

What have we done? Part 4

By

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“God said it, I believe it, that settles it.” This is one of the more popular sayings today you hear from various Christians and Pastors and yes even on bumper stickers. In fact for many Christians that is their entire theology boiled down to one catchy phrase. Now who in their right mind would argue with God especially since it came directly from Him?

I am reminded of a cartoon many years ago written by Charles Schultz: Charlie Brown was talking to Snoopy and said to him: I hear you are writing a book on theology, I hope you have a good title. Snoopy responds, I have the perfect title, “Has it ever occurred to you, you might be wrong?” We all chuckle at that but it carries a much deeper truth.

In the 1800’s there was a rather humorous debate raging in all of the churches about indoor plumbing in the church building. It was all based on a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 23. Here is the scripture: ¹²Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. ¹³As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴For the Lord your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.

Now while I say humorous debate by today’s standards, to the people then it was a very hotly debated and contested issue. You know God said it, I believe it that settles it mentality. So much so that sharp divides occurred over something we just naturally plan as part of any modern church structure. While that one is one of the more humorous events, we can say well they got that all wrong, they didn’t understand the context. Let me remind you that we have many of the same things going on today based on the same mentality as the great toilet debates. The role of women in the Church, the mandate that women should have their head covered or remain silent and many others just too numerous to list. Context, context, context. We have ceased to be students of God’s word and have become parrots of catch phrases (or Bible verses) that make us feel good about our particular stance. I, like Dr. Schultz, worry that maybe we got it wrong.

The Church as we see it today is ensnared in doctrines devised not in the first century but evolved over centuries to what we take as God’s direct words to us. Take for instance the doctrine of the rapture of the Church: “Pre-tribulation rapture theology was popularized extensively in the 1830s by John Nelson Darby and the [Plymouth Brethren](#), and further popularized in the United States in the early 20th century by the wide circulation of the [Scofield Reference Bible](#).¹ (Bray, 1982)” you know the infamous notes we have all used to cement our thinking and doctrinal views. While I am not espousing one view over another we must be careful to weigh all of what we know of the 1st century believers and what they understood to be direct revelation from God.

So I end this series with the phrase “What have we done?” I wonder, is God as pleased with how we have treated His Word to us? We have used it to discriminate against peoples, to further the causes of political regimes and agendas of Kings and politicians and to start wars. I am sure this was not the mentality or understanding of the 1st century believers. I also know we can’t go back, but we can and should be true Bereans of the writings we have in our hands today.

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