


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM





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

CHAOS, CORRUPTION, AND THE CHRISTIAN RESPONSE

We are living in bizarre times. The world is caught in the grip of **FEAR**—fears over **DEADLY DISEASES, FINANCIAL RUIN, UNCHECKED VIOLENCE, GOVERNMENT OVERREACH**, and **POLITICAL UPHEAVAL**. For the last several months, much of America has been on fire—both figuratively and literally. Our lives are essentially dominated by **CHAOS** and **CONFUSION**, as we careen from one emergency to the next.

We shudder to think how society could degrade into further corruption, darkness, and disarray, and yet the world keeps finding new lows to which it too-willingly sinks. Should the Lord tarry, we might eventually look back at **2025** as **“THE GOOD OL’ DAYS.”**

- On top of the endless chaos surrounding us, our society is drowning in a sea of **LIES**, such that the culture is permeated by a sense of devastating insecurity. We no longer have confidence in **politicians, health experts, social activists, academics**, or **THE MEDIA**—all of them have lost credibility by pursuing agendas over honesty. Even **religious leaders** have shown a knack for doublespeak and outright deception when it suits their purposes.
- We have been **LIED** to so routinely that we treat every claim as dubious. Living in that constant state of doubt and suspicion is both exhausting and exasperating. However, there is One to whom we can turn and always hear the truth: the **LIVING GOD** who has revealed Himself in the pages of Scripture. ***IN A WORLD DOMINATED BY CHAOS, CORRUPTION, AND LIES, ONLY GOD IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL AND TRUE.***

- His Word is truth (**JOHN 17:17**), and if we want to make sense of the evil days we're living in—and understand how God would have us respond—it is the only place for us to turn.

UPENDING GOD'S LAW

- We can begin by looking at the book of **ISAIAH**. *Seven hundred* years before the birth of Christ, God was confronting another nation that had plunged itself into **corruption** and **chaos**: **ISRAEL**.

“LISTEN, O HEAVENS, AND HEAR, O EARTH; FOR THE LORD SPEAKS, “SONS I HAVE REARED AND BROUGHT UP, BUT THEY HAVE REVOLTED AGAINST ME. 3, AN OX KNOWS ITS OWNER, AND A DONKEY ITS MASTER’S MANGER, BUT ISRAEL DOES NOT KNOW, MY PEOPLE DO NOT UNDERSTAND.”

4, ALAS, SINFUL NATION, PEOPLE WEIGHED DOWN WITH INIQUITY, OFFSPRING OF EVILDOERS, SONS WHO ACT CORRUPTLY! THEY HAVE ABANDONED THE LORD, THEY HAVE DESPISED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL, THEY HAVE TURNED AWAY FROM HIM. 5, WHERE WILL YOU BE STRICKEN AGAIN, AS YOU CONTINUE IN YOUR REBELLION? THE WHOLE HEAD IS SICK AND THE WHOLE HEART IS FAINT. 6, FROM THE SOLE OF THE FOOT EVEN TO THE HEAD THERE IS NOTHING SOUND IN IT, ONLY BRUISES, WELTS AND RAW WOUNDS, NOT PRESSED OUT OR BANDAGED, NOR SOFTENED WITH OIL. 7, YOUR LAND IS DESOLATE, YOUR CITIES ARE BURNED WITH FIRE. (ISAIAH 1:2–7)

- Throughout the Old Testament, we see the pattern of **ISRAEL'S SPIRITUAL INFIDELITY** and the Lord's faithful judgment for their sin. Here at the beginning of **ISAIAH**, God's people were steeped in sin and transgression. **THEY HAD REJECTED THE LORD AND HIS WORD AND WERE ON THE BRINK OF JUDGMENT.**

Through the mouth of His prophet, God was warning them of the desolation that occurs when a nation turns against God.

