

Remembers: Chapter 5 The Apostasy of the Body of Christ: Back to Elements of the World

Paul's Gospel

- Every religion of earth employs ceremonies, and people can become passionately attached to their “sacred” rites.
- Worship in the Spirit is the “new and living way” spoken of in Hebrews 10:20.
- No one who still performs rituals understands the gospel Paul taught.
- Paul’s gospel did not exclude rituals because Paul hated them; rather, it excluded rituals because the gospel Jesus revealed to Paul excluded them.
- In spite of the absence of instructions for rituals in the New Testament, belief in ceremonial worship is embedded in the Christian psyche.
- Even Christians who see that no rituals are taught in the New Testament will not cease from them.
- Initiation into the body of Christ is spiritual; it is the baptism that Jesus gives.
- The first-century believers’ choice to add fleshly rituals to their faith opened the door to the influences of the world.
- This was the great apostasy of the body of Christ: the return to fleshly rituals from life in the Spirit.
- Before God sent His Son, Jews and Gentiles alike had always performed ceremonies, for ceremonial worship was the only kind of worship available to man before then.
- The difference between the worship of Jews and the worship of Gentiles was that God ordained the worship of the Jews, the ceremonial worship demanded in the law God gave to Moses.
- Even though the law was ordained by God, the law was still “in the flesh”, just like the worship of the Gentiles. Jesus did not fulfill the worship rituals of the Gentiles, for they were not commanded by God and were not holy, but he did fulfill the law of Moses.
- God’s requirement for men to obey Moses’ law died when Jesus did.
- Even though God gave the law, He was also the one who “blotted out” the law, and only He could have done so.
- It takes the same power to undo what God does as it took to do it in the first place, and only He has it.
- The law which God gave to Israel was “against us”, as Paul said to the Colossians, because it was holy and we were not.
- The revelation God gave to Paul was that Jesus had made the way for man to escape the prison of his sinful nature, which the holy law of Moses did not and could not do.
- Paul preached that the law of Moses had been superseded by Christ and was no longer in effect and that its rituals had become as vain for salvation as the rituals of Gentiles had always been.
- Moses’ law was robbed of all its glory by the surpassing glory of the Son of God, and its rituals were now nothing but “dead works”.
- Paul’s gospel sounded blasphemous to many Jewish believers, but Paul never said that Jews were at that time required to cease from the law.
- Paul taught that whoever was a Jew must continue to keep it unless God made keeping it impossible, which He did in AD 70, using the Roman military to destroy Jerusalem and its temple.
- Paul insisted that Gentiles were not required to keep the law, and for anyone to teach them that they must do so was wrong, for it dishonored the sacrifice of Christ.
- Paul would never have taught to Jews what he taught Gentile believers; at the same time, he was adamant that Jewish believers not tell the Gentiles that they were required by God to keep the law.
- The controversy as to whether or not Gentile believers had to keep the law was the single greatest issue among first-century believers.

- Circumcision was the gate through which men had to pass to become Jews.
- At the Jerusalem Council, the apostles and elders listened to both sides and concluded that Paul's doctrine was from God, even though it differed from their gospel to the Jews.
- Many Jewish believers did not accept the Council's conclusion.
- Paul's Gentile converts everywhere were persuaded to submit to the God-given law of Moses and forsake the God-given "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus".
- It was frustrating to Paul, to say the least, for him to see his beloved converts be taken in by Jewish teachers, and then, make themselves out to be teachers of the law.
- When such teachers began to win the confidence of Paul's converts in Corinth, Paul was reduced to pleading with them to trust him.
- In the end, Paul lost his battle for the hearts of the saints.
- Gentile believers forsook the gospel which Christ had revealed to Paul and returned to worship using dead, earthly materials. That was the apostasy of the body of Christ.
- To turn from the Spirit to worship in rituals is treachery against the Son of God.
- Every time a child of God performs a ceremony, he is denying the Lord who has bought him, for he is denying the sufficiency of Christ, all by himself, to save.

