

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

I GOT USED TO IT

A few years ago, during my college days, I heard a youth worker proclaim, "I, too, had a problem with hand clapping at youth devotionals, but I got used to it." Is this not how all errors, innovations, and apostasies begin, people just get used to it?

Since Christ returned to His heavenly Father some 2000 years ago, after He had sealed His new covenant with His precious blood, men have sought to tamper and change His divine standard. For example, Jesus states, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Along the way some began to teach otherwise, that salvation as not dependent on a person being immersed in water. Perhaps many cried out against such as erroneous doctrine, but soon many "got used to it."

Paul stated that baptism is a burial (Romans 6:3,4). However, as time went by, some began to substitute other modes such as pouring, dipping, or even sprinkling. Perhaps many cried out against such a falsehood, but soon man "got used to it."

Jesus declared, "*Upon this rock I will build my (singular) church*" (Matthew 16:18). Paul so affirmed when he wrote, "*There is one body*" (Ephesians 4:4). It wasn't long, though, until many began to divide into various religious groups, or denominations. Perhaps many cried out against such divisions, but soon many "got used to it."

The Scriptures are absolutely silent with regard to instrumental music being used in the worship assembly. Jesus tell us that the only worship pleasing to God is that which is done "*in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24), and Paul said to "*sing and make melody in your heart to the Lord*" (Ephesians 5:19). As time passed, some though worship needed to be "improved" and mechanical instruments were brought into the worship assembly. Perhaps many cried out against such heresy, but soon many "got used to it."

We are told that the early Christians came together upon the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). Time would change this practice, however. "Scholarly" individuals decided that upon every first day of the week was too often, somehow the remembrance of the Lord's death would lose its significance. Perhaps many cried out against its exclusion in worship, but soon many "got used to it."

All throughout the centuries man has gotten sued to doing that which God never authorized or not doing that which God did authorize. Even in the church today, it is amazing to find how God's word is disrespected and abused. Many in our younger generation who were taught the fundamentals of the faith since early childhood, now allow themselves, along with their children, to sit in buildings week after week whose pulpits are filled with liberal preachers who compromise or distort God's truth. The heresies that abound in these pulpits are numerous: salvation by grace alone, total depravity, women teaching over men, cooperation with denominations, instrumental music in worship become a non-issue. How do people being to accept such doctrines that contradict clear and plain Bible teaching? They do so the same way they have accepted hand clapping at youth devotionals—they "get used to it."

Those who would teach these damnable doctrines and those who follow such teachers have left the doctrine of Christ and thus are guilty of sin (II John 9-11). If one fails to repent, he will forever be lost in a devil's hell (II Peter 2:1,4). One thing is for sure in eternal torment, it is eternal, and no one will ever "get used to it."

-Barry Grider

A COMMON PEACE IN CHRIST

A NEW ATTITUDE

Text: _____

I. The Peace _____

Notes:

II. The Peace _____

Notes:

III. The Peace _____

Notes:

IV. The Peace _____

Notes:

SO GREAT SALVATION

Text: _____

I. Christ is the Better _____

Notes:

II. Christ is the Better _____

Notes:

III. Christ is the Better _____

Notes:

1. Give people more than they expect—cheerfully (Philemon 21).
2. Don't believe all you hear, spend all you have, or sleep all you want.
3. Smile when answering the phone. Callers can hear it in your voice.
4. Remember that great love and great achievements involve great risk.
5. When you say, "I'm sorry," look the person in the eye.
6. Be engaged at least six months before you get married.
7. Believe in love at first sight.
8. Spend some time alone (Matthew 14:23).
9. When you say, "I love you," mean it (I Peter 1:22).
10. Never laugh at a dream. People without dreams don't have much.
11. Don't let a little dispute injure a great friendship (Proverbs 27:10).
12. Talk slowly but think quickly (James 1:19).
13. Don't judge people by their relatives (Matthew 7:1).
14. Marry a man/woman you love to talk to (I Peter 3:7).
15. Do an anonymous kindness each day (Ephesians 4:32).
16. When you lose, don't lose the lesson (James 1:1-3).
17. When you make a mistake, take immediate steps to correct it.
18. In disagreements, fight fairly. No name calling, threats, or bringing up ancient history.
19. Remember the three R's: Respect for self; Respect for others; and Responsibility for all your actions.
20. When someone asks you a question you don't want to answer, smile and ask, "Why do you want to know?"
21. Love deeply and passionately. You might get hurt but it's the only way to live life completely.

