

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;” (1 Peter 2:9 KJV)

Christ’s church *is* distinctive. It is *not* like the numerous denominations in the world today. It *is* different. It is different by the design of its Maker and the One who purchased it with His blood. There *is* a right way and there is a wrong way for His church to function. That right way can *only* be determined by using the instruction manual He left for us — the Bible. What better way can there possibly be to understand the Bible than by relying on the *direct commands* contained within its pages, the *examples of the Apostles* listed throughout its pages and the *necessary implications* or inferences made clear in it? Once we as Christians, begin to look at the instruction manual *He* gave us and say “*Did God really say...?*” Satan has taken us down the wrong fork in the road and *that road* has absolutely *no* stopping places. Most *any* practice or belief can be justified if we no longer take the Scriptures at face value but instead, like Eve, begin to take God’s *clearly* spoken Words and fall victim to Satan’s temptation of “*Did God really say...?*”

The “old” hermeneutics has built in stops on a number of issues effecting the Church today. When a practice or belief must pass the book, chapter, verse test, there *are* restraints and restrictions. *That’s* why many current day preachers, teachers and Christians *had* to come up with a *new* hermeneutic — one that could replace the centuries old approach. The Scriptures *are* restrictive in *many* areas. Some of the practices that many desire to implement are clearly not allowed with a book, chapter, verse hermeneutics. God left us His instruction manual to follow and to live by. It is the only way and the only source that can tell us how to have *Jesus* — His Way not *Jesus* — Your Way.

Christians who begin to see what they perceive as “small” changes in their congregations *and* who begin to hear Biblical foundational Truths referred to as merely “traditions” should listen closely for the serpent hissing in the background. When those who defend basic Biblical foundational practices and beliefs are ridiculed for their old fashioned views and are called Bible Police, Pharisees. Legalists, etc., it is certain that *Jesus* — Your Way is becoming more important than *Jesus* — His Way. And as a matter of fact — yes! — God *DID* really say...! Never let Satan convince you that God *DIDN’T* really say what is *clearly* revealed in His inspired Word by using some “new hermeneutics” to explain it away through confusion and doubt. Satan used the very same method of deception to convince Eve that God *meant* something different than what He clearly *told* her. Brethren, we have God’s Inspired Word. It’s *not* confusing. Let us live by it!

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DILIGENCE

“We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure.” — Hebrews 6:11

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Special Note — We neglected to mention in the December 1st issue that we take a break during the holiday season and do not publish a December 15th and a January 1st issue of Diligence. Thanks for your inquires.

Jesus — Your Way in 2024 (Or Sooner)

Nearly eighteen years ago the Owens family moved to the Cincinnati area and selected a local congregation of believers with whom we intended to worship for many years to come. Although we recently left that particular congregation, we worshiped there for over 17 years.

Shortly after our move to Cincinnati, our oldest son Ryan, accepted Christ in the watery grave of baptism and a few years later our youngest son Evan, made that same decision.

The congregation where we worshiped for those 17+ years allowed their young men opportunities to speak from time to time if they so desired and our sons took advantage of those opportunities.

On May 13th, 2001 Evan prepared and delivered a sermon that he entitled *Jesus, Your Way in 2024*. The thrust of that sermon was that the “small” departures from the Word that were beginning to show their face at the time he delivered that sermon, would soon *not* be so small if left to continue down the fork of the road that appeared to be in progress at that time.

Evan believed that choosing to “bend” the Scriptures in areas that *seemed* at the time to be small (or fuzzy gray areas), would lead to huge consequences on down the road. As it turned out, his fears that prompted that 2001 sermon have indeed become a reality, and much sooner than in 2024.

