



MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

A BIBLICAL ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS & SECULAR MEDIA

SPECIAL REPORT

JOEL OSTEEN ANOTHER VICTIM OF LARRY KING

Of late the true Gospel—the message that all men may find salvation from sin and from the consequences of sin only through faith in Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for their sins—has come under greater attack.

That's nothing new, you say? True. The world has, since the beginning, attacked the Gospel. Even religious people, particularly among liberal theologians in the churches, have attacked the Gospel. But the attack of which I speak is increasingly coming from those within the evangelical camp of Christianity—those who claim to believe all the truths of Scripture regarding man's lost condition and his need for Jesus Christ as his Savior, but who feel compelled to compromise those truths for the sake of seeking common ground with others.

These are people in the forefront of Christianity, leaders looked up to by many. Collectively they reach millions with their messages. Their quisling acquiescence to a form of universalism is born out of fear of offending unbelievers. They are bold when preaching to the choir, but melt into a spineless mass when confronted by unbelievers who challenge them on the Bible's claims that in Jesus Christ alone man may be saved.

The latest to fall on his face in this regard is Joel Osteen, the pastor of allegedly the largest church in the United States. Osteen claims to preach to some 30,000 people every Sunday, as well as reach hundreds of thousands through his television show. His books are on the New York Times Bestseller list. Because of his huge popularity within Christianity he was invited on the Larry King Live program which aired July 3.

During the course of the program, King did what he often does when interviewing well-known Christian leaders. He asked Osteen if people who do not be-



lieve in Jesus can be saved. Unfortunately, Osteen followed the lead of others who have waffled on the issue, choosing to put a "positive" spin on their faith rather than stand firm for biblical truth. Excerpts from that telecast follow:

KING: Have you always believed?

OSTEEN: I have always believed. I grew up, you know, my parents were good Christian people. They showed us love in the home. My parents were the same in the pulpit as they were at home. I think that's where a lot of preachers' kids get off base sometimes. Because they don't see the

same things at both places. But I've always believed. I saw it through my parents. And I just grew up believing.

KING: But you're not fire-and-brimstone, right? You're not pound-the-decks and hell-and-damnation?

OSTEEN: No. That's not me. It's never been me. I've always been an encourager at heart. And when I took over from my father—he came from the Southern Baptist background, and back 40, 50 years ago there was a lot more of that. But, you know, I just—I don't believe in that. I don't believe—maybe it was for a time. But I don't have it in my heart to condemn people. I'm there to encourage them. I see myself more as a coach, as a motivator to help them experience the life God has for us.

KING: But don't you think if people don't believe as you believe, they're somehow condemned?

OSTEEN: You know, I think that happens in our society. But I try not to do that. I tell people all the time, preached a couple Sundays about it. I'm for everybody. You may not agree with me, but to me it's not my job to try to straighten everybody out. The Gospel [is] called the good news. My message is a message of hope—that God's for you. You can live a good life no matter what's happened to you. And so I don't know. I know there is condemnation but I don't feel that's my place....

KING: Many evangelists feel that the church, the church itself, the religion, has failed. You share that view?

OSTEEN: Well, I think in a sense when you see certain things in soci-

ety you would think that. But in another sense I see faith in America, faith in the world, at an all-time high today. When I was growing up it was a big deal to have a church of 1,000. Now there's churches of 10,000. So many of them. So I think in one sense I can agree with that point. But in another sense I see a real spiritual awakening taking place....

KING: Is it hard to lead a Christian life?

OSTEEN: I don't think it's that hard. To me it's fun. We have joy and happiness. Our family—I don't feel like that at all. I'm not trying to follow a set of rules and stuff. I'm just living my life.

KING: But you have rules, don't you?

OSTEEN: We do have rules. But the main rule to me is to honor God with your life; to live a life of integrity; not be selfish. You know, help others. But that's really the essence of the Christian faith.

KING: That we live in deeds?

OSTEEN: I don't know. What do you mean by that?

