

# THE ASSEMBLY MESSENGER

Proclaiming the Timeless Truths of the Church to a New Generation of Believers  
Volume 97-10

Dear Reader

Going back to newsletter 97-5 and Leslie Grant's chart, we see that many Christians meet -- not exactly on the ground of -- but *where* false doctrine is taught or practiced. The very ground of *denominationalism* and *clerisy* is false doctrine in itself, and a major doctrine of Scripture is that *association with sin defiles*. We will look at some of these doctrines before ending our study of brother Grant's chart. Note that agreement on every doctrine and practice is *not* our ground of gathering. But when the doctrine affects the fundamentals, the foundations, of Christianity, such as the Persons of the Trinity and their work, and the basis of our collective gathering as part of the Lord's Church, His chief interest today among believers, then general agreement is necessary.

## The Lord's Conception

A popular but very serious fundamental error is that the Lord Jesus was conceived like all the rest of us and as a result was a mere man, although a great one who showed us all how to live a self-less life. This is a denial of the virgin birth and of His conception as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit alone (Lk.1:34-35; Ps.40:6; Heb.10:5). He is the second Man from heaven (1 Cor.15:47). When this is not clear and definitely believed, it is a foundation of many more errors concerning Him. We cannot walk with those who believe such errors. We will go into more detail in our studies of the local assembly, which will begin shortly, the Lord willing.

## The Lord's Full and Perfect Manhood

Another error taught or allowed in some groups touches the Lord's perfect Manhood. Since we can't comprehend how He can be both God the eternal Son and true Man in one blessed Person, there is a tendency on the part of some to refuse to believe He was full man with a human body, soul and spirit (Jn.4:6; 11:33; 1 Tim.2:5; Heb.2:17; 1 Jn.4:2, etc.). In fact a *man* by definition is one who has a human body, soul and spirit (1 Thes.5:23). But He was a Man of a different order — the second Man out of heaven.

The opposite error over-emphasizes His Manhood. Many, even in evangelical circles, say He *could* have sinned, but resisted it and thus is an example for us. They use verses like Hebrews 2:18 by putting the connotation on "*tempti*" (as translated in many translations) of a *tendency to sin* -- "I'm *tempted* to hit him, but I don't want to go to jail." With us, the temptation often is there, but may be resisted because of the consequences. Not so with our Lord! The Greek word *peirazo* can equally mean *test* or *trial*, and certainly all our Lord saw of the sin around Him was a sore trial to His holy soul. Our Lord was strongly *put to the test*, even by Satan personally, and He fully passed the test and thus was found to be who He claimed to be -- God Himself. Just as pure gold passes the "acid test" *with no possibility of failure*, so there was no possibility of failure with our Lord, even though the test was very real. He was born *holy* (Lk.1:35) and was the spotless holy Man, completely *set apart* to God. Further, if *Jesus* could sin, then *God* could sin since He was and is God. What a blasphemous thought! Yet this false doctrine has been taught widely. We cannot have fellowship with those who bring such false doctrine (2 Jn.9-11).

The same goes for Hebrews 4:15. The Lord saw and felt everything around Him, yet sin couldn't touch Him. There wasn't the slightest trace of *wanting* to do wrong. Another little-understood verse is Hebrews 2:14. Mankind has an equal and *common sharing* of the fallen nature; the Lord *took a part in it*, but that part didn't include the fallen nature. The note on this verse in JND's translation is excellent. There are two distinct Greek words used (*koinoneo* and *metecho*). "The first, referring to children, is the common equal sharing of the nature. The second, referring to Christ, means He took a part in it and refers always to something outside myself, but which I take, or take a part in. The first word refers to a joint-participation in that which belongs

to me. The second ... word does not say how far the taking share went.” Be very careful, for some versions of the Bible are very poor in the translation of this verse, and in general, the English translations, without explanatory notes, do not make the distinctive meaning of the Greek words clear.

### **The Crucifixion**

Another set of very serious, fundamental errors which are popular today, even in evangelical circles, concern the Lord’s crucifixion. Nothing except wild imagination has Him fainting under the weight of the cross. The ones who proclaim this false doctrine take it from Simon being forced to carry the Lord’s cross (Mt.27:32; Mk.15:21; Lk.23:26; Jn.19:17), but their conclusion is simply wild unscriptural speculation. The Lord was about to endure a suffering in bearing our sins on the cross (1 Pet.2:24; Heb.9:26, 28) that was *infinite* compared to anything we can imagine -- an ocean-full compared to the child’s little bucket on the beach, between what He suffered for us, to satisfy a holy God, and anything we suffer or anything *He* suffered at the hands of evil men. And they think He couldn’t carry His cross because of physical inability! Many seem to delight in presenting a weak Christ. While He was the willing *Victim*, He also was the *Victor* (Jn.10:17-18).