A New Kind of Covenant

- Jeremiah prophesied that God would one day establish with Israel a new covenant, unlike the one He gave them through Moses.
- In saying that He would no longer remember Israel's sins, God was saying is that because His Son would offer himself as an eternal sacrifice for sin, animal sacrifices would no longer be accepted.
- Jesus' sacrifice of himself put an end, forever, to the sacrifices which constantly brought sin to remembrance.
- The law of Christ is not a law written on paper with pen and ink, but is "written with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts."
- God pleaded with Israel to obey His moral commandments, but they did not, and so, He came to hate seeing them perform the ceremonies He had given to them in the law.
- Isaiah foretold of a time when God would reject Israel and make performing the ceremonies of Moses' law a sin so great that it would lead to damnation.
- When Christ fulfilled Moses' law, he took all the glory it and made it absolutely worthless for salvation.
- In God's eyes, after the sacrifice of His Son, as far as salvation is concerned, the law of Moses ceased to exist.
- Christ made the law of Moses impossible to keep as a means to salvation. That was the gospel that Jesus revealed to Paul for the Gentiles.
- Gentiles who turned to the law were turning to something that Christ came to put an end to.
- Those today who would keep the law of Moses are turning to something that has been long gone and means nothing to God.
- Paul taught that in this covenant, God demands a different kind of sacrifice, not the sacrifice of animals, but of one's self.
- When Paul's Gentile converts lost faith in spiritual worship and turned to the law's fleshly, ceremonial faith, Paul pleaded with them, but they would not listen, and Christianity was the eventual result.
- The tragic first-century apostasy of the body of Christ has not ended. It has so deceived the world that the vast majority of God's own people have joined themselves to it, "thinking to do God service."

The Mind of Christ and the Mind of Man

- There is more to life in Christ than receiving the Spirit; we must follow the Spirit after receiving it, or we would never come to know God.
- Without growing in Christ, even those with the Spirit will judge things as their natural, carnal minds perceive them.
- God's children are not aliens to God's kind of life.
- The entering in of God's word elevates God's children far above the plane of ordinary men, and for them to descend from that holy plane and begin to think again like ordinary humans is shameful.
- Without Christ, we all once had no choice but to live according our carnal minds.
- The Spirit of God alone guides men into truth, and without it, it is impossible for anyone to understand the things of God.
- Those with God's Spirit have a choice; we can live according to the mind of Christ we have been given or we can be "double-minded", vacillating between his right thoughts and our wrong ones.
- It is glorious to know that as hopeless as we are in ourselves to escape our carnal mind, we are "more than conquerors" of it when we follow the Spirit.
- With the mind of Christ, we are as far above carnal thoughts and ways as heaven is above earth.
- Following the Spirit is God's secret path to freedom from a darkened mind, a secret way reserved for those who put their trust in Him.
- Whenever our fleshly nature is not checked by the Spirit, it wields a mysterious power over the mind. Even the most brilliant of men cannot make righteous judgments if the Spirit is not leading them.
- Speaking of learned men without the Spirit who have only their natural minds to guide them, Paul said they are "always learning, and yet, never able to come to a knowledge of the truth."

The Carnal Mind concerning Ceremonies

- Through the centuries, a few believers have seen that Christ brought us life, not more ceremonies, but those folk were often ostracized, or cruelly punished, and sometimes even eliminated.
- After the Synthesis, Christian leaders had the political power to say whatever they wanted to say and then demand that their words be accepted as true.
- The manner of worship in this covenant is spiritual, not ceremonial.
- The priesthood in the New Testament is spiritual.
- In the Old Testament, instructions concerning ceremonies were very detailed because they were given by God as prophecies of His Son acted out instead of spoken.
- Failing to perform those prophetic rites exactly as God commanded distorted the picture of the Son which God was painting in the law, and so, that failure could result in severe penalties.
- No transgression of a ceremonial rule is recorded in New Testament books because no ceremonial rule exists in this covenant for believers to transgress.

The Physical Needs the Physical

- Christian theologians have sought to justify their ceremonies by arguing that people who are still in physical bodies need physical rituals.
- The life and worship of the body of Christ is entirely in the Spirit.
- The body of Christ was created when the Spirit was given to man in Acts 2.
- God did not send His Son to appeal to man's aboriginal instincts and primal appetites, but to expose those instincts and appetites as hopelessly incapable of pleasing God.
- Jesus did not suffer and die so that God would communicate with us through our flesh.
- What is real is what is eternal, and Paul said that eternal things are invisible.

