

Has the Gospel Been Corrupted? (Part II)

Matthew 13:31: (NASB) He presented another parable to them, saying,

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,

which a man took and sowed in his field;



A few weeks ago, we began talking about Jesus speaking the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. This was one of the few parables he actually interpreted for his followers, and in that interpretation, he revealed it was a prophecy about the difficult future of Christianity. He spoke of false Christians and an entire age when the true and false Christians would grow together outwardly indistinguishable from one another until the harvest time. We traced some of the corrupting influences through the long history of the church and began to see how the gospel was treated - and mistreated - along the way. Jesus, after speaking the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, spoke two other parables and we believe they further described the corrupted condition of Christianity. What do these other parables tell us? Are we in danger of being deceived? Is the gospel even intact here and now in our present world?

There are seven parables in <u>Matthew 13</u> and the first, the <u>Parable of the Sower</u>, was the only parable to omit the beginning phrase the kingdom of heaven is like. Why?

People versus Process. The Parable of the Sower is about people individually and the other six parables are about the process of how the *kingdom of heaven* would develop through the age of the gospel. In the Scriptures, the *kingdom of heaven* is

not always referring to the future. It can refer to the present experience of the development of the true followers of Jesus.

<u>Matthew 13:24</u>: (NASB) Jesus presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field.

The *good seed* represents the children of the kingdom, and *the field* represents the world.

Matthew 13:25: (NASB) But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away.

	❖ SOWER	❖ WHEAT AND TARES
❖ SEED	The word of God	The children of the kingdom; those who follow righteousness
❖ FIELD/ GOOD SOIL	The good hearts of those called to follow Jesus	The world, the unbelievers

- As the *good wheat* are children of the kingdom so the *bad wheat (tares)* are children of Satan. The children are not individuals here, but they are groups of people.
- There is definitely a warfare here being described between Jesus and Satan. Satan is always against the cause of Christ. Jesus teaches us Satan's methods to help us with this fight for our life.



<u>Matthew 13:26-28</u>: (NASB) ²⁶But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. ²⁷The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? ²⁸And he said to them, An enemy has done this! The slaves said to him, Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?

Jesus offers no explanation for these few verses, perhaps because the conversation that takes place is not transferrable to prophetic reality - Jesus does not assign a prophetic identity to the *slaves of the landowner* as they are only "props" in the story to explain the devious work of Satan to the listener.

In Part I we discussed some of the planting of paganism into the early church. We will continue taking a historical look at Constantine's influence.

Constantine begins, Statues renamed, Constantine's Pagan-Christianity, 9th Saint

Constantine can rightfully claim the title of "Great" for he turned the history
of the world into a new course and made

Christianity, which until then had suffered bloody persecution, the religion of the state.

• And so, as people from around the Roman Empire entered the Christian church, they brought with them many of their former pagan beliefs and practices. Over time, Church leaders began to embrace the regal robes and flamboyant ceremony that was part of the pagan religions. And in place of the simple commands of God, they began to teach superstitions and man-made traditions. Now instead of the Christian church converting the heathen world, the pagans were converting the church.



The pagans were converting the church! Two examples are Easter (from the goddess Eostre) and Yule which celebrates the winter solstice. This waters down what is sacred, taking its power away.

The master declares the appropriate course of action:

Matthew 13:29-30: (NASB) ²⁹But he said, No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.

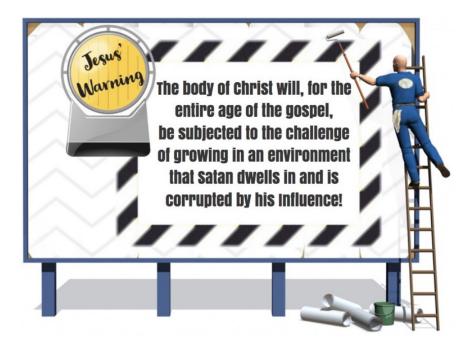
Jesus' explanation of the parable:

<u>Matthew 13:39</u>: (NASB) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

Christianity would grow in a corrupted state (which it has been doing for the last 2000 years). Jesus says, "Leave it alone until the time of the harvest when the age of the gospel is over." He allowed it as a test for the true followers and for the lesson of what false following looks like.