Then, another common error promoted today is that the Lord died from heart failure due to the pain and exhaustion of the cross. Nonsense! After all was completed, after He had suffered unimaginably at the hands of a sin-hating God, bearing our sins, He gave a great shout -- *hardly possible for an exhausted person near death* -- and He simply *dismissed His spirit* (Greek: *aphiemi*, only used in Matthew 27:50 and John 19:30). No one could take His life, but as Man He could lay it down voluntarily at the proper time (Jn.10:17-18). From man’s viewpoint they murdered Him: that was their *intent*, and so they are charged by the apostles and others (Acts 3:15; 4:10; 8:52).

Perhaps the most terrible, most sinful error concerning the Lord’s work on the cross is that proclaimed by the Roman Catholic *mass*. Any other denomination involved in the same thing is equally guilty. They teach that every time the priest performs the mass, Christ is offered again! The Holy Spirit foresaw this evil teaching and made it plain that the death of Christ was *once for all*: it is *never* repeated (Rom.6:10; Heb.7:27; 9:12, 26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14). No Christian should be associated with such blasphemous error against the work of Christ.

### **Human Relationships**

Other terrible errors are seen in blasphemous statements of sinful religious men concerning the Lord’s relationship with Mary Magdalene, etc., but once we understand His absolute purity and perfection, and why He came to earth, these sinful remarks are unlikely to entrap an intelligent believer. But stay away from them!

### **In Gethsemane**

A terrible error is that the Lord had a struggle with Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane as to whether to save Himself or obey the Father’s will and go to the cross. Some teach that after hours of wavering He finally decided to obey the Father and go to the cross. Lucky us! These errors have become so common they are almost accepted by default, even in many evangelical circles, *yet it is false doctrine of the most severe type*. Such, even though Christians, do not bring the doctrine of Christ. Particularly young people need to be warned of the serious consequences of being involved in any Christian circle where such errors are taught or tolerated, or in having any fellowship with such false teachers (2 Jn.9-11). Also, there are many captivating books filling Christian bookstores that also contain these errors, and such books are often devoured by the unsuspecting. In fact, my experience is that such writings are even *promoted* by some who should know better! Sad!

### **Denial of the Deity of Jesus**

The Lord's deity is constantly under attack, from Him not being God at all -- just a good, even remarkable man -- to the Jehovah Witness error that He did such a good job He was given the place of a God. Misapplication of Proverbs 8 is commonly used in their arguments. His deity is plainly stated in John 1:1; Romans 9:5; Colossians 1:15-19; 1 Timothy 1:17 and Hebrews 1:8-9. The fact is that the Lord Jesus, Jehovah-Savior (the meaning of *Jesus*), is co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, absolutely God and perfect Man in one blessed Person.

### **Denial of His Eternal Sonship**

The Lord's eternal Sonship is denied by some. It is a basic error against the Person of the Christ. The Son was *given*, but a child was *born* (Isa.9:6). He eternally was God the Son. The Father was the Father before the incarnation (Jn.16:28). The Lord *as Man* also was the Son of God, but that is not when His Sonship began.

### **Denial of His Atoning Work**

Some -- the infidel -- deny the Lord's atoning work. That is not generally a problem with real Christians, so if someone states this terrible error, or if it were taught in some religious group, it certainly would tend to classify the person as a mere professor, and the group as not truly Christian at all.

### **Claiming the Lord Went into Hell Between Death and Resurrection**

Some teach that the Lord went into hell to preach to the spirits in prison during the time He was in the grave. They get it through a misapplication of Ephesians 4:8-10 where it is said He descended into the lower (not lowest) parts of the earth and led captivity captive, and from 1 Peter 3:18-20 where the Lord, by the Holy Spirit working in Noah, preached to the spirits who then were living people, but *now* are in prison. But the Scriptures are plain. The Lord's *body* was in the tomb, but He (His spirit and soul) was in *Paradise* and so was the believing thief (Lk.23:43). Now Acts 2:27, 31 indicates that the Lord's soul was in *hades* -- obviously not a bad "place," obviously not *hell*, since we have just seen His spirit and soul, apart from His body, were in *paradise* (2 Cor.12:2-4). Maybe if we better understood "hades" as a *condition*, not a location or place (see *Outlines for Christian Youth* by R.P. Daniel; chapter on hades, Believers Bookshelf) -- we wouldn't be as easily caught up by the wrong teaching as to where the Lord went after He died. Note that Isaiah 44:23 shows that "the lower parts" of the earth is the earth's surface in contrast to the heavens and the mountains.