DEATH, AT NINE

A group of nine-year-olds was asked their opinions on the subject of death. Jim said, "When you die, they bury you in the ground and your soul goes to heaven; but your body can't go to heaven because its too crowded up there already."

Judy answered, "Only the good people go to heaven. The other people go where it's hot all the time like in Florida."

John replied, "Maybe I'll die someday, but I hope I don't die on my birthday because it's no fun to celebrate your birthday if you're dead."

Marsha added, "When you die, you don't have to do homework in heaven, unless your teacher is there too."

THE BOOK OF DIVINE SUPERIORITY

The book of Hebrews stands out among the numerous epistles of the New Testament for several reasons. First, the epistle is anonymous. All of the other epistles clearly are claimed by the writer, but Hebrews is not. This has caused a great deal of confusion among many for a long time; however, its unity with all of the rest of the Bible clearly marks its inspiration. Therefore even though the penman may not be known, there is no question the author was indeed God. Second, the book of Hebrews stands out because of its subject. While other of the epistles **dealt with** Christians with Jewish backgrounds, this epistle was written specifically **to** Christians with Jewish backgrounds. There was a very specific problem arising and the means by which the author goes about to instruct the readers marks the book as true masterpiece. Then, third, Hebrews stands out because of its arrangement. In order to help those to whom he was writing, the author went about to go almost point by point and disprove that to which they were so tempted to return. And though many other reasons could be noted, at least these three clearly indicate the unique nature of this marvelous book.

In order to understand the book of Hebrews it is absolutely essential to get some insight into its purpose. Scattered throughout the epistle are numerous references to persecution, trials, and temptations (Hebrews 5:12-6:3; 10:23-25; 12:3-4; 13:22; etc.). Given this and other evidence throughout the book and from history, it has been generally concluded that:

“Because of bitter persecution, the Jewish Christians addressed seemed to think that in espousing Christ they had lost everything. They had a tendency to disbelieve Christ and to undervalue their blessings and privileges in Christ. Absorbed with their sufferings, they were in danger of falling away from Christ. By filling their minds with the glory of Christ, and the grandeur of His work, the writer shows that instead of losing all, they had gained all” (Dunn).

And putting yourself in the shoes of the writer, seeing the great emotional and spiritual struggle with which the audience was faced, how would be the best way to approach their downward spiral? Simply put, the best way to convince these Christians from a Jewish background that they should remain in Christianity rather than revert back to Judaism is to tell them about the superiority of Christ and Christianity. Lay it all on the table side by side, and point by point, and prove by each that a life in Christ is better because Christ Himself is better. That would make the most sense, and inspired by God, that is the exact tactic used by the writer. In fact, in thirteen ways the book of Hebrews compares Christianity to Judaism and concludes honestly and forthrightly that the better life is in Christ. What are these examples?

1. Christ is superior to the prophets (Hebrews 1:1-4).
2. Christ is superior to the angels (Hebrews 1:4-2:18).
3. Christ is superior to Moses (Hebrews 3:1-19).
4. Christ is superior to Joshua (Hebrews 4:1-8).
5. Christ offers a superior rest (Hebrews 4:9-13).
6. Christ is superior to Aaron (Hebrews 4:14-5:10).
7. Christ has the superior priesthood (Hebrews 6:13-10:18).
8. Christ has the superior covenant (Hebrews 8:6-10:18).
9. Christ is the superior atonement (Hebrews 9:1-10:18).
10. Christ has the superior tabernacle (Hebrews 9:1-10:18).
11. Christ is the superior way (Hebrews 10:19-11:40).
12. Christ offers the superior relationship to God (Hebrews 12:1-29).
13. Christ has a superior work and worship (Hebrews 13:1-21)

That essentially is the book of Hebrews. Christ is the superior One and offers the superior way. And while the circumstances through which a temptation to draw one's self away from Christ may be different the way to counter it has not changed a bit. Is denominationalism appealing to you? Christ's way is better! Does the carnal world of atheism look tempting? Christ's way is better! Are the feel good ways of the world pulling at your heart? Christ's way is better! Whatever to which you might be looking as a pleasing alternative to Christianity, do not be fooled. Once and for all let it be known and shouted from the rooftops—Christ is superior!

-Andy Brewer