The age of Christianity and the gospel will end when the gospel call is complete, and this world order is brought to an end. What does it all mean? WHAT ABOUT THE END OF THE PARABLE?





Jesus prophesied specifically that his followers (the body of Christ) would be growing in an environment of corruption.

How does this all happen? What about false Christianity? How do we tell who is who?

Let's put the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares on hold for a bit. Our introduction today asked, "What do these other parables tell us?" The important point to build upon is this: the next two parables, the Mustard Tree and the Flour and the Yeast (Leaven), are spoken right after the Wheat and the Tares. Therefore, see them as building on its foundation.

- Once upon a time, The Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant, Jesse Morrell (We will share parts of this allegory with you because we feel the story paints a good picture of the prophecy from Jesus. We do not agree with Jesse Morrell's doctrinal stand.)
 - Once upon a time in the land called "Feel Good," there was a church, the Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant. And the Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant just recently hired a new pastor, Pastor Peacekeeper. Pastor Peacekeeper just graduated from the most popular seminary in the land, the Seminary of Smooth Talking. The Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant loved the Pastor's new sermons. Some of their favorites were "God is Happy with Everyone," "Everything is Fine and Dandy," and of course, "There is Nothing but Good Times Ahead."

The Scriptures teach us that Christianity is not an easy task. If you are being presented with a brand of Christianity that says it is easy, think twice. The Scriptures do not lie.

The second parable, the Mustard Tree:

Matthew 13:31-32: (NASB) ³¹He presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; ³²and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.

Because of your Jesus

verily I say un



Sounds like a happy inclusive lesson - but is it?

First, Jesus elsewhere references a mustard seed:

Luke 17:5-6: (NASB) 5The apostles said to the Lord, Increase our faith! 6And the Lord said, If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, Be uprooted and be planted in the sea; and it would obey you.

The mustard seed can represent the great growth potential of faith! The mustard seed is very tiny and grows into a big tree. Have faith like a mustard seed and your faith can accomplish things.

Remember, Jesus just finished teaching and explaining the Parable of the Sower. In that parable he used some of the exact language as in the Mustard Tree - The birds of the air.

Luke 8:4-5: (NASB) 4When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to him, he spoke by way of a parable: 5The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air ate it up.

The explanation of the parable:

Matthew 13:18-19: (NASB) ¹⁸Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one (Satan) comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart...

So, birds of the air are not nice things! Jesus tells us they represent Satan and his minions working with him. In Scripture, birds frequently do not represent things that are good.

Ephesians 2:2: (NASB) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Satan comes to nest or live in the "branches" of the potential faith of the true church.

Constantine made the church the centerpiece of Rome.

(1) Apostasy begins/statues renamed, Constantine's Pagan-Christianity, 9th Saint

- You're trying to Christianize an empire. You're trying to Christianize a pagan culture. The old basilicas were basically pagan temples. Put a cross over it. Put in paintings of biblical scenes, biblical heroes and saints and martyrs.
- The speed with which the early church tobogganed into apostasy will take your breath away.

While we do not take issue with an ancient or modern use of a repurposed building or statue, the issue is the transforming of the idolatry of the building or statue into Christian idolatry. Pagan Christians would not have seen the statues as art, they were objects of worship and remained so.

We are looking at the corruption of how the gospel began.

The parable of the Mustard Tree seems to be accentuating the lessons of the first parable of the Wheat and the Tares from a different perspective. The true church is developed in an environment of faith (pictured by the mustard seed) that through the Gospel Age grows large and ends up attracting the birds



(Satan and his influence) to dwell in its branches. This is in great contrast to what Jesus described the follower's life was supposed to look like.

