


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out, some resting on the ground and others draped over the stone walls of an old building. The stone is dark and weathered, with some green moss or lichen visible. The background shows more of the ruins and some green foliage. The overall scene is one of nature reclaiming old human structures.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24


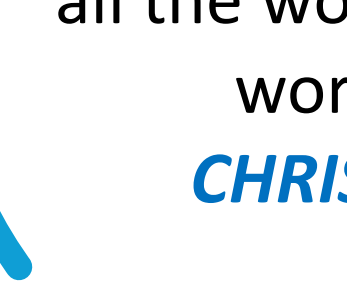
REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

THE *CHURCH* AND THE *WORLD*

*WHY DO **EVANGELICALS** TRY SO DESPERATELY TO COURT THE WORLD'S FAVOR?*

- Churches plan their worship services to cater to the “**UNCHURCHED.**” Christian performers ape every worldly fad in music and entertainment. Preachers fear that the offense of the gospel might turn someone against them, so they deliberately omit the parts of the message the world might not like.
- Evangelicalism has been hijacked by legions of carnal spin doctors, who are desperately trying to convince the world that the church can be just as inclusive, pluralistic, and broad-minded as the most politically correct worldling.


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- The quest for the world's approval is nothing less than ***SPIRITUAL HARLOTRY***. In fact, that is precisely the imagery the apostle **JAMES** used to describe it. He wrote, ***“YOU ADULTERESSES, DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD IS HOSTILITY TOWARD GOD? THEREFORE, WHOEVER WISHES TO BE A FRIEND OF THE WORLD MAKES HIMSELF AN ENEMY OF GOD”*** (JAM. 4:4).
 - There is and always has been a ***fundamental, irreconcilable incompatibility*** between the church and the world. Christian thought is out of harmony with all the world's philosophies. Genuine faith in Christ entails a denial of every worldly value. Biblical truth contradicts all the world's religions.
CHRISTIANITY ITSELF IS THEREFORE ANTITHETICAL TO VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THIS WORLD ADMIRES.

WHY THE *WORLD HATES*

- **JESUS** told His disciples, *“IF THE WORLD HATES YOU, YOU KNOW THAT IT HAS HATED ME BEFORE IT HATED YOU. IF YOU WERE OF THE WORLD, THE WORLD WOULD LOVE ITS OWN; BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT OF THE WORLD, BUT I CHOSE YOU OUT OF THE WORLD, BECAUSE OF THIS THE WORLD HATES YOU”* (JN. 15:18–19).
- Notice that our Lord considered it a given that the world would despise the church. Far from teaching His disciples to try to win the world’s favor by reinventing the gospel to suit worldly preferences, **JESUS** expressly warned that the quest for worldly accolades is a characteristic of false prophets: *“WOE TO YOU WHEN ALL MEN SPEAK WELL OF YOU, FOR THEIR FATHERS USED TO TREAT THE FALSE PROPHETS IN THE SAME WAY”* (LK. 6:26).

- He further explained, ***“THE WORLD . . . HATES ME BECAUSE I TESTIFY OF IT, THAT ITS DEEDS ARE EVIL”*** (JN. 7:7).
- ***IN OTHER WORDS, THE WORLD’S CONTEMPT FOR CHRISTIANITY STEMS FROM MORAL, NOT INTELLECTUAL, MOTIVES:***
- ***“THIS IS THE JUDGMENT, THAT THE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED THE DARKNESS RATHER THAN THE LIGHT, FOR THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL. FOR EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL HATES THE LIGHT AND DOES NOT COME TO THE LIGHT FOR FEAR THAT HIS DEEDS WILL BE EXPOSED”*** (JN. 3:19–20).
- That is why no matter how dramatically worldly opinion might vary; ***Christian truth will never be popular with unbelievers***. Yet in virtually every era of church history, there have been professing Christians who think they can win the world by ***CATERING*** to its tastes. ***SUCH AN APPROACH HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO THE DETRIMENT OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE.***

- The church has only made a significant impact on the world when the people of God have **STOOD FIRM, REFUSED TO COMPROMISE, and BOLDLY PROCLAIMED THE TRUTH—*despite* the world's hostility.**
- When Christians shrink away from confronting popular worldly delusions with unpopular biblical truths, **THE CHURCH HAS LOST ITS INFLUENCE AND BLENDED INTO THE WORLD.** Both Scripture and history attest to that fact.
- **THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE** simply cannot be twisted to conform to the ever changing of worldly opinion. **BIBLICAL TRUTH IS FIXED AND CONSTANT, NOT SUBJECT TO CHANGE OR ADAPTATION.** Worldly opinion, on the other hand, is in constant flux. The various fads and philosophies that dominate the world change radically and regularly from generation to generation. **THE ONLY THING THAT REMAINS CONSTANT IS THE WORLD'S HATRED OF CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL.**



• It is likely that, the world will long embrace whatever ideology is in vogue this year. If the pattern of history is any indicator, by the time our great-grandchildren become adults, popular opinion will be dominated by a completely new system of belief and a whole different set of values. Tomorrow's generation will renounce all of today's fads and philosophies.

