

JESUS IS THE WAY**THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE**

New York Mayor Rudy Guilliani spoke before the United Nations following 9/11. He said that on a typical weekend he visits an Islamic mosque on Friday and a Christian church on Sunday. His perspective on religion is that both groups worship the same God, but in different ways. Is he right? Are both acceptable religious paths to the same place?

Jesus would disagree with the honorable mayor. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Let's analyze His statement.

"I" - personal. Take Buddha out of Buddhism or Mohammed out of Islam, and little would change, but take Jesus out of Christianity, and nothing would be left. Christianity is not a philosophy or ethic but a personal relationship with a living Savior.

A missionary once needed to visit a remote village. There was no airstrip near it or road that went to it. The only way to reach it was a long walk through the jungle. A young boy was selected to guide him there. The journey started easily enough—the path was easy to follow. Soon, however, the path disappeared and the boy began to cut a path in the overgrown jungle with his machete. After a while, the missionary feared the boy was not up for the job. He asked, "Where is the path?"

The guide looked back at the missionary, smiled, and said simply, "I am the path."

Jesus said simply, "I am the path." When man needed to know the way to heaven, Jesus did not send an angel to point in its direction; He did not tap a dignitary to lead a movement to find its source; He did not convene a council to study the situation. He came personally (John 1:14). When He arrived He did not say that He knew a way, that He had a map of the way, or that He had read a book once that had valuable information about the way. He personally claimed to be the way: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

"Am" - present. Jesus has not been on earth for 1976 years, but we do not refer to Him in the past tense, as we do with the Caesars, Pilate, and Josephus. Why? Because these historical figures are no longer present. Jesus is. He is still with us (Matthew 28:20). Christ is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Christians do not worship statues of a dead Christ; they worship their resurrected Lord. The day is coming when "every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11). Thus the choice is not between worshipping Jesus and refusing to worship Him. The only choice is when we begin that worship and how we conduct it.

"The" - exclusive. Jesus makes the claim that the only way to God is through Him. This dogmatism does not sit well with our culture. Jesus could claim to be "a" way and not raise an eyebrow, but when He claims to be "the" way, He raises a ruckus.

Our young people are challenged on this point. When they take a comparative religion course their freshman year of college, for instance, they are informed that Christianity is just one expression of religion. Jesus Christ is just a leader among leaders, a founder among founders. Yet to compromise this one truth is to give up on the Bible and lose any hope of salvation. Christians is exclusive of it is nothing at all. Jesus put it simply: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Moses, the founder of Judaism, explained that his religion would be superseded by another prophet who is clearly identified in the New Testament as Jesus (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Acts 3:22). Moses commanded that preeminence be given to Him: "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23).

There is no eastern religion and western religion. There is only true religion and false religion. There is only divine-sanctioned religion and human-origin religion.

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

**WHAT DOES IT TRULY
MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?
SWIMMING UP STREAM**

Text: _____

I. It Means we are Different in _____

Notes:

II. It Means we are Different in _____

Notes:

III. It Means we are Different in _____

Notes:

PRAYER WILL KEEP US BUSY

continued from last week

Prayer will Keep Elders Busy

Just as in the case of parents or preachers, a man serving as an elder should not have to find something to keep him busy. The task of an elder is impossible to accurately measure with words. Truly Paul called it a work (1 Timothy 3:1). Those who do not view it as such are doing the Lord’s church a serious and destructive injustice.

Remember that the work of an elder involves feeding, guarding, tending, and leading the sheep. As God arranged, the elders in a particular location are only responsible for the sheep of that congregation. Even so, being responsible for 50 to 500 souls is sometimes a daunting task. For this reason, God gave explicit and detailed qualifications that a man must meet before serving as an elder (1 Timothy 3:1ff). As you read through those qualifications in the future, ask yourself this question: Could a man possess these traits if he were not a man of daily, faithful prayer? The answer is undeniably, no! Elders are to be men of prayer.

In turn, those prayers will keep them busy in the work God has for them to do. Their minds and hearts will be more attuned to what the flock needs. Their senses will be aware of danger posed to the

Christianity is an all-the-world-every-creature religion (Mark 16:15-16). There is nowhere else to go, no one else to whom to turn. Peter acknowledged the human condition when he said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Peter further declared of Christ: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The Spirit asked the rhetorical question: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3).

There is one mediator between God and man, and His name is Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5-6). All spiritual blessings are found in Him—and none outside of Him (Ephesians 1:3). We must not reject Him: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25).

