

Discerning New Evangelicalism

Lesson Six

Joshua's Deathbed Warning

We cannot overemphasize the importance of separation from worldliness and unto God. The doctrine of grace involves the supernatural enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God as He divinely energizes the yielded believer (Romans 6:11-13 and 12:1-2) for the “work of the ministry.” This divine energizing is the result of “fellowship” with God that comes to the believer through repentance of sin (turning from it or separating from it), confession of sin (both our inward desires for it; the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;” and outward or inward acts of failure to any degree) and forgiveness with cleansing (I John 1: 7-9). Once the cleansing is accomplished the indwelling Spirit of God supernaturally empowers the believer from within for ministry. None of this can take place apart from understanding and practicing Biblical separation.

Joshua understood this principle. He had witnessed the departure of the Shechinah on numerous occasions in the forty years in the wilderness. He knew in a very real way the consequences of the departure of the Shechinah. Joshua was with Moses during the occasion with Balaam. He understood the dangers that are involved when God's people fail to remain separated. He worked diligently during his lifetime of leadership to keep the people of Israel separated. Other than a few instances, he was successful. Even on his deathbed he was preoccupied with this truth.

“⁶ Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom *to* the right hand or *to* the left; ⁷ That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear *by them*, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them: ⁸ But cleave unto the LORD your God, as ye have done unto this day. ⁹ For the LORD hath driven out from before you great nations and strong: but *as for* you, no man hath been able to stand before you unto this day. ¹⁰ One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the LORD your God, he *it is* that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you. ¹¹ Take good heed therefore unto yourselves, that ye love the LORD your God. ¹² Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, *even* these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you: ¹³ Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out *any of* these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you” (Joshua 23:6-13).

This single incident with Balaam stuck in the memory of Joshua and it should stick in our memory in that God is “the same, yesterday, today and forever.” There have been too many instances to mention of churches that have “perished from off this good land” because they failed to heed the warning of Joshua. Yes, they continue in the sense that they have buildings and people who come to services, but God is not there, not in the sense of blessing and power anyway. The Shechinah is not present when God's people are not separate from worldliness and apostasy.

Balaamism continues to haunt the church of Christ. Its spirit of compromise for personal gain and acceptance of men lives on in the hearts of many believers. The Bible speaks of this as “the way of Balaam” (II Peter 2:15), “the error of Balaam” (Jude 11) and “the doctrine of Balaam” (Rev. 2:14).

The “way of Balaam” was the desire for position with men rather than righteousness with God. Today we have many people who would rather tolerate the unrepentant rather than cause a problem. The real problem is that, to them, God is not real enough. To them, no problem is worth losing a friend or a church member over. The reality is that they do not want anyone to think them so radical as to confront someone with their unacceptable behavior. This person will always put a man and his position with men before God. Popularity and societal acceptance is a central concern of the “way of Balaam.”

The “error of Balaam” was that he attempted to manipulate God and the Word of God so that he might have the best of both worlds. He knew what was right and yet used that knowledge for personal gain. The “error of Balaam” is to think you can sit on the fence; to think you can walk the tight rope between the world and righteousness. This person always ends up living on the periphery of being right with God and on the border of the battlefield with the world never really meeting God and never really abandoning the world. This defines the “lukewarm” of the Laodicean Church (Revelation 3:14-22) and it disgusts God.

The “doctrine of Balaam” is the teaching that separation is not important and that unity at any cost and any compromise is the most important. That kind of teaching will always be a “stumbling block” to the children of God. It will always result in believers becoming involved with apostates (spiritual adultery) and the loss of both their distinctiveness and God’s blessing.

“¹ They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. ² Lift up thine eyes unto the high places, and see where thou hast not been lien with. In the ways hast thou sat for them, as the Arabian in the wilderness; and thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms and with thy wickedness. ³ Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed” (Jeremiah 3:1-3).

The saddest loss of all will be the loss of God’s hand of blessing upon churches and individuals. It will result in Christians who get out of the bondage of death and condemnation, but never get into the promise land victories that God intends for them. Their Christianity will become more of an inconvenience and problem with each passing year. The king Balaks of this world will persist in enticing these people to their side. The commandments of God will become an overwhelming burden and they will, eventually, talk themselves into fellowship with the world and out of God’s service.

“⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: ¹⁰ But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. ¹¹ And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand. ¹² And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, *even* the two kings of the Amorites; *but* not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. ¹³ And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat. ¹⁴ Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. ¹⁵ And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. . . ¹⁹ And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. ²⁰ If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. ²¹ And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. ²² And Joshua said unto the people, *Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.* ²³ Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel” (Joshua 24:9-15 and 19-23).

