), the truth through the centuries has been exchanged for lies, not only by those of the world that have been under the power and influence of Satan, but perilously exchanged by the religious system that has never been exclusively divorced from the worldly structure. It is in this context we are examining some of the exchanges made to the peril of Christianity.

The first and most perilous exchange, little known by most church members, and the average Christian today is unaware of the staggering consequences of this is the exchange of the truth of the one God for the lie of a God existing as three persons, consisting of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. How did this exchange come about? This trinity of three persons is never mentioned in the Bible and God is never said to be a “triune” God. The exchange took place about 318 AD (over three hundred years after the last words of Scripture were written). There arose a controversy among leading “bishops” of the church that was destined to shake not only the professing church but the entire Roman Empire and resulted in a conflict so fierce and intense, persecutions from both sides gripped the entire civilized world. This came to the attention of Emperor Constantine, said to be the first “Christian” emperor, who decided to put an end to the controversy by convening a council of Bishops to settle the question. The aim of Constantine to present a creed that would foster unity of the faith did not work out as planned. The council developed into a victory for the Trinitarians who made the exchange of the one God into three persons. St Augustine, a century later, developed the teaching of the council into the doctrine of God the Father, God the son, and God the Holy Spirit, that remains with us unto this day.

God declares over and over “Hear O Israel the Lord our God is one Lord” and Jesus quotes this statement in Mark 12:29. Trinitarians say that when the Bible speaks of God as one, it is speaking of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being one God. But the Apostle Paul states: “But there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and we exist for Him, and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things and we exist through Him” (I Cor. 8:5). The term one God means Supreme Sovereign and head of all. Paul further says, “the head of Christ is God” (I Cor. 11:3). In John 17:3 Jesus refers to God as “the only true God.” He tells his Apostles, “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28).

The next exchanges we will note do not have a definite date marking their beginning as we have in the above exchange but have gradually developed throughout the years. These exchanges basically have to do with the Bible’s revelation of the last things or the final events in human history: the second appearing of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the day of judgment, the kingdom of God and the future of the earth (that is if the earth has a future). These themes are, for the most part, simply an afterthought for mainstream Christians in the world today. This subject is fertile ground for religious suppositions and wild-eyed prophesy fundamentalist whose gaze is fixed on

contemporary events in the Middle East that portend the end of the world as we know it.

The day of judgement has been exchanged for the day of one’s death. After all, it is believed, the day of death is the day one either goes to Heaven or Hell. This means the day of judgment has been exchanged from the end of the age to the end of life. This contradicts the Apostle Paul’s statement in Acts 17:31: “God has *fixed a day* in which He will judge the world in righteousness through the man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead.” The Scriptural teaching on death has been exchanged from *sleep* in death that continues until the day when Christ descends, and with a shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God awakens all, both saved and lost, to a disembodied soul that is as conscious as if it were alive. (So death is not really death as Satan said, “you shall not surely die”). The Scriptures never speaks of a soul without a body, neither do they refer to an “immortal soul.” The soul has no independent existence.

Note these Scriptures: Dan. 12:2: “And many of those who *sleep* in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Matt. 27:52: “and some tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints, who had *fallen asleep* were raised.” Luke 8:52,53: “Now they were weeping and lamenting for her; but he said, ‘stop weeping, for she has not died, but is *asleep*’ and they began laughing at him, knowing that she had died.” John 11:11-14: “Our friend Lazarus has *fallen asleep*; but I go that I may awaken him out of *sleep*.” Acts 7:60 (Stoning of Steven) “And having said this, he fell *asleep*.” I Cor. 15: ver. 6: “After that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have *fallen asleep*.” Ver. 18: “Then those also who have *fallen asleep* in Christ have perished.” Ver. 20: “But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are *asleep*.” Ver. 51: “Behold I show you a mystery, we shall not all *sleep*, but we shall be changed.” I Thess. 4:13: “We do not want you to be uniformed about those who are *asleep*.” Ver. 15: “We who are alive and remain at the coming of the Lord shall not precede those who have *fallen asleep*.” II Peter 3:4: “Since the Fathers *fell asleep* all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” When these scriptures are rejected, and it is insisted the soul continues to live wherever they are destined for eternity, is the basis for the confusion and perplexity in the religious world concerning life in eternity. Christianity has exchanged the present age and the age to come with Heaven and Hell. Salvation has been exchanged from a *coming* to a *going*: The *coming* of the kingdom and the judgment at the end of the age to the *going* to heaven or hell at the end of each individual life, so the day of judgment has been replaced with the day of one’s death.

Further, resurrection of the body has been exchanged for the day of one’s death. The common belief that at death the Christians go directly to heaven and sinners go directly to hell, and the resurrection is ignored is based primarily on four passages in the New Testament: II Corinthians 5:8: “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” Philippians 1:23: “I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be

with Christ..." Luke 23:43: "I say unto you today, you will be with me in Paradise," and Luke 20:37, 38: "But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage of the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but the living; for all live to Him."