KING: Because we've had ministers on who said, your record don't count. You either believe in Christ or you don't. If you believe in Christ, you are, you are going to Heaven. And if you don't, no matter what you've done in your life, you ain't.

OSTEEN: Yeah, I don't know. There's probably a balance between. I believe you have to know Christ. But I think that if you know Christ, if you're a believer in God, you're going to have some good works. I think it's a cop-out to say I'm a Christian but I don't ever do anything...

KING: What if you're Jewish or Muslim, you don't accept Christ at all?

OSTEEN: You know, I'm very careful about saying who would and wouldn't go to Heaven. I don't know...

KING: If you believe you have to believe in Christ, they're wrong, aren't they?

OSTEEN: Well, I don't know if I believe they're wrong. I believe here's what the Bible teaches and from the Christian faith this is what I believe. But I just think that only God will judge a person's heart. I spent a lot of time in India with my father. I don't know all about their religion. But I know they love God. And I don't know. I've seen their sincerity. So I don't know. I know for me, and what the Bible teaches, I want to have a relationship with Jesus.

CALLER: Hello, Larry. You're the best, and thank you, Joe—Joel—for your positive messages and your book. I'm wondering, though, why you side-stepped Larry's earlier question about how we get to Heaven? The bible clearly tells us that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and the only way to the Father is through him. That's not really a message of condemnation but of truth.

OSTEEN: Yes, I would agree with her. I believe that.

KING: So then a Jew is not going to Heaven?

OSTEEN: No, here's my thing, Larry, is I can't judge somebody's heart. You know? Only God can look at somebody's heart, and so—I don't know. To me, it's not my business to say, you know, this one is or this one isn't. I just say, here's what the Bible teaches and I'm going to put my faith in Christ. And I just—I think it's wrong when you go around saying, you're not going, you're not going, you're not going, because it's not exactly my way. I'm just...

KING: But you believe your way.

OSTEEN: I believe my way. I believe my way with all my heart.

KING: But for someone who doesn't share it is wrong, isn't he?

OSTEEN: Well, yes. Well, I don't know if I look at it like that. I would present my way, but I'm just going to let God be the judge of that. I don't know. I don't know.

KING: So you make no judgment on anyone?

OSTEEN: No. But I...

KING: What about atheists?

OSTEEN: You know what, I'm going to let someone—I'm going to let God be the judge of who goes to Heaven and hell. I just—again, I present the truth, and I say it every week. You know, I believe it's a relationship with Jesus. But you know what? I'm not going to go around telling everybody else if they don't want to believe that, that's going to be their choice. God's got to look at your own heart. God's got to look at your heart, and only God knows that.

What does that mean? Doesn't Osteen know that man's heart is wicked and that all men need redemption (Jeremiah 17:9)? Sincerity doesn't merit anything with God. If sincerity were all that is necessary for salvation then Jesus didn't need to die. He would have been a fool to put Himself through the agony of crucifixion if, in the long run, it wasn't really necessary.

Osteen speaks out of both sides of his mouth. On one side he claims to be a firm believer that Jesus is the only way to God; on the other side he says that someone who practices their religion sincerely can also come to God without Jesus. At best, he just doesn't know. Eight times he said, "I don't know," when confronted by King with the question of whether or not it's true that Jesus is the only way to God. Yet he holds the position of a pastor and teacher to tens of thousands in his church building alone, and untold hundreds of thousands through his television show.

The essence of Osteen's position is that for him, Jesus is the only way to God, but for others the way to God may be someone or something else, including their own self-righteousness.

If this is not a denial of Jesus, then what is?

Osteen doesn't feel it's his "place" to address damnation. What does Scripture say?

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And for some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the

fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (Jude 1:21-23)

Both methods of saving souls are essential to a true ministry anointed by the Holy Spirit. To say that it isn't his place to address damnation is to say that his place is not in the forefront of the Body of Christ. Yet there he stands.