- **ISRAEL** was headed toward a devastating divine judgment. Through **ISAIAH**, God provided some specific indictments about the sins that put them on this terrifying trajectory. ***“WOE TO THOSE WHO CALL EVIL GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL; WHO SUBSTITUTE DARKNESS FOR LIGHT AND LIGHT FOR DARKNESS; WHO SUBSTITUTE BITTER FOR SWEET AND SWEET FOR BITTER!” (ISA. 5:20).***
- Toward the end of the book, He condemns them again: ***“FOR YOUR HANDS ARE DEFILED WITH BLOOD AND YOUR FINGERS WITH INIQUITY; YOUR LIPS HAVE SPOKEN FALSEHOOD, YOUR TONGUE MUTTERS WICKEDNESS. NO ONE SUES RIGHTEOUSLY AND NO ONE PLEADS HONESTLY. THEY TRUST IN CONFUSION AND SPEAK LIES; THEY CONCEIVE MISCHIEF AND BRING FORTH INIQUITY” (ISA. 59:3–4).*** Such moral inversion usually signals the coming judgment of God.

- In their rebellion against God, Israel had flipped morality on its head. Their opposition to the Lord had turned their view of truth, righteousness, and virtue upside down. That is, in essence, the nature of fallen humanity: to ***BELIEVE LIES***, to ***OVERTURN RIGHT AND WRONG***, and ***TO REPLACE GOD'S HOLY STANDARD*** with a flawed and feeble one of its own design. Does that sound familiar?
- Much like Israel in Isaiah's day, we are living in another historic manifestation of the corrupting, perverting influence of sin. We're watching the same upending of morality happen every day, with the hearty applause of a rebellious culture fully convinced of its own merit and virtue.
- Look no further than the recent headlines to see how sinners currently ***"CALL EVIL GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL."*** SO-CALLED ***"PEACEFUL PROTESTS"*** RESULT IN ***RIOTS, LOOTING, DESTRUCTION, AND DEATH.***

- Those who claim to be **ANTI-FASCISTS** shout down and violently suppress opposing viewpoints. **ANTI-RACISTS** argue for ethnic segregation, hiring quotas, and other forms of organizational and financial partiality. Law-abiding citizens are ordered to stay home, while the mayhem of violent mobs is indulged and encouraged. **PROTESTERS** pour into the streets to proclaim that black lives matter, while proudly supporting an organization that slaughters nearly a thousand black babies every day. Others demand a self-styled justice based on scant facts and snap judgments. **CRIMINALS** are mourned as martyrs while the police are routinely vilified.
- **WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS WORLD?** How did we get here, with everything upside down? Is it the result of some social inequity? Is the problem **EDUCATIONAL, ECONOMIC, or ENVIRONMENTAL**? How did we become so twisted in our thinking?

THE **HEART** OF THE PROBLEM IS THE **HEART**!

- The book of **JUDGES** repeatedly employs a chilling phrase to depict the waywardness and corruption of God's people: **"EVERYONE DID WHAT WAS RIGHT IN HIS OWN EYES"** (JUD. 21:25).
- God's people had forsaken His law and their covenant with Him and did whatever they wanted to fulfill their sinful desires. It's also a fitting summary of the world we live in today, as our culture is overrun by **chaos** and **corruption**. We're seeing every day the **consequences** of a society doing what is right in its own eyes.
- To make sense of the wretched state of the world, we first need to see through the world's **deceptive excuses for sin**. In particular, we need to understand that sin is not the fault of external factors—it can't be blamed on your **EDUCATION, UPBRINGING, or ECONOMIC SITUATION**.

- The **WORLD OF PSYCHOLOGY** will point to every conceivable external rationalization for why people act the way they do. **BUT SCRIPTURE IS CLEAR—THE PROBLEM OF SIN IS INTERNAL.**
- **JESUS** Himself made that very point in a confrontation with the Pharisees. Israel's religious elite were obsessed with external religion. They reduced the law of God to a burdensome list of rituals and practices and held up themselves and their good works as the standard of holiness. **BUT THEIR PIETY WAS EMPTY, AND THEY HATED JESUS FOR EXPOSING THEIR HYPOCRISY.**
- After one such confrontation in **MARK 7**, **CHRIST** explained why the **EXTERNAL RELIGION** of the Pharisees was impotent to address the sinner's true spiritual needs.