An Addiction

- Jesus was not revolting against the law's rituals when he fulfilled them, and in proclaiming that Christ fulfilled them, Paul was not preaching revolt, but liberty.
- Man's obsession with ceremony is a grave problem.
- The ability to adapt rituals to please and attract people is an advantage to ceremonial worship, but those who worship with rituals in this covenant are akin to idolaters.
- In this covenant, people are not made idolatrous by performing ceremonies; they perform ceremonies because they are idolatrous.
- Except for the ceremonies given by God to Israel, every ceremony on earth has sprung from the carnal mind of man.
- A conscience purged by the blood of Christ has no desire for ceremonies and no fear of refusing them; only a conscience not purged by the blood of Christ still trusts in rituals.
- In Christ, believers are liberated from *all* ceremony, not just the Old Testament forms of it.

Early Addicts

- The addiction of Christians to ceremonies is evident even in their earliest writings.
- It is vain to worship God using earthly elements.'
- To someone led by the Spirit, symbols cannot possibly mean as much as hearing the word of God.
- It is contrary to the very nature of the New Testament that any earthly thing should be sanctified, except, of course, the bodies of Spirit-filled believers.
- Denial of the truth is fundamental to Christianity, and the most revered Christian ministers who are gifted with the ability to package errors with plausible language.

More Addicts

- The men who murdered Stephen were addicted to rituals.
- Human nature is hopelessly corrupt.
- The nature which God gives us in His Son needs no ritual, for in this covenant, physical substances play no part in believers' communion with God.
- Rituals have no part in Christ, for the flesh cannot help the Spirit.
- The nature of Christ already has communion with God, and his purpose for coming was to share that nature with us.
- We are not doomed to live in the fallen nature we inherited from Adam. The nature God gives us in Christ is holy; it is *His* nature.
- When God's nature is given to us, we are free of the need of external things in order to have communion with Him.
- If Jesus did not begin or mandate Christian rituals, then someone else must have. And if anyone other than Jesus began and mandated them, they are not of God.
- Believers must live and worship in the Spirit *alone* if they would serve God acceptably.
- Paganism and Judaism, decorated by Christian imagination, account for everything that is Christianity. None of it is of God.
- Fallen man is more attracted to symbolic rituals than to spiritual power and wisdom because "a natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God."
- When Christian scholars and theologians who have had no revelation from Jesus try to teach about the things of God, they are believed only by those who have no knowledge God.

Hidden Wisdom

- Men with a natural, carnal mind scoff at the notion of revelation because they have never experienced it, and without grace from God, they can react no other way.

- Jesus promised that when the Spirit came, it would reveal the truth to God's children.
- This world may dismiss the testimonies of those who have heard from God, but Jesus rejoiced that God hid His truths "from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes."
- The truth that God reveals to His children may sound like nonsense to carnally minded people, but it is the way of life to those whom He has chosen.
- Those who trust in God to guide them by His Spirit may be ridiculed as gullible by the worldly-wise, but the joke is on them.
- God always reveals His truth to those who are simple enough to believe in His Son, and only the heart touched by God can believe what He says.
- Revelation is the only way God's truth has ever been understood by anyone, and God has determined that only by revelation will the body of Christ be fed and grow.

I Know, but It's OK

- Christianity started with Constantine, not Christ, and worship "in spirit and truth" is not in the least subject to human regulation.
- Ceremonial worship is subject to human regulation.
- The Faith which Christ revealed to Paul had no outward forms or institutions.
- The gospel of Christ was not designed to change when it comes into contact with new elements of human life. It demands that humans change when they come into contact with the gospel.
- Early Christians sought to justify their adoption of Pagan practices by renaming those practices and claiming that God, through Christ, ordained it to be done.
- One cannot change the effect of poison by relabeling the bottle as "Milk".
- Early believers forsook the truth, turned to a religion of the flesh, and called their false religion after the name of the true Lord. But naming their religion *Christianity* did not make it true.
- Just as the flesh is contrary to the Spirit, so the Christian religion is contrary to Christ.
- To turn from worship in the Spirit, purchased by the blood of the Son of God, to worship with "weak and worthless elements of the world" is not innocuous; it is treachery against Christ.

I Know, and It Is *Not* OK

- Regardless of whether historians view the Church's adoption of Pagan and Jewish rites favorably or unfavorably, they all acknowledge that it happened.
- The religion of Christianity is a composite religion, made of elements from godless cultures and the Old Testament law, concealed beneath a patina of claims of divine authority.