<u>Matthew 7:13-16</u>: (NRSV) ¹³Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it.

The *narrow gate* is for the Christian. Have churches confused the broad way to be the way of life? It is NOT what Jesus taught! Christianity is not an easy broad-lane highway. It is a steep, narrow and difficult way.

¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Have churches eliminated the difficulty of the way to make room for everyone? Unfortunately, yes. One example is they teach tolerance even for those who are blatantly sinning. Tolerance and mercy are important but need to be in the context of righteousness, godliness and self-sacrifice.

¹⁵Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

Have we fallen under the melodious word spells of those who preach for their own wealth?

Please see March 6, 2017, CQ Episode 960: "Is Christianity a Greedy Religion?"

¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?

Have you recently looked at the fruits of those who preach earthly abundance? Do they have Bible-based spiritual fruit?



The Mustard Tree ends up housing the enemy! Is the third parable just as bad, or even worse?

To really understand what Jesus is teaching we need to go where the lesson takes us without reservation. To find such a destination we need to focus on HOW THE SCRIPTURES DEFINE THEMSELVES. This simple principle leads us to clearer and bolder biblical understanding. We are looking at a prophecy that Jesus gave through several parables describing something that is very uncomfortable. Many seem to name the name of Christ, but it is not Christ that is being lived or taught.

Mr. Conscience, The Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant, Jesse Morrell

• The Pastor Peacekeeper once made a very terrible mistake. He allowed one of the elders into the pulpit, Mr. Conscience. And Mr. Conscience did nothing but call their mistakes "sins" and he called them to repent. You see, Mr. Conscience had never been to the "Seminary of Smooth Talking," and maybe he should have because his sermon did nothing but offend the congregation. They were offended at his audacity and his arrogance. And they said to themselves, "Who does this intolerant, judgmental, self-righteous, legalist think that he is? Why should we allow this false preacher in our church to bring this congregation into bondage?"



If we are going to be in bondage, let it be to godly righteousness.

The third parable - The Flour and the Yeast (The Leaven): This one could also be interpreted as a good thing - but is it?

Matthew 13:33: (NASB) He spoke another parable to them, The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.

Is this good? First of all, she *hides* the leaven.

What about the flour? The Greek English Lexicon says it is wheat flour - remember the Parable of the Sower? In this parable they were sowing wheat seeds.



Luke 8:11: (NASB) Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

The seed is our nourishment.

(Source: Bible commentary by William Barclay) The Three Pecks (measures) of Flour: In Palestine bread was baked at home; three measures of meal were, as Levinson points out, just the average amount which would be needed for a baking for a fairly large family.

The number three in the Scriptures represents a complete experience. Two examples are when Peter denied Jesus three times and was forgiven three times.

The whole experience of nourishment was in place. We have a sufficient supply of godly food for the household of faith.



Statues renamed, Constantine's Pagan-Christianity, 9th Saint

- As millions of Pagans hastily joined the church they were naturally reluctant to dispose of their idol treasures. The Romans and the Greeks were so used to being surrounded by symbols and their deities, they began doing the same thing with Christianity. So many of these new converts just relabeled their idols with Christian names, like Paul, Mary and Peter.
- The statue of Jupiter became the statue of Peter, and we know that because it has a sun disk right over its head. That indicates this is not Peter, but it's a pagan statue that's been renamed.
- Instead of Romulus and Remus, hey, why not the great martyrs, Cosmos and Damien?

They took the pagan symbols but just changed the names. What a dark time! The paganism of Rome was crushing true Christianity and kept the name. It became an idolatrous environment.

What does the leaven represent? Leaven is sin!

(Source: Biblical commentary by J. Vernon McGee) What does the leaven represent? There are those who interpret the leaven as the gospel, and they ought to know better! Nowhere is leaven used as a principle of good; it is always a principle of evil. The word leaven occurs ninety-eight times in the Bible and it is always used in a bad sense.

The full nourishment of the word of God to be fed to the true church is now polluted with leaven.



