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BEHOLD, THE LAMB AND THE LION

By Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" --John 1:36
"Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah..."
-- Rev. 5:5

Preachers and other teachers constantly urge us to be more Christ-like. "The spirit of Christ", "the mind of Christ", "Christ-like", "Christ-like spirit" are terms used to express the same idea.

We can find no fault with these expressions when taken at face value. A Christian should be able to sing "more like Jesus would I be" and mean it.

However, when one hears these terms, he would do well to stay tuned for the details. The speaker's Jesus may not be the Biblical Jesus. His Jesus may be of the modern imagination -- a passive, ever-smiling, back-patting, soft-spoken, all-embracing Jesus who would never ever be critical of people much less become upset with them enough to raise his voice to them.

This is the Jesus that we are urged to become like by a few brethren who are specializing in freeing the church of the pharisaic spirit and restoring "the spirit of Christ". This is a noble work, if in fact this what they are really doing. Again, one needs to stay turned for the details. If

one listens carefully he may sense that these students of the pharisaic spirit have, in fact, caught the disease through the back door. They thank God that they are not as other brethren are: proud, boastful, negative and condemning but are humble, sweet, positive and up-lifting as they represent the spirit of Christ(?) in the world.

Their distorted portrayal of Jesus, not only weakens the gospel and the church, it undermines the efforts and undercuts the moral support of good brethren who are trying their best to obey the divine charge "preach the word! ... convince (reprove KJV), rebuke and exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching". (2 Tim. 4:2). They despise those who "rebuke with all authority" (Titus 2:15), especially those who "rebuke them sharply" (Titus 1:13). They often suggest to audiences that such preaching may well be the main obstacle hindering our taking the world for Christ. Oh, yes, they can occasionally be stirred to break out of their version of the spirit of Jesus long enough to rebuke sharply those who rebuke sharply.

Jesus was both "the lamb of God" and "the lion... of Judah". One can hardly reflect the spirit of the real Jesus

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MAKING GOD IN MAN'S IMAGE

By Paul C. Keller

We frequently form our conceptions of things we do not know by forming a mental picture based upon things we do know. For example, one may read or hear of a place where he has not been and as he tries to picture it in his mind he likens it to things in places he has been. Or, one may be told about a certain person, may talk to him by phone or hear him speak by means of radio, and based upon but little information he has he forms a mental picture as to the appearance, personality and characteristics of that person. More frequently than not we find our conclusions drawn in this manner to be incorrect, and when we visit the place or become acquainted with the person we find them to be much different than we had thought. Notwithstanding the frequent mistakes we have experienced in our conclusions drawn in this manner, which ought to impress us of the folly and undependability of such reasoning, many people use this very method in forming their conceptions of Jehovah God. Because of this, there are many misconceptions concerning God.

Having learned that man was made in the image of God and that God is a person, and while readily conceding that it is the spiritual part of man which was created in the image of God, men are prone, nevertheless, to visualize God as being somewhat like man in physical appearance. Furthermore, men are prone to disregard what the Bible says about the nature and character of God and they begin thinking that God is like man instead of recognizing that man was made in the image of God they begin to make God in the image of man. This was the mistake made by some of whom we read in the 50th Psalm. These wicked ones were charged with hating instruction and casting God's words behind them, consenting with thieves and partaking with adulterers, giving their mouth to evil and their tongue framing deceit, speaking against their brother and slandering their own mother's sons (vv. 16-20). Through

the Psalmist, God said the reason underlying their sins was, "Thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thyself." (v. 21) Thinking God was like man they thought they could "get by with" the committing of these sins. Many make the same mistake today.

Thing God is like man causes men to reach many false conclusions. Because a man is able to hide from other men he gets to thinking he can hide from God. When Adam and Eve had sinned they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." (Gen. 3:8) Their effort did not succeed. We will do well to read Psalms 139:7-12 and seriously consider the fact that while we may sometimes hide ourselves and our sins from men we never hide any thing from God.

One man can deceive another man. Some there are who are very practiced, and very proficient, in the art of deception -- even some who claim membership in the Lord's church. Knowing it is possible to deceive men, Ananias and Sapphira his wife practiced deception in keeping back part of the price when they had sold a possession. But they had lied not merely to men "but unto God." Because of this attempt to deceive, both died. (Acts 5) A reading of Psalm 139:1-6 will remind us that we do not deceive God.

Man is often slack in his word; he may faithfully promise to do a thing and then fail to perform it. So many times men have broken their promises to us. Not infrequently have we made promises which we failed to fulfill. Knowing that men are that way may lead one to think God is that way, and hence, cause him to disregard the teaching, the commands, promises and warnings of God. But the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. (2 Pet. 3:9) All He has promised He will do. His commands are to be obeyed; his warnings are to be heeded.

Man can be bribed into approval. While we do not believe the frequently

without beholding Him in both capacities. Emphasizing either at the expense of the other gives one a warped picture of the real image of Jesus.