But that would take the "fun" out of his Christian life. Osteen's message of positive living would suffer. Why, he might even lose some of his audience. God forbid that his multi-million dollar lifestyle should be adversely affected by the idea that living for Jesus isn't fun.

"Look, the hour is coming—yes, has now come—that every man of you will be scattered to his own place, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

"I have spoken these things to you so that in Me you might have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." (John 16:32-33)

Being of "good cheer" is not the same as having "fun." It is the joy of the Spirit that sustains us through tribulation. But who would say that tribulation is fun?

Scripture chronicles the lives of the saints of old who lived for Christ, many experiencing great conquests through faith, others suffering greatly through faith:

And others (of whom the world was not worthy) had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yes, more-over of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (Hebrews 11:36-38)

Sounds like a load of fun.

I suppose it's because it would interfere with his fun that Osteen doesn't follow any set of rules. Yet one cannot follow Jesus without following His "rules."

"If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15)

"It is he that has My commandments, and keeps them, who loves me. And he that loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."

Judas, not Iscariot, said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "If a man loves Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our home with him.

He that does not love Me does not keep My sayings, and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent me." (John 14:21-24)

One might argue that these are not "rules"; they are the Lord's commands. But Osteen doesn't make a distinction. The world looks upon the Lord's commands as "rules" they find offensive. They must be told that the life of a true believer in Jesus does indeed involve rules by which we must live if we wish to prove our love for Him.

The easy-believism of today's Christianity wants everyone to think that they can live however they choose and still have salvation. But Jesus was clear that one cannot abide in the love of God without keeping His commandments:

"Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples.

"As the Father has loved Me, so I have I loved you. Continue in My love.

"If you keep My commandments, you shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." (John 15:8-10)

Jesus goes on to explain that His commandment is that we love one another. But that is one commandment. Scripture relates many commandments given by the Lord which must be followed if we are to be His true disciples. This is not "works salvation": it is what God requires of us.

Focusing on the commandment to love one another, can we call it "love" if

one withholds truth? Is it love for a pastor of a church to lead his congregation down the path of spiritual error? Is it love for a pastor to keep his position even as he confesses that he doesn't know if those who argue against Jesus being the only way to God are wrong?

Is it love to imply that for him, Jesus is the way to God, but allow that, for others, there may be another way?

One may make a weak case that it is love to avoid offending others. But what about offending God? His Word tells us that offending others is a byproduct of faithfully proclaiming the Gospel.

To you therefore who believe, He is precious, but to them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner and a stumbling stone, and a rock of offense—even to them who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, whereto also they were appointed. (1 Peter 2:7-8)

The Gospel is an offense to those who perish. This doesn't mean we should go out of our way to offend others with the truth; it does mean, however, that we should not shirk our obligation in telling the truth out of fear of offending.

It was obvious by Osteen's stuttering and stammering that he feared offending Larry King and his viewers. So how does Osteen honor God with his life, as he claims to do, if he holds God's Word in such low esteem? If God has exalted His Word above His very name (Psalms 138:2), to dishonor His Word would certainly dishonor Him.

It is telling that Osteen sees the growth of megachurches as evidence that faith is on the increase in America and the world. As if truth were validated by large numbers. But what did Jesus say?

Enter in at the narrow gate, because wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in that way. Because narrow is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13-14)

Those who look to large numbers to validate their message are deluding them-

selves. Most people will reject the truth. Popular messages are evidence that the teacher has strayed from God's Word.

OTHER WAFFLERS

Osteen is just one of a growing number of Christian leaders who have denied Jesus in similar fashion.

Oral Roberts gave essentially the same answer several years ago when asked by Larry King if Jews go to Heaven. His response, also, was that he does not judge.

Billy Graham

Most disappointing for many Christians has been Billy Graham's waffling on the issue. I've reported on this before, but I feel it necessary to reiterate what he has said in order to demonstrate how widespread this heresy is. He, too, has appeared on Larry King Live on many occasions. Never has he publicly implored King to surrender to the Gospel of Jesus. On the contrary, he has affirmed that it really isn't necessary to do so if one is a sincere practitioner of one's faith. Most recently he appeared on the Larry King Live show which aired in June:

KING: But what about those faiths—the Mormons and the others that you mentioned—believe in Christ. They believe they will meet Christ. What about those like the Jews, the Muslims, who don't believe?