<u>Luke 12:1</u>: (NASB) Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, he began saying to his disciples first of all, **Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees**, which is hypocrisy.

The Pharisees were a great example of the "puffed up" attitude.

The parable of the Flour and the Yeast (The Leaven) tells us that hidden within the spiritual food set aside for the spiritual family will be the corruption of sin and hypocrisy. This is giving us a picture of Christianity. Let's take a look at the warnings from Jesus for each of the three parables.

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares shows the growing up together: The body of christ will, for the entire age of the gospel, be subjected to the challenge of growing in an environment that satan dwells in and is corrupted by his Influence!



The Parable of the Mustard Tree shows the resting of Satan it its branches:

The Parable of Leaven in the Flour shows the corruption of the nourishment:





With these warnings in place we now go back to the conclusion of the Wheat and the Tares.

This conclusion shows us what will eventually happen with the problems: Matthew 13:30: (NASB) Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.

Remember, this is process *not* people, so our first and perhaps most important observation is that the gathering up and burning is symbolic of the "cease, desist and destroy" order that Jesus declares. When the wheat is ripe and is harvested it will be time to move forward.

With Jesus' warnings in place and things looking very bleak, what do we have to look forward to?

Our looking forward should be built entirely around what has already been present: God's redemption plan for our world already accounted for the depths of sin and corruption that would be breached. God intentionally allowed this all to happen as a testing for those called and as an eternal example for all to eventually behold. There is a profound reason why God allows His plan to happen. It will be for eternal lessons.

Business as usual, The Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant, Jesse Morrell

• And so, Pastor Peacekeeper received many complaints from the congregation about the sermon of Mr. Conscience. The congregation was outraged, and Pastor Peacekeeper knew he had made a terrible mistake. You see, Mr. Conscience had betrayed the trust of Pastor Peacekeeper. So, Pastor Peacekeeper told Mr. Conscience he was no longer welcome in the church any longer and he asked him to leave. And so, everyone in the congregation was very happy that Pastor Peacekeeper asked Mr. Conscience to leave the congregation. Business at the church continued to function as usual.

The moral of that story so far is not to let rotten apples upset your apple cart.



Tricia: Why would anyone want to be associated with Christianity knowing that it is so corrupt? Sometimes I do not want to be called a Christian because of this.

Because Christianity in its truest sense is the most valuable and beautiful way of life that has the most impact on humanity for all of eternity! You should want to be a part of what is good in true Christianity.



Jesus gave a detailed explanation of the necessary separating work at the end of the age:

Matthew 13:39-43: (NASB) ³⁹...the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, ⁴²and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.





<u>Malachi 4:1</u>: (NASB) For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.



Observations: This parable is specifically an end of the age picture as shown by verse 40 and the furnace of fire.

- Refers to separating out the false Christian systems at the end of the Gospel Age.
- The Tares (false systems) are DESTROYED in fire not tortured.
- This *furnace of fire* is the "great time of trouble," not "Gehenna" which is the second death (destruction).
- The weeping and gnashing of teeth refers to the anger, shame and lamenting at being exposed as false.

Please see June 7, 2016, CQ Episode 869: "Do the Fires of Hell Come From God?" (Part I)

• Pre-Judgment Day (see <u>verse 43</u>) and no allusion to eternal torment; it is just destruction. (They are two separate times.) Judgement Day is when the true church will be shining and reigning with Jesus.

 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.



(1) Isis to Mary/statues renamed, Constantine's Pagan-Christianity, 9th Saint

• The representations of Isis, which is originally an Egyptian goddess but has become very Greek, already becomes essentially the representation of Mary carrying her child.

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- You have a mother and child tradition all the way down through history. You have it in Mithraism, you have it in Babylon, you have it all the way back in Persia.
- It appears that Mary acquired some of the characteristics that were associated with some of these other goddesses.
- She wears a dark blue coat and she stands on the half-moon. She is the mother of all gods.
- Isis carrying her son Horus, that is the image that gets a new name and now the name is Mary carrying the child Jesus.

