

It Is Written

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THE TRANSCENDENCE OF GOD

By Tommy Peeler

"Thus says the LORD, Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool, Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? For My hands made all these things, Thus all these things came into being, declares the LORD. But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:1-2).

The Utter Transcendence of God

His level of existence is far above and beyond anything we are or can imagine. This is a common theme in Isaiah:

- "And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day" (Isaiah 2:11, 17). In context, the LORD is bringing judgment on human pride.
- "In the year King Uzziah's death I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1).
- "Now I will arise, says the LORD, Now I will be exalted, now I will be lifted up" (Isaiah 33:10).
- "Who has measured the waters in the hallow of His hand, and marked off the heaven by the span, and calculated the dust of the earth by the measure and weighed the mountains in a balance and the hills in a pair of scales" (Isaiah 40:12).
- "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers" (Isaiah 40:22).
- "For thus says the high and exalted One, who lives forever, whose name is Holy, I will dwell on a high and holy place" (Isaiah 57:15).

God's Transcendence Demands a Humble and Contrite Spirit

The word "contrite" is used elsewhere in the Old Testament, specifically about Mephibosheth (II Samuel 4:4; 9:3). Mephibosheth is crippled, and the word for "crippled" is the same word translated as "contrite" here. The word stresses a sense of inability and dependence. The LORD wants us to be broken, to see that the answers are not in man but in God. This helps us understand better (Acts 3:1-10).

We can be led to be humble and contrite by:

- The intensity of our troubles (Psalms 34:18). See Psalms 34:6-7, 17-20.
- The magnitude of our sins (Psalms 51:16-17). See Psalms 51:3-5.
- The overwhelming glory of God (Isaiah 66:1-2).

Trembling Before God's Word

"And who trembles at My word" (Isaiah 66:2, 5; Ezra 9:4; 10:3). The only other times the word trembling is used are in Judges 7:3 and I Samuel 4:13. These are the ones "who take seriously what He says and obey Him" [Willis, p. 476]. The humble tremble in looking at His instructions "for they realized that He knew them better than they knew themselves" [Beyer, p. 239]. This is in contrast to the dismal present when God speaks, and Israel does not hear or listen (Isaiah 65:12; 66:4). "The transcendent and creative God is fully accessible to the one who is humble, contrite, and respectful of God's word" [Childs, 540]. See I Samuel 15:22; II Samuel 7:6-7.

On Identifying False Teachers

By Dub McClish

As our Lord drew the Sermon on the Mount to a close, He gave the following warning: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:15-16). Do we still need this warning?

It is presently easier to find protectors of wolves among the sheep than to find those who will expose them. In fact, it is the common thing nowadays for the false teacher to be praised, endorsed, supported, and welcomed, while one who would correctly identify him as a wolf is treated as the wolf should be treated. How different from the Lord's is the attitude of many brethren on this matter. We are not left to wonder how the apostolic church dealt with false teachers: They were watched for and when discovered, they were marked, avoided, silenced, shunned, rejected refused endorsement, and "delivered to Satan" (Acts. 20:29-31; Romans 16:17-18; I Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-11, 14; 3:10; II John 9-11).

Now there may be some "witch-hunters," "alarmists," and those who "play God" among us (as defenders of false teachers are wont to accuse), but I doubt it. (If there are, the wolves vastly outnumber them.) These and similar appellations are smoke-screen words designed to mitigate the exposures of the false teachers and their errors without their having to answer them or repent of them. Such terms are intended to intimidate and silence those who expose the false teacher. They are employed to create prejudice against those who stand for the Truth, and they are a favorite ploy of the liberals. (Ironically, false teachers who claim to abhor "name-calling" and "labeling" don't mind doing it themselves when they are being exposed.)

I know of no one who enjoys exposing sin or error of any kind in a brother or sister. I certainly do not. I would much rather always be able to commend and praise and never have to criticize or reprove. However, one is not really a Gospel preacher (or a true follower of Christ, whatever his work in the kingdom) who shrinks in cowardice from this necessary task. If it makes me a "witch-hunter" or an "alarmist" to warn brethren of a "wolf" among the "flock" (or "flocks"), then I am such with Heaven's blessing. If I am such a one, then what shall we call the Lord and His apostles who commanded and practiced this responsibility? If exposing false teachers is to "play God," I would rather do that than "play the devil" by refusing the Lord's mandate to do so. If one would be great in the Master's eyes, he must be faithful to the charge to identify and expose false teachers, even if they are dear friends or even relatives.

"Social Gospel" Creep

By Kyle Campbell

A couple of years ago, I received an email from a friend who was forwarding me a link to a non-institutional congregation in Tennessee. Under the heading of "Event Notice" was a "Touch Football Day" at a local park. While institutional churches have long had no qualms about advertising social events, non-institutional churches have recognized that the church has no business promoting a social, non-spiritual event.

While I have no doubt that this congregation did not spend any of the money from its treasury, I am gradually seeing churches blend the spiritual with the social. Although they could say that they do not spend any of the Lord's money, the lines will become gradually blurred and the next generation will not have a problem carrying this further, perhaps even coming full circle back to church-supported social events! This is the nature of apostasy. Jesus made a clear delineation between His spiritual kingdom and physical kingdoms of the world (John 18:36; cf. Romans 14:17). We need to keep the same distinction in our congregations today.