GRAHAM: That's in God's hands. I can't be the judge.

KING: You don't judge them?

GRAHAM: No....

KING: How do you feel...

GRAHAM: ...going to hell and all that.

KING: How do you feel when you see a lot of these strong Christian leaders go on television and say, "You are condemned; you will live in hell if you do not accept Jesus Christ," and they are forceful and judgmental?

GRAHAM: Well, they have a right to say that, and they are true to a certain extent, but I don't—that's not my calling. My calling is to preach the love of God and the forgiveness of God and the fact that he does forgive us. That's what the cross is all

about, what the resurrection is all about, that's the Gospel. And you can get off on all kinds of different side trends, and in my earlier ministry, I did the same, but as I got older, I guess I became more mellow and more forgiving and more loving. And the Jerry Falwells and people like that, I love them, I thank God for their ministry. He has a great university and two or three of my grandchildren have gone there; they have had a tremendous change in their lives for being there, and some of the other people are the same way, but at the other end of the extreme.

For a professing Christian to say that he does not judge whether or not non-believers in Jesus go to Heaven when they die is a cop out. Granted, it's wrong to judge individuals because we don't know if they will one day come to Christ. But to not render judgment on those whom the Bible says are lost is to deny God's Word; in truth, it is to deny Jesus Himself. It is to say that Jesus was a fool to pay the price that didn't need to be paid.

There is no such thing as preaching "the love of God" without proclaiming Jesus as the only way to God:

But God exhibits His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Christ died to demonstrate God's love for us. It is not God's love to withhold that essential truth. It is not love to refuse to judge the lost. That is the motivation for bringing them the Gospel in the first place.

This is only one of several examples where Graham has stated that all religions are on the path to God.

How can one explain how an evangelist, who has proclaimed the Gospel so eloquently can also say that the Gospel is not true? The only thing I can attribute this to is the Scripture that affirms the gifts and calling of God:

For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Romans 11:29)

This was in reference to the calling of the Jews as God's chosen people. God has not abandoned them; they aban-

doned Him, and will do so until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled.

Balaam was a man gifted as a prophet of God. When entreated by Balak to prophesy against Israel he tried to do so on many occasions. But each time, the words that came forth from his mouth were blessings upon Israel. He had no choice but to speak what God put into his mouth. Yet he was unfaithful and ultimately condemned, even while still possessing the gift of prophecy.

This should be a warning to us all not to assume that we are in God's favor just because He continues to work through us. We must guard ourselves and not allow the enemy to persuade us away from the truth.

John Hagee

It's especially when dealing with Jews that many Christian leaders seem afraid to make a judgment. Recently, John Hagee, another well-known pastor who reaches tens of thousands, if not millions, through television, and who also heads a megachurch, stated emphatically that Jews do not need Jesus in order to be saved:

The Jewish people have a relationship to God through the law of God as given through Moses. I believe that every Gentile person can only come to God through the cross of Christ. I believe that every Jewish person who lives in the light of the Torah, which is the word of God, has a relationship with God and will come to redemption.

The law of Moses is sufficient enough to bring a person into the knowledge of God until God gives him a greater revelation. And God has not. Paul abandoned the idea [of Jews knowing Christ]. In the book of Romans he said, "I am now going to go to the Gentiles from this time forward." Judaism doesn't need Christianity to explain its existence. But Christianity has to have Judaism to explain its existence.

Talk about twisting Scripture. Paul's statement that he was going to the Gentiles was a slap in the faces of the unbelieving Jews who refused Jesus as their Messiah. He first tried to proclaim the

Gospel to the Jews, but when they refused to hear it he turned his attention to the Gentiles. That doesn't mean the Jews didn't need the Gospel also.