If something is idolatry, by changing the name you are not changing what it is. You can change the name, but an idol is still an idol.

One of our initial questions, "are we in danger of being deceived?" Absolutely yes! What do we do and how do we deal with it?



Revelation 18:1-3: (NASB) ¹After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. ²And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! (In the Old Testament, the great king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar. One of

his dreams was of a great tree that had grown mighty in size and had been cut down. It had an iron band put over it, so it could not grow again. Think about that and think about the imagery of the mustard seed and the mustard tree that grows up. Babylon is fallen. That means it is all the false systems of Christianity that embraced the idolatry and corrupted food.) She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. ³For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.

If all the nations are interacting with this, that means they are large systems that have control and power. If you are in these systems, ask yourself, "Is this where I should be?"

Realize judgment is going to come upon the systems. Next, to examine where you are and what you are partaking of and act accordingly:

Revelation 18:4-5: (NASB) ⁴I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; ⁵for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

Jonathan's Experience

When God opened my eyes to His word and the good news, I called the system I grew up in and that my parents took me to every Sunday and I said, "I want you to take my name off your membership. I am not a member of your organization anymore. I do not believe the things you are teaching me based on what I have found, and I am cutting the strings from you." I walked away.

If you feel like you are in that situation, we encourage you to do the same. All of Jesus' warnings lead to a simple conclusion - if you are truly called according to HIS purpose you will seek to fellowship where there is as much as a SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AND SPIRITUALLY PURE FOOD as you can find! Do not be fooled by fluff and dramatics or pomp and circumstances, wealth and vast numbers.





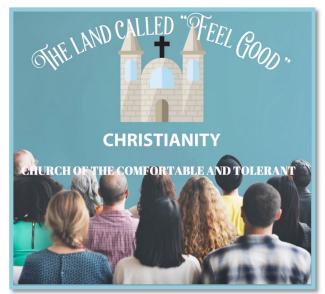
Action is now crucial, but we need specifics! How are we supposed to know what we are supposed to run away from?

We not only need to know what we are to run from, but also what we are running towards. We will put together a brief list of SOME of the key beliefs to look out for. With this list it is crucial to review it through the eyes of scriptural teaching only. Do not just take our word for this. Please look up the Scriptures and study them on your own. Forget what sounds "good" or "easy" or even "logical." Without CLEAR scriptural support, none of those things matter!

Pews of complacency, The Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant, Jesse Morrell

• Once things were back to normal, the way they had always been, everyone was

very happy in the land called "Feel Good." Pastor Peacekeeper continued to sugarcoat sweet and wonderful little lies to preach from the pulpit that made everyone comfortable in their sins. And he heavily guarded against preaching on abrasive truths. And who could blame him? You see, the Pastor loved his new church, his new home, and of course his new salary. He couldn't put these precious things on the line. And so, Pastor Peacekeeper guaranteed that the Church of the Comfortable and Tolerant was



as satisfied and as happy as they can be while they sat in their pews of complacency and compromise.



Is there a parallel of Israel leaving Egypt and the true church leaving paganism? Both situations were affected by idolatry and unleavened bread was important in the Passover before deliverance.

Yes, there is a parallel. In the bigger picture, Moses represents Christ in leading the people out. The sacrificial lamb (Jesus) gets them out of the pagan environment and from under the thumb of who held them in bondage. We want to focus on the drama of that picture by getting specific with the teachings we believe the Scriptures are clear about.







Let's take a look at some biblical truths and see where the problems lie.

Jesus died once for all mankind:

Hebrews 7:26-27: (NASB) ²⁶For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; ²⁷who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this he did once for all when he offered up himself.

It is explicit that Jesus offered himself *once for all*. Why do some of us "re-sacrifice" Jesus over and over again when he only asked us to memorialize him? Why do some say the emblems of the bread and the wine (cup) are actually the body and blood of Jesus?