There is in the Church today, a movement that many would refer to as a full blown apostasy that *began* with very small departures from the Scriptures. There are those who want to make *major* changes in the church. However since the final goal that they desire to reach attacks the very *foundation* of the church, it could never be accomplished in one bold move. There would be far too much resistance. The changes would be *much* too obvious if not done in small *incremental* steps that seem at first to be of little consequence. So in order to accomplish their goal it has been *necessary* to *begin* with *small* departures from the Scriptures. This use of *incrementalism* is a tactic being used by Satan to slowly erode the very

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foundational beliefs of the New Testament Church. What is the *real* tragedy however is that many Christians are sitting quietly by, not wishing to voice objections to what they are being told are only *small* changes. Their silence is allowing Satan to use the power of incrementalism to slowly subvert the Gospel of Christ and change their congregation into something *other* than the New Testament Church for which Christ died. Practices and beliefs that could *never* be accomplished in one large “package” *are* being accomplished in a series of small incremental steps that are a departure from the Word of God. That departure from the Word is being accomplished as a result of Christians falling victim to the same temptation that the serpent presented to Eve in the Garden of Eden.

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’ The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’ ‘You will not surely die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’” (Gen. 3:1-5 NIV)

So what was the key phrase Satan used to entice Eve to sin? It was “*Did God really say...?*” Anytime Satan wishes to gain a hold on an individual or on a group of individuals, casting *doubt* on the Word of God is certainly an easy way to do it. It worked with Eve and it’s working in churches today.

For many centuries, Bible scholars of *all* persuasions and beliefs have tirelessly combed the Word to determine how mankind can be pleasing to God. While it is true that those scholars have frequently disagreed on how best to accomplish that goal, they *have* for the most part, *approached* their studies with a consistency of *methods*. Those methods employed such things as examining the context of any given verse, considering the historical facts surrounding it, the meaning of the original language, the customs of the times, etc. After applying these methods to their studies, the practices and beliefs determined to be *acceptable* in the church then rested on the presence of three factors — direct command, Apostolic example and necessary inference or implication. So in other words, even though the *conclusions* of the Bible scholars have often not been the same, their *approach* to studying and interpreting the Scriptures *has been* consistent for many centuries.

Now however, some in the church today have decided that the Bible scholars have been *wrong* and that the Scriptures can be approached with “new hermeneutics” — or a *new way* of interpreting the Scriptures. Why has this become so popular *and* so necessary? Because to get from *Jesus — the Bible Way* to *Jesus — Your Way* it is *necessary* to approach the Scriptures differently than they have ever before been approached. Brethren who want *Jesus — Your Way*

simply can not get to where they want to be with a book, chapter, verse — command, example, and necessary inference hermeneutics. There is simply *too much* inconsistency between the practices in which they desire to engage and the *accepted* approach to Bible study used for centuries. Prominent and well known preachers and teachers find the “*old* hermeneutics” (or way of interpreting the Scriptures) too restrictive. That method will simply not allow association with the “Unity Through Diversity” and the “Unity, Not Uniformity” movements that are currently sweeping the nation. The Word is clear that the church for which Christ shed His blood is to stand out from the world, not blend in with the majority. No where in the Scriptures does God ever say that there are *numerous* paths to heaven *or* that the church for which His Son died would be fragmented into multiple denominational names, beliefs and practices and that they are *all* acceptable to God.

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. 4:4-6 KJV)

“Unfaithful people! Don't you know that to be the world's friend means to be God's enemy? If you want to be the world's friend, you make yourself God's enemy.” (James 4:4 TEV)

Since these current movements are totally inconsistent with the Scriptures, many preachers, teachers and Christians have embraced the “new” hermeneutics approach. By doing so they no longer have to view book, chapter and verse studies as relevant. From *their* new found perspective, such a study merely results in differences of *opinion* anyway rather than determining “right and wrong” practices and beliefs. They point to the differences of opinion among conclusions reached by Bible scholars over the past centuries and claim that Christians today not only *do* not agree on doctrinal matters but *can* not agree and therefore God’s grace will cover *all* men who believe in Jesus regardless of whatever else they may believe or practice — *even* to the point of covering those baptized as infants, not baptized at all or baptized for the wrong reason.

Those who have succumbed to this new found method of interpreting the Scriptures, often view those who still rely on the centuries old approach as Pharisees, Legalists or Bible Police since the “old” hermeneutics approach not only *requires* but *demand*s *Biblical authorization* for practices and beliefs rather than a *Jesus — Your Way* approach that teaches that “we are all going to heaven anyway, just traveling different roads.” The Scriptures themselves deny that this is so. There are numerous places that tell us otherwise.

“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14 NIV)