And the next sabbath day almost the whole city came together to hear the Word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spoke against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.

Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you, but seeing you put it away from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.'"

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.

But the Jews stirred up the devout and honorable women and the chief men of the city, and raised persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them out of their regions. (Acts 13:44-50)

If the Jews don't need Jesus, why did Paul say (in the Scripture alluded to by Hagee) that it was necessary that they hear the Gospel first? Why did he say they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life if they did not need Jesus?

Foolish prattle from men such as this is destroying souls.

Pat Robertson

John Hagee was not the first to posit this heresy. When he was running for the Republican presidential nomination for 1988, Pat Robertson appeared on NBC's Donahue, hosted by Phil Donahue. Straying from the subject of the presidential race, Donahue asked a similar question of Robertson regarding whether Jews go to Heaven:

DONAHUE: Do Jews go to Heaven?

ROBERTSON: The Jews go to Heaven in relation to their own reli-

gion, and what does their religion say? It's very clear. They go to Heaven if they keep all the commandments of the Jewish Law; and if you go back into the Old Testament you see that it was necessary in case they didn't, to have animal sacrifices. That's what was set up in the Old Testament. And in accordance with keeping all of the Law, they are God's chosen people; there's no question about it.

DONAHUE: They go to Heaven. So, when I get to Heaven, which I certainly will be doing some day, there'll be Jews there.

ROBERTSON: Well, Abraham, Isaac, and David, I think—Jacob—I think for starters, are some rather eminent Jews who will be there welcoming us all I hope—the ones of us that are going to go.

DONAHUE: So you don't have to be a Christian to be good in God's sight—in God's eyes.

ROBERTSON: Phil, in order to be right in God's eyes you have to do what the Bible says.

DONAHUE: So you don't have to be bathed necessarily in the blood of our Savior Jesus Christ in order to go to Heaven.

ROBERTSON: (Hesitating) Uh, Phil, the position of all the churches is that there is salvation in none other, and there is no other name given under Heaven whereby we must be saved than in Jesus Christ. That was said by Peter who is considered by the Catholics—you are one—the first pope. That was his word. And that's what we all believe. That's the Nicene Creed, and I'm not going to back off from the beliefs of my faith....For the Jews it's a different deal. If they want to keep their Law, if they want to fulfill the Covenant, if they want to have the sacrifices provided in the book of Leviticus, then that is what's available for them. That's the way it is.

DONAHUE: Okay, but it sounds like you're saying two different things.

ROBERTSON: Well, they're two different people. The Jews are the chosen people of God. They've got a unique relationship with God. But Jesus Christ came, as you know, as the Jewish Messiah. He said, "I'm the Messiah."

At this point the interview turned back to politics.

So Robertson wasn't going to back off his beliefs, but then he backed off by saying the Jews don't need Jesus.

Some may argue that Robertson was being coy—that he knows no one can keep the Law perfectly, and that there have been no animal sacrifices available for the Jews since the destruction of the temple in AD 70. In essence, then, he is saying that the Jews cannot be saved apart from Jesus.

In the first place, only true believers in Jesus would be able to discern any such hidden meaning. Non-believers would naturally think that he is saying Jews can be saved apart from Jesus; He is not the only way to the Father.

In the second place, even if the Jews kept the Law perfectly they could still not be saved apart from faith in Jesus. His statement was patently wrong. Worse, it was a damnable heresy.

What does God's Word say?

Therefore, no flesh shall be justified in God's sight by the deeds of the Law, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ—even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:15-16)

Speaking to the Jews, Paul said:

Be it known to you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is proclaimed to you the forgiveness of sins. And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)

For the Law, having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered continually year by year make those who come to them perfect. For then would they not have stopped being offered? Because the worshippers, once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4)

Hagee and Robertson are merely the tip of the iceberg. Many "Christian Zionists" believe that the Jews can have salvation apart from Jesus. This is why they do not proclaim the Gospel to the Jews they claim to love. Rather, they spend their energy and money in promoting and defending the godless state of Israel as if it were the New Jerusalem.