Jesus could look at some people and be moved with compassion (Mk. 6:34) and look upon others with anger. (Mk. 3:5).

He could weep at the prospects of the destruction of His beloved Jerusalem (Luke 19:41; cf. Matt. 23:37) after calling its religious leaders "Serpents, brood of vipers!" and rhetorically asking them "How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

He could be both tender and tough. He could lay his hands on little children and pray for them and then, just two chapters later, use the same hands to overturn the tables of the moneychangers and drive them from the temple. (Matt. 21:12-13; cf. John 2:15).

He could answer the cries of the blind men for mercy by compassionately touching their eyes (Matt. 20:29-34) and a little later, say to the Pharisees "Woe to you, blind guides, ... Fools and blind". (Matt. 23:16,17).

He could even sometimes cry out as He taught some who opposed Him. (John 7:28). Now, such crying out is a definite "no, no" to many who have reconstructed the "Christ-like spirit" for us.

Stephen is correctly held up as one who possessed the "spirit of Christ" as his dying words were "Lord, do not charge them with this sin", (Acts 7:60) just as Jesus' had been "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do". (Luke 23:34). Such a forgiving spirit is indeed indicative of the true spirit of Jesus and is direly needed in the church today. What spirit was Stephen imitating when he, just moments before, concluded his speech to the Jews with "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the

direction of angels and have not kept it?" (vv. 51-55) Did not these words also reflect Stephen's Christ-likeness? All of this was uttered by one "full of the Holy Spirit" (v. 55).

What a pity it would be if we could only see the toughness of Jesus without His tenderness, His boldness without his benevolence, or His strictness without His sensitivity. We would have a warped picture of what we ought to be like. Conversely, it would be tragic to see only His tenderness without His toughness, His benevolence without His boldness, or His sensitivity without His strictness.

Let us both behold the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah as we sing "more like Jesus would I be".

J. H. Moody

Brother Moody, who was for many years a member of this congregation, passed away Oct 17. For the past few years he attended at Skyline Drive. Our sympathy goes out to his family.

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repeated saying, "every man has his price," there is ample evidence that many, many men can be "bought". Bribes, "kick-backs", "pay-offs", etc. are so generally practiced that too few people even question the propriety. It come to be expected, a "way to get things done". Since a man himself will take "pay-offs" and he can bribe other men he gets to thinking he can bribe God. The giving of some may not be motivated by love for the Lord and zeal for His cause but may rather be their efforts to appease the wrath of an offended God. We definitely get the impression from some that they think their frequent attendance to church services will cause God to overlook their indulgence in sinful pleasures, their worldliness and carnality, their materialism and greed, their sinfulness and ungodliness. However, Jehovah God needs nothing from man. In that 50th Psalm there is this reminder of the Lord: "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." (v. 12) On Mar's Hill, Paul taught, "the God that made the world ... dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is he served by men's hands, as though he needed anything ..." (Acts 17:24,25) The living God cannot be bribed into approval.

Man thinks lightly of sin; does not regard it as a matter that is really serious. This is the attitude of many in the church as well as the people of the world. Thinking lightly of sin, men continue to indulge themselves in unbridled lusts, and they encourage others to do so. Since they do not think sin is a serious matter they expect the Lord to have the same attitude. In this, they are mistaken. Sin separates men from God. (Isa. 59:1,2) To die in sins means that one cannot go to heaven. (Jno. 8:24; Rev. 21:27) The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23); "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" is the destiny of the wicked. (Rev. 21:8) God does not regard sin lightly and, for His own good, neither should man.

Man thinks one religion is as good as any other. Many there are who delight to express this opinion, loudly, often, and

repeatedly to all who will listen. When one so thinks he gives little thought to the importance of learning the truth, and puts forth little effort toward, learning the truth. Furthermore, he deceives himself into thinking the Lord regards one religion to be as good as any other religion. But, alas, God does not think like man thinks. (Isa. 55:8,9) Jesus taught that it is the truth that makes men free (Jno. 8:32), and that God's word is the standard of truth. (Jno. 17:17) Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." (Matt. 15:13-14) The apostle Paul wrote, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed ... If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. 1:8,9) The apostle John wrote, "Whosoever transgresseth (goeth onward, ASV), and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God ..." (2 Jno. 9) Such statements as these from the word of God make it clear that God does not regard one religion as good as another.

The only correct conception of God is to be learned from His word, as He has given us a revelation concerning Himself and His will. We will do far better to learn what the Bible reveals about God than to reason about him from the standpoint of man's wisdom. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:25). Let us not try to make God into the image of man. Even though God say the sins of those who though He "was altogether such an one" as themselves, and for a time "kept silence", He warned: "...but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." (Psa. 50:21,22) This is a principle upon which God has always dealt with man. Let us learn it, and let us heed the warnings involved in it.

-- from Pause - Ponder - Profit