“Way” - practical. When Jesus came, the world did not need an advisor. The world had advised itself into mass confusion. The world did need a philosopher. The three great philosophers—Aristotle, Plato, Socrates—had already lived and the world still sat in darkness. The world did not want a reformer, a man who could tweak what was already in place and make it work. It did not need an engineer to readjust the wheels and pulleys and the mechanical forces of society. The world needed a Savior! Earth rejoiced, then, when Luke recorded, “Unto you is born this day...a Savior” (Luke 2:11).

Jesus is the way to the Father’s house (John 14:1-3). The word translated “rooms” or “mansions” (KJV) comes from the verb that means “abide” or “remain.” God’s dwelling place—and ours—is not a temporary shelter; it is an eternal home.

Jesus is the way to salvation. Salvation centers around one name: Jesus! The name *Jesus* means “salvation of Jehovah.” The words “save” and “savior” are found in Scripture 386 times (in various forms). The name “Jesus” is found 983 times. Jesus is referred directly as “Savior” sixteen times in the New Testament.

Jesus is the way to the church (Galatians 3:26-27).

Jesus is the way to joy and purpose (John 10:10).

Won’t you join us in following Jesus, the path to heaven?

-Allen Webster

if they have prayed daily for those needs to be met. Their senses will be aware of danger posed to the flock by false teachers if they have prayed for wisdom to determine such. Their compassion for the flock will be evident if they have prayed for them with tears filling their eyes.

Certainly prayer will motivate all of us to be busier in the things that matter. Parents, preachers, and elders, may we utilize this tool and incorporate it in our daily routines.

-Wayne Jones

DUMBER THAN A DRUNK MONKEY-1

It is a vice that has tightened its grip upon the masses of mankind virtually throughout the history of the world. Its dangers are obvious and consequences well documented. It has severed marriages, broken homes, left its victims in moral and financial ruin, and torn lives apart. Yet more and more people, instead of running away from it, are found running into its arms, seeking the “comforts” and “entertainment” they believe it can provide. Billions have had to learn the hard way that this “social past time” is in reality a social and spiritual disaster. Television tries to distinguish it as a sign of intelligence, attractiveness, authority, and popularity; but rather than being a sign of distinction, Solomon would characterize it in this way: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging; and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

T.B. Larimore used to tell the story of a man he knew in Nashville who had a pet monkey named Jack: “This man had some blackberry wine that was quite intoxicative. He had Jack on a leash in the back yard of his place. He decided one day to fill Jack’s cup with the wine. Jack went over and began to gulp down the wine. Soon he was a drunk monkey. He reeled and staggered around the yard in characteristic style of one under the influence of strong drink. The owner gave Jack sufficient time to regain his sobriety again. Then he proceeded with step number two of the experiment. Again he filled Jack’s cup with the blackberry wine. Jack went over and sniffed this time. The first sniff was sufficient. This time he went just as far away from the cup of wine as the leash would allow. The owner said he had a look on his face that seemed to be saying, “Master, you make a man out of me once, from now on I am staying a monkey!” (Taylor, How Young People Get Hurt, pg. 7).

Sadly, there are many humans that are not as bright as that monkey, because they return again and again to the cup that contains strong drink. In that way they are indeed dumber than a drunk monkey! At least he learned his lesson the first time. Others go an entire lifetime given to this vice of the devil, resolved to depart earthly scenes before they would depart the grasp of their favorite drink. The world loves is liquor and will defend its use till the end. But what is sadder is that there are even some Christians that seek every conceivable justification to be involved in the same. However, to the Bible we must go to determine God’s view of alcoholic consumption.

The Bible’s condemnation of alcohol consumption. When the Bible condemns the consumption of alcohol, it does so by the avenue of any form and any amount. The reason such a statement is necessary is because of the ever increasing popularity of the concept that the Bible does condemn drunkenness, but never “social drinking” in a “moderated form”. The clear conclusion that shall be reached is that there is no Biblical distinction between the two. There is nothing social about drinking, and there is no form or amount that justifies its use.

Begin by noting a few passages of scripture that clearly states the Biblical position of drinking:

- Psalm 75:8—“For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out, and drink them.”
- Proverbs 23:31-32—“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.”
- Isaiah 5:22—“Woe unto them that are mighty to drink wine, and men of strength to mingle strong drink...”
- Isaiah 28:7—“But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are out of the way through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”

Is there any doubt that these passages illustrate a strong condemnation of alcoholic consumption? And notice that none of them merely mention drunkenness (though several do—Romans 13:13; Galatians 5:21, etc.), but condemn the generic consumption of alcohol in any moderation, whether large or small. It is the consumption that is condemned, not the amount. However, some would interject at this point that the Bible does refer to “wine” in an uncondemned fashion. But know that while it might refer to “wine” without condemnation, it never refers to alcohol without condemnation. How can such be said? - *to be continued*