Whom Do The Jews Worship?

The lack of incentive to witness to Jews is largely based upon a belief that all Jews are de facto chosen by God. Since religious Jews call upon YHWH in name, it is assumed that they worship the same God that believers in Jesus worship. But do they really?

This is something to consider seriously, particularly in view of the growing Christian Zionist movement. It is a delicate subject, and one that must be approached with tact and wisdom. But if we are to address it at all, we must do so with all honesty. It does no one any good to do otherwise.

Many assume that Christians and Jews worship the same God since both understand God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and, as Moses said, "YHWH our Elohim is alone YHWH."

But who is YHWH who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses? Is He different from the God that believers in Jesus worship?

The Gospel of John opens with these words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were

made by Him, and nothing that was made, was made without Him....

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

In Revelation we read that God is YHWH, and that YHWH is Jesus:

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1:8)

I was in the Spirit on the Day of the Lord, and heard behind me a great voice, like that of a trumpet, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last," and, "What you see, write in a book, and send it to the seven assemblies which are in Asia—to Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and bound about the waist with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like wool—as white as snow—and His eyes were like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters. (Revelation 1:10-15)

"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For outside are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie.

"I Jesus have sent My messenger to testify to you these things in the assemblies. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." (Revelation 22:13-16)

The Alpha and the Omega calls Himself "the Almighty," which is a name re-

served for God. Jesus calls Himself Alpha and Omega.

This does not mean that Jesus is the Father, but that having come forth from the Father, He is of the same essence and substance as the Father. Just as I am human—the same essence and substance of my human father—Jesus is the same as His Father. He is God.

YHWH in the writings of the Hebrew prophets is the Word of God who, in later years, took on the form of a man and became one of us in order to reveal Himself to us and to provide redemption through His self-sacrifice.

Scripture is clear that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existing in the eternal Godhead. Without one member of the Godhead, God is incomplete and it can be said that He isn't the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the Jews chose to reject their Messiah they rejected the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They decided that He didn't measure up to their expectations of what God should be. Instead, they preferred ignorance and spiritual blindness that has been carried down through the ages until the time of the Gentiles should be completed.

No one with any understanding of end-time prophecy will deny that God is doing a tremendous work in the nation of Israel today. It is obvious that He is preparing that nation for His final revelation. It is through the Jews, after all, that God will effect His final phase of redemption in the world. But until that time comes, the Jew who does not receive Jesus as his Savior and Lord has no salvation. It is a certainty that he cannot even offer a sacrifice for his sins under the old Covenant. After Jesus was rejected by the Jews they were allowed some thirty-seven years to receive Him as Messiah. Then the Romans leveled the only authorized place that God had established for the offering of their sacrifices for atonement. The temple was destroyed; God cut them off and made it clear that, since they would not accept His sacrifice, He would not accept theirs. There was no longer any way for the Jews to atone for their sins. But the way to Christ has remained open all these centuries. All they have to do is

humble themselves and receive Him. Some have done so; most have not.

In rejecting Jesus—in refusing to worship Him as Savior and Lord—they refuse to worship God because, as Jesus said, “Whoever denies the Son, the same does not have the Father; he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (1 John 2:23).

While we must love the Jews and remember that, according to God’s original plan, salvation came through the Jews in the person of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, we cannot make the mistake of thinking that they are worshipping our God. To do so would be to deny the Gospel. It would be saying that the Jews are exempted from needing a Savior. God’s Word is clear that there can be no worship of the true God without His Son. To say that He would allow one segment of mankind to escape that requirement would make Him a respecter of persons. We can have no fellowship with anyone, Jew or Gentile, who rejects Jesus.

Carlton Pearson

Then there are those who preach a new kind of universalism—called “inclusion”—which says everyone is already saved; they just need to be told so. One example is self-proclaimed “bishop” Carlton Pearson, who appeared on a Trinity Broadcasting Network “revival” meeting in which he claimed God told him there is no hell. He told of going into a restaurant and declining the offer to sit in the bar while waiting for a table.