<u>Luke 22:19</u>: (NASB) And when he had taken some bread and given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.

We believe the Bible teaches we are to celebrate the memorial of Jesus' death once a year on the anniversary of his death. *Do this in remembrance of me*.



Because Jesus died once for all, the clergy-laity relationship of "priesthood" over the "church" is not the way Christianity was designed to operate:

<u>Hebrews 10:11-14</u>: (NASB) ¹¹Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; (In the Old Testament, the priesthood made sacrifices for the people. They were sacrificing over and over again because the sacrifice did not actually take away sin.) ¹²but he, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time onward until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by **one offering** he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.



The Jewish nation as a people needed the priesthood as a mediator between them and God. The true follower of Christ does not need a mediator because we are on God's side and we *are* the priesthood.

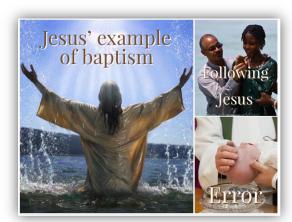
In fact, all called out ones ARE the priesthood:

Revelation 1:6: (NASB) and he has made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Why have we divided ourselves to be those who sit and those who teach? In many churches there are those who teach from the pulpit and are looked upon like gods. It is the way people looked at the Pharisees in Jesus' day. It is not the design. If you are a true follower of Christ and have been called and given God's spirit, you are part of the priesthood. At this time, we are all supposed to be working together. The job of the priesthood in the future will be to bless the world of mankind.

))Statues renamed, Constantine's Pagan-Christianity, 9th Saint

- The baptism ceremony was also performed in a lake or a river where people were fully submerged, signifying they were fully washed from their sins.
- The practice of baptism was gradually altered by the church. Hundreds of years after Christ, sprinkling and pouring was introduced as a more convenient mode of baptism. This actually undermined the powerful symbolism of the service and it contradicts the example of Jesus who was baptized by immersion.



Please see June 9, 2013, CQ Episode 765: "Why Do We Baptize?"







The Christian "church" is the people NOT the building. A church building has no specific sacredness according to Scripture:

<u>Acts 5:42</u>: (NASB) And every day, in the temple and **from house to house**, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

<u>Romans 16:5</u>: (NASB) also greet the church that is **in their house**. Greet Epaenetus, my beloved, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.

A church building is not inappropriate, but it should not be a central focus of the church. It could become an idol.

Christian leadership is necessary and is designed to come from within the local "church":

<u>Titus 1:5</u>: (NASB) For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

They were directed to *appoint elders in every city* (not appoint elders TO every city or OVER every city.) A close study of how they appointed elders reveals it was done by each individual congregation by way of *them* voting and not a central organization appointing someone.



Christian learning was not designed to come from just listening and nodding, but from study!

<u>1 Thessalonians 5:19-21</u>: (NASB) ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit; ²⁰do not despise prophetic utterances. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good;

<u>Luke 8:10</u>: (NASB) And he said, To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.

Christianity is something we must work at following with care, honesty, sincerity and courage. Scriptural truth is not often found in all the places you may think it would be. Just because it looks good does not mean it is scripturally sound. Find those who have that scriptural truth and be with them.

<u>2 Timothy 2:15</u>: (KJV) Study to shew yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

So, has the gospel been corrupted?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!

And now <u>even more</u> to think about... only in the Full Edition of CQ Rewind!







Join us next week for our February 26, 2018, podcast, "How Parental is Our Parenting?"

These texts continue to warn us:

<u>Isaiah 30:9-10</u>: (NASB) ⁹For this is a rebellious people, false sons, sons who refuse to listen to the instruction of the LORD; ¹⁰Who say to the seers, you must not see visions; and to the prophets, you must not prophesy to us what is right, speak to us pleasant words, prophesy illusions.