Apparently, Joshua had succeeded in ferreting out the public idolatry within the nation of Israel. The vast majority of this idolatry took the form of worshipping Jehovah in the form of one or more of the many idols of the nations they had encountered. This is very similar to modern day Ecumenicism where *God* can be worshipped in any form or under any name. For these people, neither is it important HOW *God* is worshipped. It is obvious from this portion of Scripture that this philosophy is not acceptable to God. Separation from worldly practices and false belief systems is essential to both acceptable worship and fellowship with God.

In verse 14, Joshua commands the children of Israel to serve the Lord “in sincerity and in truth.” This is the statement Christ refers to in John 4:24; “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.” Similar to the Samaritans referred to in John chapter four, Joshua’s admonition regarded Israel’s repeated use of pagan worship practices in the worship of Jehovah.

None of the OT sacrifices and rituals were salvational. They were intended to be practiced only by an already redeemed people. They had to do with maintaining fellowship with God. Any unscriptural practice or distortion of truth would defile the nation resulting in broken fellowship with God. Any breach of separation from worldliness and unto God will break our fellowship with God. Two things were essential to the acceptability of the sacrifices that would cleanse God’s people for fellowship with Him.

1. A sanctified Priesthood
2. A purity of purpose (heart) of the people

The following Scriptures are but a few that affirm this absolute essentials to acceptable worship or fellowship/ministry.

“¹⁰ In the four and twentieth *day* of the ninth *month*, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹ Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests *concerning* the law, saying, ¹² If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. ¹³ Then said Haggai, If *one that is* unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. ¹⁴ Then answered Haggai, and said, So *is* this people, and so *is* this nation before me, saith the LORD; and so *is* every work of their hands; and that which they offer there *is* unclean” (Haggai 2:10-14).

“³ Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? ⁴ He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. ⁵ He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. ⁶ This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah” (Psalm 24:3-6).

“¹⁹ Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. ²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. ²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, *and* prepared unto every good work. ²² Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (II Timothy 2:19-22).

“⁵ Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and *of* a good conscience, and *of* faith unfeigned: ⁶ From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; ⁷ Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (I Timothy 1:5-7).

For those that measure righteousness by the standards of worldly success, remember, *Pay Day is not always on Friday!*

“¹⁵ And the mean man shall be brought down, and the mighty man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled: ¹⁶ But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness. ¹⁷ Then shall the lambs feed after their manner, and the waste places of the fat ones shall strangers eat. ¹⁸ Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart rope: ¹⁹ That say, Let him make speed, *and* hasten his work, that we may see *it*: and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know *it*! ²⁰ Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! ²¹ Woe unto *them that are* wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! ²² Woe unto *them that are* mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink: ²³ Which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! ²⁴ Therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, *so* their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the LORD of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel” (Isaiah 5:15-24).

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1. Discuss the *Doctrine of Grace* as it relates to your personal separation from worldliness and unto God.

2. Read Joshua 23:6-13. Discuss this text as it relates to Israel's history during the 40 years in the wilderness; especially regarding Joshua's understanding of the times of the departure of the Shechinah. _

3. Discuss the warning of Joshua 23:11 and how it applies to Christians today. _____

4. The Bible says that God is the "same, yesterday, today and forever." How does this truth relate to the history of God's dealings with Israel and His present day dealings with the Church? _____

5. In what way is the "error of Balaam" similar to the Laodicean Church (new Evangelicalism) and what is God's attitude towards both of these errors? _____

6. Read Jeremiah 3:1-3. Discuss spiritual adultery, what defines it and what it means to have a "whore's forehead." _____

7. Read Joshua 24:14. Discuss the meaning of the statement, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth . . ." _____

8. Read Joshua 24:19. Discuss the meaning of the statement, "Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he *is* an holy God; he *is* a jealous God" from the context of Joshua chapter 24. _____

9. How was the private integration of pagan worship methodologies in the worship of Jehovah similar to the Ecumenicism of modern day *Christianity*? _____

10. List the two essentials for the acceptability of sacrifices (the means of restoring broken fellowship with God). _

11. Read Isaiah 5:15-24. I Timothy 1:6 talks about "vain jangling." Modern day New Evangelicals measure the rightness of their methodologies by the results those methodologies produce (pragmaticism). Discuss Isaiah's warning to Israel as it relates to this false notion. _____