The Spirit of God spoke to me and said, “I’m over there.” He said, “Look at them drinking. The ones that are drinking themselves—you know why they’re drinking?”

I said, “No.” My quick answer: “Well, because they’re just sinners on their way to hell, glory to God!”

He said, “They’re drinking because you have not convinced them that I like them. Go over there and tell them. They’re trying to drink their guilt away.

“I’m talking about the Church. You have not convinced them that we love them. You have judged them, and criticized them, and put them down, and sent them to hell.

You don’t have no hell to send them to!

“They’re just—tell them my blood! They’re already bought; they just don’t know. I paid for their sins! They’re justified! They’re accepted! Tell them that I love them!...”

“You have convinced them—[you] in the religious world—that I don’t have good will toward them; that I’m angry, and I’m a judge, and I’m going to send them to hell! Tell them I have good will; I’m pleasantly disposed toward them!”...

I’m sitting in front of my television, eating my dinner with my new baby girl—she’s about three months old or something, Majesty—watching the news. The Tutsies and Hutus are returning from Zaire to Rwanda, and they’re dropping by the thousands on the road—flies caked in the corners of their eyes, and of their mouths, and sores all over their bodies, and they’re gaunt and drawn and starving to death. And I sat there with a plate full of food, and my baby in my arms, and I said—and I’ll be honest with you, I was angry—I said, “God, how can You call Yourself God, and let those people fall like that and just suck them right into hell?”

He said, “Oh, that’s what you think I’m doing?”

Now this is in my mind, God is speaking. I said, “Well, that’s what I’ve been taught.”...

He said, “Oh, you think I’m pulling them right into hell.” He said, “Do you believe that my Son died for them?”

I said, “Yes.”

“Do you believe that His blood can cover their sins?”

I said, “Yes.”

“Well, if you think they’re all going to hell, if you go over there and tell them, do you think that that would save them?”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Well how come you’re not on the first thing smokin’ to get over there?”

And I got mad. I said, “God, don’t put that guilt trip on me.”

I said it. I said, “Don’t put—don’t do it; I cannot save everybody.”

He said, “Exactly. I am the Savior.”

He said, “I’m not sucking them right into hell! They’re already in hell; can’t you see it? I’ve prepared a place for them.”

I said, “Wait a minute; wait a minute! They didn’t hear my message and respond to my ‘Just as I am’ song and altar appeal.”

He said, “My blood covers. While they were yet sinners I died for them. I was wounded for their transgressions; I was bruised for their”—we have not preached the full Gospel!

We don’t understand the finished work of Christ. We think they gotta all come in our way—our church, our altar call, our four spiritual laws.

I don’t believe that anymore. Now maybe you all don’t want me to come back, but I believe that Jesus covers sins. We are to tell them, “You’re justified! You’re forgiven! You just don’t know it! He owns you; He bought you!”

The devil has convinced you; he said “All of your righteousness is as filthy rags.”...

[God said], “Stop telling them to get saved, and start telling them they are saved.”

Wait, wait, wait, wait a minute now, wait a minute; they couldn’t be saved.

“What do you think I died for? You haven’t been preaching the Gospel right. You’ve been preaching your gospel, not Mine. Tell them that while they were yet sinners I died for them.”...

I said, “Wait, wait, wait, Lord, you’ve got to send somebody to hell! You know, we’ll have another Jerusalem council to try to—wait a minute Lord, some of these people gotta go to hell! You’ve gotta find a way for some of them!”

We would argue. If you found out that everybody was going to Heaven you’d lose your religion. “Somebody gotta go to hell, God, please!”

Now that’s not the love of God in our hearts.