II Corinthians 5:8: Chapter five is connected with chapter four. In the original text there is no break between chapter 4 and chapter 5. What Paul says in chapter 5 must be seen in the light of the subject he is discussing in chapter 4 which is stated in verse 14: "Knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you." Paul had written to the same people in I Corinthians 15 concerning the resurrection at the appearing of Christ, the same language is used in II Cor. 5 that is used in I Cor. 15. Note I Cor. 15:54: "But when this perishable will have *put on* the imperishable, and this mortal will have *put on* the immortality, then will come about the saying that is written 'Death is swallowed up in victory'." II Cor. 5:2, 4: "For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, longing to be *clothed* with our dwelling from heaven...for indeed while we are in this tent we groan being burdened not because we do not want to be *unclothed* but to be *clothed*, in order that the mortal may be swallowed up by life." The word *put on* in I Corinthians 15 is the same word as *clothed* in II Corinthians 5. Further: I Cor. 15:54: "then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is *swallowed up* in victory'." II Corinthians 5:4: "We do not want to be *unclothed* but *clothed* in order that what is mortal may be *swallowed up* in life." I Corinthians shows that "being absent from the body and present with the Lord" takes place at the resurrection and not at death. In death the person is asleep and unaware of the passing of time.

Philippians 1:23: "But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ." The key to understanding this passage is the phrase "depart and be with Christ." The way we should interpret Scripture is to compare Scripture with Scripture. The Scriptures are their own best interpreters. Paul will not write one thing to one church and contradict it by writing something else to another church. In I Thessalonians 4:13-17 Paul says he does "not want you to be uninformed about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope." He does not comfort them and tell them not to grieve because the souls of loved ones are enjoying conscious bliss with the Lord in heaven. Rather he explains that "those who have fallen asleep" will be resurrected from the dead at the resurrection when the Lord returns.

Luke 23:43 "...I say unto you today you shall be with me in Paradise." It seems the confusion of this passage is caused by the translators. The Greek text has basically no punctuation and it is a personal choice where the English translators put commas, paragraphs etc. Replacing the location of the comma in this passage gives it clarification. The passage can legitimately be translated: "Truly I say unto you today, you shall be with me in Paradise," or "today (in your dying hour) I say unto you..." There are passages of Scripture when for added emphasis the speaker says, "I say to you *today*" Deut. 30:18; "I declare to you *today*, you shall perish." Jer. 42:21: "So, I have told you *today*, but you have not obeyed the Lord your God." Acts 20:26: "Therefore I testify to you *this day* that I am innocent of the blood of all men." On that day, in his dying hour, Jesus gave the thief assurance that he would be with him in Paradise, but he didn't say when. Simply by replacing the comma the sentence

has an entirely different interpretation. This is no injustice to Scripture.

Luke 20:37, 38: To many this passage says that the patriarchs though dead are living because "He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living for all live to Him." Therefore all the dead are alive. On this scripture we quote Robert Hatch in his book *Possession and Persuasion*: "To conclude according to a popular interpretation of this text, that Jesus asserts the present existence of the patriarchs in the form of disembodied souls in the presence of God is to rip these words from their context, in which Jesus says that Moses' words reveal "the fact that the dead are raised," not that they are immortal souls in the presence of God. Throughout the narrative, Jesus is referring to 'the resurrection of the dead' to life in 'that age' the hope of salvation that his hearers, the Sadducees, denied."

The last exchange we will mention is the fact that the modern religious world has exchanged the Kingdom of God for the church. It has been said that America is not a Christian nation, but it is a nation of churches. The messages today of the modern religious system is for the most part, a message concerning the church. What we are saying here is by no means disparaging or denigrating the church. We are simply saying the message preached today is not the same message preached by Jesus and the Apostles. "Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt. 9:35). In fact Jesus says the reason he was sent was to preach the Kingdom: "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, because *for this purpose I have been sent*." (Luke 4:43). After his ascension the Apostles, and the early church continued preaching the same message Jesus preached: "the gospel of the kingdom of God" (Acts 8:12, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23,31). This is not the message being preached today. We hear much today about the church and the world, growing the church, church planters, church growth, marketing the church, mega churches, church membership, user friendly churches, the purpose driven church, and perhaps many other descriptions showing the relevance of the modern church. By comparison there is a famine of references to the kingdom of God, in fact most Christians have never heard a sermon on the Kingdom of God because the majority of preachers have never preached a sermon on the kingdom.

There is a popular interpretation that the church is the kingdom. However the Greek word for "church" and "Kingdom" show they are not the same thing. The word for church is *ekklesia*, a combination of the words "*ek*" (out) and "*klesis*" (a calling), meaning "called out). The word kingdom is *basileia* and means "reign" or "rule" (II Tim. 2:12). The church is the people of the kingdom, but not the kingdom itself. The kingdom is the rule of God, the church is an assembly of people.

The ultimate purpose, then, of the church is to bring people into the kingdom of God and under the reign of God which is manifested in the life and teachings of His son. When Jesus told Peter "upon this rock I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18) he went on to say, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (ver. 19). It seems building the church was not an end in itself but a means of his people inheriting the kingdom "prepared from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34). "for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Jesus "builds" the church, and the Father "gives" us the kingdom. The Kingdom has been exchanged for the church.