### **Fundamental Errors Against the Holy Spirit -- the Charismatic Movement**

Fundamental errors are not limited to the person and work of the Christ. The whole Charismatic movement, with its claim to perform healings and to speak in tongues (strange, unknown "spiritual" languages) by the power of the Holy Spirit, is simply a *terrible, terrible slur* upon the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. *It is a masterpiece of spiritual counterfeiting and thus fundamental error.* Yet we tend to be very tolerant of such deep, deep sin! We need to stand strongly against it while truly loving the dear saints involved in it, but refusing to have any part in, or association with, their sin! John Nelson Darby in the late 1800's called the clergy-laity system the dispensational sin against the Holy Spirit, but the Charismatic Movement, with its various offshoots (the third-wave, the Vineyard movement, Power Evangelism, etc.) is certainly another dispensational sin against the Holy Spirit. Unlike the clergy-laity system which *merely* (I use the word in contrast) displaces the Holy Spirit as the Director of the gifts and of using whomsoever He wills in the Assembly, denying in practice the priesthood of all believers for carrying on worship and service to God, the Charismatic Movement attempts to make the Holy Spirit the *cause* of many false doctrines and false practices which can only be attributed to the *unholy* spirit. Be alerted!

One reason why we have become accustomed to the various offshoots of the Charismatic Movement is their effective use of the mass media, from radio and television, to the written word. The majority of TV religious broadcasting and of books written -- often with outstanding visual and writing skills -- is dominated by

charismatics. Much of the contemporary “christian” music is charismatic-based. Further, many of the well known evangelical “leaders” (so-called) have either embraced it or have compromised and associated themselves with it, working with it, instead of denouncing it. The worldly glitz, claimed new revelations from God, the promises of healing, financial prosperity, happiness, baptisms and fillings of the Holy Spirit, the second blessing, great spiritual experiences such as speaking in tongues and other miracles, breaking down God’s roles for the sexes, ecumenicalism, all have great drawing power to our old nature. Emotions, feelings, run high! People *feel* religious. It’s a great show ... if it wasn’t so seriously in error.

In 1 John 4:1 we are told not to “believe every spirit, but *test the spirits*, whether they are of God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” That testing is by comparing what people say or do with all that the Word of God has to say on the subject. Things may be said by the power of the *Holy Spirit* as the Word of God is faithfully preached; things also may be said or acts performed by the power of the *unholy spirit* -- Satan (the adversary) and his demons. *Experience* may well be a false teacher. Both God and Satan can lead by experience.

I’m often struck by the sad verses in Matthew 7:21-13, “Not everyone who *says* to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many *wonders* [works of power, JND] in Your name. And then I will declare to them, *I never knew you*; depart from Me *you who practice lawlessness*.” These verses seem to fit many in the Charismatic Movement and its offshoots. Stay far away from it. Don’t get involved; don’t associate with it or with its “events” that seek to draw you in with good-sounding words and goals. Hate their false teachings and practices as God hates them. Love every true child of God.

### **Ritualism**

Brother Leslie Grant also had *ritualism* on his chart as one of the false grounds. We will include the *liturgy* under ritualism. A liturgy is a rite or rites prescribed for public worship (Webster). Many denominational churches and other “groups” have some form of ritual or liturgy. The Roman Catholic denomination essentially operates on ritual. *Everything* is prescribed, down to the very words to be spoken for various occasions. Many of our holidays originally were Roman Catholic in origin, often taken from heathen custom, then “christianized” by Rome without the slightest scriptural authority. And each one has a ritual.

In the Old Testament, under Judaism, under Law, God set up a very detailed ritual with various offerings, detailed and elaborate priestly clothing and many priestly functions. There also were numerous feast days. But things changed. The Law “was added because of transgressions *till* the Seed (Christ) should come” (Gal.3:19). “Before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Law, kept *for* the faith which would afterwards be revealed. Therefore the Law was our tutor ... to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal.3:23-25). I have left out the words “to bring us” in verse 24 because they have been added and miss the point. Once Christ came, the tutor left: it was no longer needed.

Today, we worship the Father *in spirit and in truth* (Jn.4:23). We worship from our innermost being according to the revelation of Christianity. Further, the Holy Spirit is our leader for the flow of the meetings of the local assembly (Phil.3:3), the hymns to be sung, not a sheet of paper handed out or words on a board hanging at the front of the “church.” We saw in the last newsletter that the Holy Spirit operates the various spiritual gifts and manifestations He gives *as He wills* (1 Cor.12:11).

### **Our Response to Such Errors**

Sadly, we often don’t react as strongly against such errors as Scripture does. The *principle* of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 and 2 John 9-11 states things very strongly. There can be no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness; rather, separation! But we don’t think it’s very tolerant or democratic to separate. This is an age of tolerance of the individual and of his or her views. But Scripture makes a substantial difference

between *weakness* -- where one momentarily fails or is taught wrong but is willing to be taught correctly and change his ways -- and *willfulness*. I cannot have fellowship with those who *willfully*, despite remonstrance, hold to and press false doctrines. To even associate with them *in a religious sense* makes me a partaker of their evil. I don't have to *believe* their false doctrine, but I am still guilty of it if I even *greet* such an one when he is bringing such evil (2 Jn.9-11). So each of us needs to be very careful what we support, buy, read, listen to, attend.

RPD