Speaking of sinners who consider themselves unworthy to be in a church, Pearson tells them to forgive themselves:

First of all, accept God's love. I'm not going to tell you to stop sinning first, because you don't know how to do that by yourself. Accept God's love; accept His deliverance. Stop judging yourself. You see, you can't expect God's forgiveness if you don't forgive yourself.⁵

Notice that Pearson attributes God's Word to Satan: "The devil has convinced you; he said, 'All of your righteousness is as filthy rags.'"

How ungodly is that? To take a biblical truth, spoken by one of God's greatest prophets under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and attribute it to Satan. That in itself should convince us that Pearson was not hearing from God. And if not from God, then what demon gave him this "gospel"?

Pearson's doctrine of "inclusion" states simply that we do not need to tell people to get saved; we need to tell them that they are already saved. If this were true, that would have been the apostle Paul's response to his jailer:

Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." (Acts 16:29-31)

Why did Paul and Silas not simply say, "Don't worry, you're already saved"?

Paul further states that God desires that all men would come to salvation. Nowhere does he, or anyone else in Scripture, say that everyone is already saved, and all that is needed is for them to be told about it.

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men—for kings, and for all that are in authority—so that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty.

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved, and to

come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

Why is it necessary to pray for anyone to be saved if all are already saved?

I don't write these things in order to feel superior to these men. God knows I must guard myself from falling into error. Don't we all wish that everyone would be saved? Who among the saints wouldn't want to believe in universal salvation? But that is our humanity speaking. It is not the Spirit of God.

We do the lost no favor by suggesting to them that they are already saved, or that they can believe whatever they want, and live however they choose, without suffering the consequences deemed appropriate by the holy God who created them.

Joyce Meyer

Sadly, even those who do not believe in universal salvation have a difficult time articulating biblical truth when trying to publicly defend their position before skeptics. Joyce Meyer, a woman pastor and television teacher fumbled terribly with Larry King:

KING: Some people might have said, why not study Muslims, a religion with more members than yours? Why not study Judaism, a religion older than yours? Why Christianity? There are a lot of roads to God.

MEYER: Yes. I'm sure that – first of all, I didn't even think of anything else, because this is all I had ever heard about or known. And I know that question is always there. Well, what about this? What about that? What about something else?

KING: They believe as fervently as you do.

MEYER: All I know is this works. It's not only worked for me, but I've seen it work for literally thousands and thousands of people. I have seen the transformation on people's faces when they receive Christ. I've seen the glory come on them, the light. I've seen what's happened to my own father.

KING: If it works, don't knock it?

MEYER: Yes.

That's the best this "teacher" can muster? "If it works don't knock it"?

Every religion "works" for some, if not all, of its adherents. Otherwise it would cease to exist. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world because it "works" for many.

We do not believe because Jesus "works" for us. We believe because we have received grace from God through faith in His only-begotten Son.

Why could Meyer not correct King when he said, "there are a lot of roads to God"? Just because faith in Jesus was all she had ever heard or known doesn't make it true.

Sad to say, there is not a single major voice in Christianity who has taken full advantage of the exposure given through people like Larry King to proclaim that all are lost until they come to God through faith in Jesus Christ, and that there are no exceptions. Nor have any of the wafflers been publicly corrected by any major voices in Christianity.

The world continues to witness a weak, vacillating Christianity that can't make up its mind about whether or not Jesus really is the only way to God. But this is the central tenet of the faith. If He is not the only way to God, then He is a liar and we who believe what He said have been deluded, and nothing else we believe is of any consequence.

Yet more and more major voices in the Christian community are denying this essential truth and are rendering the Great Commission to the scrap heap.

What a disgrace! What a waste!❖

NOTES

1. "Interview with Joel Osteen," *Larry King Live*, CNN, July 3, 2005.
2. Interview with Billy Graham, *Larry King Live*, CNN, June 6, 2005.
3. Julia Dunn, *Houston Chronicle*, April 30, 1988, Religion, p. 1.
4. Interview with Pat Robertson, *Donahue*, NBC Television, June, 1987.
5. Carlton Pearson, Trinity Broadcasting Network, October, 1997.

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