<u>1 Corinthians 5:6-8</u>: (NASB) ⁶Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? ⁷Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. ⁸Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

<u>2 Timothy 3:1-7</u>: (NASB) ¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

A text that begins to show us what is important - being a true follower and understanding that we are ALL bound by sin:

<u>John 8:31-34</u>: (NASB) ³¹So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed him, If you continue in my word, then you are truly disciples of mine; ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. ³³They answered him, We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that you say, you will become free? ³⁴Jesus answered them, Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

A text that clearly defines the kind of person who should be in the role of servant leadership. Are the leaders in YOUR church living up to these standards?

<u>1 Timothy 3:1-13</u>: (NASB) ¹It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. ²An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. ⁴He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity ⁵(but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), ⁴and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. ¬And he must have a good reputation with those outside



the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. ⁸Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, ⁹but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons if they are beyond reproach. ¹¹Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹²Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. ¹³For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

More on Birds of the air in the context of Zedekiah's rebellion:

Ezekiel 17:22-24: (NASB) ²²Thus says the Lord GOD, I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. ²⁴All the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform it.

Ezekiel on the fate of Assyria:

Ezekiel 31:1-14: (NASB) ¹In the eleventh year, in the third month, on the first of the month, the word of the LORD came to me saying, ²Son of man, say to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his hordes, whom are you like in your greatness? ³Behold, Assyria was a cedar in Lebanon with beautiful branches and forest shade, and very high, and its top was among the clouds. ⁴The waters made it grow, the deep made it high. With its rivers it continually extended all around its planting place and sent out its channels to all the trees of the field. 5Therefore its height was loftier than all the trees of the field and its boughs became many and its branches long Because of many waters as it spread them out. ⁶All the birds of the heavens nested in its boughs, and under its branches all the beasts of the field gave birth, and all great nations lived under its shade. ⁷So it was beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its branches; For its roots extended to many waters. 8The cedars in God's garden could not match it; The cypresses could not compare with its boughs, And the plane trees could not match its branches. No tree in God's garden could compare with it in its beauty. 91 made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, and all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it. ¹⁰Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, because it is high in stature and has set its top among the clouds, and its heart is haughty in its loftiness, "1therefore I will give it into the hand of a despot of the nations; he will thoroughly deal with it. According to its wickedness I have driven it away. ¹²Alien tyrants of the nations have cut it down and left it; on the mountains and in all the valleys its branches have fallen, and its boughs have been broken in all the ravines of the land. And all the peoples of the earth have gone down from its shade and left it. ¹³On its ruin all the birds of the heavens will dwell, and all the beasts of the field will be on its fallen branches 14so that all the trees by the waters may not be exalted in their stature, nor set their top among the clouds, nor their well-watered mighty ones stand erect in their height. For they have all been given over to death, to the earth beneath, among the sons of men, with those who go down to the pit.

Daniel: One of the dreams in which the king of Babylon is represented by a tree that gets cut down as a result of his excessive pride:

<u>Daniel 4:10-12</u>: (NASB) ¹⁰Now these were the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed: I was looking, and behold, there was a tree in the midst of the earth and its height was great. ¹¹The tree grew large and became strong and its height reached to the sky, and it was visible to the end of the whole earth. ¹²Its foliage was beautiful and its fruit abundant, and in it was food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, And the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches, and all living creatures fed themselves from it.



Daniel's interpretation:

<u>Daniel 4:24-27</u>: (NASB) ²⁴this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: ²⁵that you be driven away from mankind and your dwelling place be with the beasts of the field, and you be given grass to eat like cattle and be drenched with the dew of heaven; and seven periods of time will pass over you, until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. ²⁶And in that it was commanded to leave the stump with the roots of the tree, your kingdom will be assured to you after you recognize that it is Heaven that rules. ²⁷Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you: break away now from your sins by doing righteousness and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor in case there may be a prolonging of your prosperity.

The king of Babylon grew mighty and strong and provided shelter and food for all and yet this strength was not godly and would be stripped from him just as the church systems would grow mighty and strong and eventually be stripped of their power!