• ***BUT ONE THING WILL REMAIN **UNCHANGED**: UNTIL THE LORD HIMSELF RETURNS AND ESTABLISHES HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH, WHATEVER IDEOLOGY GAINS POPULARITY IN THE WORLD WILL BE AS HOSTILE TO BIBLICAL TRUTH AS ALL ITS PREDECESSORS HAVE BEEN.***


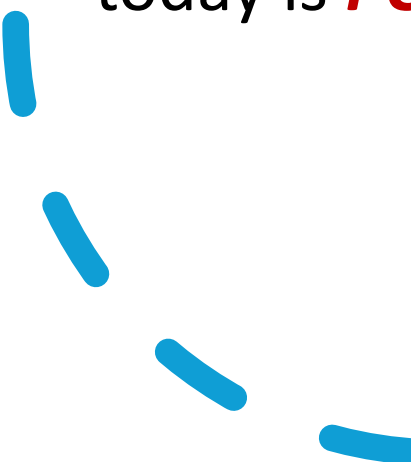


A *RECENT* BATTLE

- Consider the record of the past century, for example. A hundred years ago, the church was beset by modernism. **MODERNISM** was a worldview based on the notion that *only science could explain reality*. The modernist, in effect, began with the presupposition that **NOTHING *SUPERNATURAL* IS REAL**.
- It ought to have been instantly obvious that modernism and Christianity were **INCOMPATIBLE AT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL**. If nothing supernatural is real, then much of the Bible is untrue and has no authority; the incarnation of Christ is a myth (nullifying Christ's authority as well); and all the supernatural elements of Christianity, including God Himself, must be utterly redefined in naturalistic terms. **MODERNISM WAS ANTI-CHRISTIAN AT ITS CORE**.

- Nonetheless, at the beginning of the twentieth century many in the visible church were convinced that modernism and Christianity could and should be reconciled. They insisted that if the church did not keep in step with the times, Christianity would not survive the twentieth century. The church would become increasingly irrelevant to modern people, they said, and soon it would die. *SO, THEY DEvised A “SOCIAL GOSPEL” DEVOID OF THE TRUE GOSPEL OF SALVATION.*
- Of course, biblical Christianity survived the twentieth century just fine. Wherever Christians remained committed to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, the church flourished. But ironically, those churches and denominations that embraced *MODERNISM* became increasingly irrelevant—*THEY PRACTICALLY DIED OUT BEFORE THE CENTURY WAS OVER.*

HALLELUJAH!

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- Many grandiose but nearly empty stone buildings offer mute testimony to the deadliness of ***compromise*** with ***modernism***.
 - But modernism is now regarded as yesterday's way of thinking. It was a fad that came and went like withering grass (**ISA. 40:8**).
 - The dominant worldview in secular and academic circles today is ***POSTMODERNISM***.
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THE *CHURCH* AND *PSEUDO TOLERANCE*

- ***“THE GRASS WITHERS, THE FLOWER FADES, BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD STANDS FOREVER” (ISA. 40:8).***
- Those words from the prophet *ISAIAH* serve as a reminder of one basic truth: ***GOD’S WORD CANNOT CHANGE***. Conversely, the philosophies of the world could not offer a sharper contrast—here today and gone tomorrow. As we have already learned, ***MODERNISM*** was once our culture’s dominant philosophy. But it has given way to a new fad:

POSTMODERNISM.

- **POSTMODERNISTS** have repudiated modernism's confidence in science as the only pathway to the truth. In fact, postmodernism has lost interest in **"THE TRUTH"** completely, insisting that **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS ABSOLUTE, OBJECTIVE, OR UNIVERSAL TRUTH.**
- **MODERNISM** was, indeed, folly, and it needed to be cast aside. But **POSTMODERNISM** is a tragic step in the wrong direction. Unlike modernism, which was still concerned with whether basic convictions, beliefs, and ideologies are objectively true or false, **POSTMODERNISM SIMPLY DENIES THAT ANY TRUTH CAN BE OBJECTIVELY KNOWN.**
- TO THE **POSTMODERNIST**, REALITY IS WHATEVER THE INDIVIDUAL IMAGINES IT TO BE. THAT MEANS WHAT IS **"TRUE"** IS DETERMINED **SUBJECTIVELY** BY EACH PERSON, AND THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN **AUTHORITATIVE STANDARD** THAT GOVERNS ALL HUMANITY UNIVERSALLY.

- The **POSTMODERNIST** naturally believes it is pointless to argue whether opinion A is superior to opinion B. After all, if reality is merely a construct of the human mind, one person's perspective of truth is ultimately just as good as another's.
- Having given up on knowing **OBJECTIVE TRUTH**, the postmodernist occupies himself instead with the quest for “understanding” the other person's point of view. So, the words **TRUTH** and **UNDERSTANDING** take on radical new meanings.
- Ironically, **“UNDERSTANDING”** REQUIRES THAT WE FIRST OF ALL DISAVOW THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWING ANY TRUTH AT ALL. AND **“TRUTH”** BECOMES NOTHING MORE THAN A PERSONAL OPINION, USUALLY BEST KEPT TO ONESELF.

- That is the one non-negotiable demand postmodernism makes of everyone: **NEVER THINK YOU KNOW ANY OBJECTIVE TRUTH**. Postmodernists often suggest that every opinion should be shown equal respect. Therefore, on the surface, postmodernism seems driven by a broad-minded concern for harmony and tolerance; it all sounds very charitable and altruistic. **BUT WHAT REALLY UNDERLIES THE POSTMODERNIST BELIEF SYSTEM IS AN UTTER INTOLERANCE FOR EVERY WORLDVIEW THAT MAKES ANY UNIVERSAL TRUTH CLAIMS—PARTICULARLY BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY.**
- In other words, postmodernism begins with a presupposition that is irreconcilable with the objective, divinely revealed truth of Scripture. **LIKE MODERNISM, POSTMODERNISM IS FUNDAMENTALLY AND DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST.**