- Regarding the danger of eating *ceremonially unclean foods*, He said, ***“LISTEN TO ME, ALL OF YOU, AND UNDERSTAND: THERE IS NOTHING OUTSIDE THE MAN WHICH CAN DEFILE HIM IF IT GOES INTO HIM; BUT THE THINGS WHICH PROCEED OUT OF THE MAN ARE WHAT DEFILE THE MAN”*** (MK. 7:14–15).
- His point was clear—***THE SINNER ISN’T CORRUPTED BY EXTERNAL ACTIONS, FORCES, OR INFLUENCES. HIS DEFILEMENT IS ALREADY PRESENT WITHIN HIM.***
- When the ***DISCIPLES*** later asked ***JESUS*** for further explanation, He drove the point home vividly. ***“ARE YOU SO LACKING IN UNDERSTANDING ALSO? DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THAT WHATEVER GOES INTO THE MAN FROM OUTSIDE CANNOT DEFILE HIM, BECAUSE IT DOES NOT GO INTO HIS HEART, BUT INTO HIS STOMACH, AND IS ELIMINATED? . . .***

THAT WHICH PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MAN, THAT IS WHAT DEFILES THE MAN. FOR FROM WITHIN, OUT OF THE HEART OF MEN, PROCEED THE EVIL THOUGHTS, FORNICATIONS, THEFTS, MURDERS, ADULTERIES, DEEDS OF COVETING AND WICKEDNESS, AS WELL AS DECEIT, SENSUALITY, ENVY, SLANDER, PRIDE AND FOOLISHNESS. ALL THESE EVIL THINGS PROCEED FROM WITHIN AND DEFILE THE MAN. (MK. 7:18–23)

- ***THE THREAT OF SIN AND CORRUPTION IS NOT EXTERNAL***. In the specific case the **LORD** cited, both **CLEAN** and **UNCLEAN** foods are consumed and eliminated in the same way. They are of no lasting spiritual consequence—especially when compared to the corruption that already resides in the sinner’s heart.
- **CHRIST** is saying you’re not wicked because of what happened to you on the outside; ***YOU’RE WICKED BECAUSE OF WHAT YOU ALREADY ARE ON THE INSIDE.***

- He's saying there is something wrong with ***YOUR HEART***—not the physical internal organ, but with your ***INNER SELF***, including your ***MIND, THOUGHTS, ATTITUDES, MOTIVES***, and ***DESIRES***.
- In **verses 21 and 22**, ***JESUS*** identifies some specific categories of sin that flow out of man's corrupt heart. ***"EVIL THOUGHTS"*** refers broadly to the bad motives, designs, and intentions cultivated internally. ***"FORNICATIONS"*** encapsulates all kinds of deviant sexual sin. He adds ***"THEFTS, MURDERS, ADULTERIES"***—all external sins that are initially conceived in the mind. ***"DEEDS OF COVETING AND WICKEDNESS"*** speak to sins of greediness, along with the kind of malicious intent that seeks to harm others. But because the point isn't merely the outward expressions of man's sinful heart, Christ also identifies some of the **INWARD EVIL ATTITUDES** that give birth to those evil deeds, including ***"DECEIT, SENSUALITY, ENVY, SLANDER, PRIDE AND FOOLISHNESS"*** (v. 22).

- The **LORD** concludes in **verse 23** with the summary statement, ***“ALL THESE EVIL THINGS PROCEED FROM WITHIN AND DEFILE THE MAN.”*** All of man’s sin flows from the inside out. The Pharisees were completely backward in their thinking because they had put their trust in external religion.
- At the beginning of **Mark 7**, they were criticizing Christ and His disciples for not observing the ceremonial laws regarding handwashing. Christ’s response was essentially, ***Your hands may be clean, but your hearts are filthy***. They were counting on outward piety to win them favor with God, with no consideration for their internal corruption. They had neglected the lesson of **(1 SAM. 16:7)**, that ***“GOD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES, FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”***

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- THE HEART OF THE HUMAN PROBLEM HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE PROBLEM OF THE **HUMAN HEART**. AND **ONLY GOD** CAN DO THE TRANSFORMATIVE WORK NECESSARY TO **REGENERATE A SINFUL HEART**—TO ***“GIVE YOU A NEW HEART AND PUT A NEW SPIRIT WITHIN YOU; AND . . . REMOVE THE HEART OF STONE FROM YOUR FLESH”*** (EZE. 36:26).