

## The Open-Ended Gospel

Although this nation that we live in is considered by most of the public as a Christian nation, the actual numbers and facts to those who really believe in the Bible and its teachings would prove otherwise. Our nation would reflect a vast number of people who make the claim that they believe in the scriptures, but their works and lifestyles would reveal a totally different focus. We have in our nation the majority of people who live out a buffet religion, rather than the true faith that God longs for us to have. By using the phrase buffet religion, I simply mean that there are those who pick and choose certain things out of the scriptures in which they want to follow, and leave the rest, much like we do at a food buffet. We even have a certain select few who have taken scissors to the pages of their Bibles and cut out sections that they disagree with! Now you tell me the difference between that and what Israel was doing with their idolatry that led them to Assyrian and Babylonian captivity! The principle is the same, that God was ignored and the things He has commanded forgotten. Jesus said, *"He who rejects me and does not receive My words, has that which judges him, the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48).

We are not going to be able to rely on our smooth words or lavish looks when it comes to entering into heaven, it is going to be how well we followed God's commandments. Obedience to what God has spoken is an absolute must! Jesus would say in His conclusion to the sermon on the mount, *"Therefore whoever hears these saying of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock, and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock."* Now who does this reckon to? It is the person who hears what God says and obeys it. Now listen to what Jesus says of the disobedient. *"But everyone who hears these saying of Mine and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand, and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell. And great was its fall"* (Matthew 7:24-27). To all those who do not adhere to what the Bible says, there will be no room for them in the kingdom of God.

God's word in this country has become something that can be compared to what the Athenians of old used to take hobby in. To them, everything was discussion and philosophy. When Paul spoke boldly at the Areopagus in Athens, preaching the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the reaction to his sermon was one of mockery and unimportance. They wanted to take Paul's words and discuss them, think to themselves what kind of doctrine this was, and assign a philosophy to it. Such was their nature being

Epicureans and Stoics (Acts 17:18). For them there was no conviction within Paul's words, no necessity to obey these things, just another doctrine to philosophize about. Yet this attitude towards God's word remains even today. More and more are falling into the trap that the Bible is discussible, and we are all able to reach different conclusions on it. Such is not the way we should ever approach the instructions of the Almighty God! The prophet Isaiah said, *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways, says the Lord."* We as human beings are on a totally different level than God, for the prophet goes on to say, *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways."* When we take on the attitude that the Bible is something that is discussible in such a way that we can all have differing views on it, putting our own human intuition into it, we bring the Lord and the things He has commanded us and bring them down to our level. We make ourselves equal with God when we think we need to change what He has said, or take on a disrespectful attitude with the scriptures, turning it into theology and not authoritative commands. That is not our place! Nor has it ever been, it remains with God's word.

When we take the Bible and turn it into a common book of this world, we have sinned and not given the proper recognition to God. Jesus said, *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He come in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"* (Mark 8:38). Taking a look at the Bible and breaking it up into sections of what we want to follow and what we want to steer clear of puts one into the category of those who are ashamed of Jesus. We have in our modern Bibles two colors of font. For the words of Jesus, a red font is used, and for everything else the standard black font is used. But there are those that want to have the red words be more authoritative than the black words. They take the words of Christ and say we have to agree on those, but everything else is up for discussion. They turn parts of the Bible into theology and not the written word of God! Yet, Paul states that ALL scripture is given by inspiration, and also that ALL scripture is profitable (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Therefore, our attitude toward the scriptures must always remain in such a way where our deep respect for God's authoritative word never turns into something where human intuition enters into the picture. Let us all take on the attitude of Samuel, who was called by God at night, and when called for a fourth time, Samuel answered, *"Speak, for Your servant hears."* Samuel was ready and willing to do all that the Lord commanded him, let us strive to have the same thought in our lives.

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