The Reformation

- After Christianity became the cultural norm for the West, disagreements among Christians were not over the validity of Christianity itself, but on which parts of it were of God and which were not.
- Men of the Reformation called only for a *reformation* of the Church. They were called Protestants because they were protesting errors within the Church, not Church religion itself.
- The pity is that the Reformation was not "the Repudiation", for no part of Church religion is of God, and it should have been altogether rejected.
- To this day, both Catholics and Protestants will condemn anyone who grows in grace to understand Paul's gospel and puts it into practice.
- Protestantism was not a call for believers to return to worship only "in spirit and in truth". It was a protest against the excesses of the Roman Church, not against the apostasy that undergirded it.
- Protestantism liberated millions from some oppressive customs of the Roman Church, but it continued in the original sin which produced that Church: the rejection of Paul's gospel.

- The Reformation forwarded the most pernicious diseases of the Mother Church: faith in ceremony, worldly entanglements, and the desire to dominate.
- Protestants carried the Mother Church's spiritual DNA, and in many cases, they exhibited the same spirit of cruelty and injustice which their Mother Church possessed.
- Roman Churchmen were not the ones who conducted the infamous Salem witch trials; devout Protestants did that.

Not the Same Religion

- From the late-first century onward, even to this day, the religion of most believers has not been the Faith that was "once and for all" revealed to the saints.
- Believers today who have joined themselves to Christianity have no idea what they have made themselves part of.

Sincerity Does Not Make Worship Holy

- The value of worship lies not in how sincere the worshippers are but in whether or not the worship is in the Spirit.
- Sincere worship is worthless worship without the Spirit.
- In order to receive the Spirit, his Gentile converts had to forsake their ways of worship, not Christianize them.
- Sincerity does not make one's service to God acceptable.
- One's opinion about his own spiritual condition means nothing.
- Every soul who is truly willing to do the will of God will recognize the truth when they hear it.

The Name of the Curse

- New Testament worship is antithetical in every way to ceremonialism.
- Because of the sacrifice of Christ, none of the holy rites of Moses' law meant anything any longer to God.
- The very things God gave to Israel for their blessing, He made their curse.

Competition

- A poverty of spirit was the inevitable result of the first-century apostasy of believers; it opened the door open for ambitious, imaginative believers to shape their religion.
- An inescapable problem with having ceremonies is that they spawn competition.
- Wherever there is ceremony, there is strife.
- Jesus is the leader of the only acceptable worship of God, the only Baptizer, and the only minister of communion.
- After believers added ceremonies to their faith, their successors were soon competing to see whose ceremonies, ever increasingly complex and stylish, would be received by believers as orthodox.
- The true gospel was forgotten as the Apostates bickered over whose doctrine and ceremony was divine.
- The more cultured and connected a person was, the more influence he had in the development of the emerging Christian religion.

Wannabe Christianities

- A fitting title for the competing versions of the gospel which emerged in the second and third centuries is "wannabe Christianities", for they were all vying for the crown of "Orthodox Christianity".
- Anyone, saint or sinner, who refused to embrace the Synthesis was increasingly subject to condemnation and punishment.
- Christianity did not exist before Constantine.
- None of the Apostates' competing versions of the gospel began with Jesus and the apostles.

- The gospel of Christ had nothing to do with the gospels of the Christians.
- Since the time when Constantine founded Christianity, zealous believers, assuming that Christianity was founded by Christ, have striven to purge Christianity of its errors and restore it to its original purity.
- Christianity was never pure; it was false from its inception.
- “Christianity” is the name of the disease that weakens the heart and befogs the mind of every soul who believes in it.
- Christianity cannot be cleansed, but the truth of Christ can cleanse us from it.
- Christians consider closeness to an apostle to indicate doctrinal purity, but personal acquaintance with an apostle is no credential at all. The apostles were acquainted with many unfaithful believers.
- The men who in our time are revered as Church fathers were the false teachers predicted by Jesus and the apostles.
- The men revered by Christians as fathers of the Church are among those most guilty of obscuring and perverting the simple truth of Christ.
- One can no more improve upon the Faith of Christ than he can improve upon the God who gave it.
- Through the centuries, leaders of Christianity have often changed their gospel in order to satisfy men, but the gospel of Christ changes men in order to satisfy God.
- Faithful believers who lived in the second and third centuries were undoubtedly grieved by the spectacle of theological innovation and competition among their fellow believers.