

Truth or Consequences (Part 3)

By Wayne Vasilenko

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So far in this Series I have given a few illustrations that I believe prove that not all people think alike. To some that is an obvious statement, but I also believe that I have proven that many people who call themselves "Christian" do not necessarily think alike. This fact presents a problem for the Christian Faith as a whole. Are we as Christians at liberty to pick and choose what parts of the bible we will hold onto while rejecting others? I have mentioned in previous writings a religious sect more often than not considered a cult, best known for their door to door evangelism practices. This group found it necessary to come up with their own translation of the bible conceived by a secret group of "bible scholars" in order for their belief system to have credibility. While in agreement for the most part with the bible most Christians would read, certain passages are manipulated in such a subtle manner that it could go unnoticed by many readers. Yet one of these subtle manipulations tears apart the entire Christian faith! I refer to a passage in the Gospel of John Chapter One... (I have used this illustration before)

John 1:1 (New King James Version)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (Study Edition) In the beginning was the Word,*a* and the Word was with God,*b* and the Word was a god.

Did you pick out the subtle difference? I just looked at 17 additional translations of these same verses and they all translate it the same as the New King James Version! As you can see, the addition of a single letter word (a) makes a world of difference in the meaning of what is being said. It makes a world of difference in the credibility of Jesus being who He says He is; was Jesus indeed God in the flesh or simply just another one of many gods? As for me, I will go with the generally accepted translations done by renowned Greek and Hebrew scholars throughout the ages as opposed to the translation created by a group whose roots only go back to the 1870's. The translators of the New World Translation (*This group's official translation*) remained a mystery for many years. After some time six translators were named, however only one had any knowledge of the bible languages and even he did not possess a degree to back up his claims of such knowledge. I use this particular group's translation as one of the most glaring examples of how scripture has been manipulated over the years. Other groups and religions are just as guilty of this practice. They don't necessarily mistranslate but taking something out of context or skimming over scripture that may conflict with a doctrine can be just as destructive.

In Part 2 of this series I gave as an illustration the practice of going to confession to atone for one's sins. This is practiced by the people of one of the largest "Christian" denominations in the world, yet most other denominations do not observe this ritual. I have been on this planet for 67 years at the time of this writing; one thing I have learned over time is that when there is a debate concerning just about any issue, it usually boils down to someone being right and someone being wrong. I asked two questions at the end of Part 2 of this series, **1. "Did the animal sacrifice provide a permanent solution as far as reconciling someone to God?" 2. "Did the sacrificial system have any effect between us and our relationship with our fellow man?"** The obvious answer to the first question is "No." Just as the animal sacrifices needed to be repeated, the same is true of the practice of confession. So what does either accomplish for the sinner involved? Well, it might make you feel better for a short time but it does not provide a permanent solution for sin. Actually, the only thing that is really accomplished is that your sin is exposed and this only results in guilt and condemnation!

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You're covered until the next time you sin; then it's back to square one. I previously mentioned that some Christian groups teach that if you sin after accepting Jesus as your savior you must get that sin "Under the blood." Once again, I have to ask... "How do you do that, and why would you have to do that if Jesus died for your sins?"

Hebrews 7:27 (New International Version)

Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

The latter part of this verse says that Jesus died once for all. What does this mean to you? What this says to me is that Jesus died on the cross one time, and that paid the penalty for the sins of everyone in the world. So what about you and me; you and I weren't even born yet when Jesus hung on the cross. Must we crucify Jesus again and again each time we sin? Now we must ask the bigger question... "Wasn't the sacrifice of God's Son enough? That is something to think about isn't it? Aren't we by our actions saying to God that the Sacrifice of Jesus wasn't enough if we keep offering sacrifices as in giving up something for lent, or going through various religious rituals to get ourselves back into God's favor when we sin? Are you beginning to see how things got distorted over time?

Hebrews 9:24-28 (New King James Version)

²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- ²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

If you take these passages at face value, how can anyone reconcile what is being said in the scripture with the religious practices I've brought out so far in this lesson? Now for the second question I asked at the end of Part two; ***"Did the sacrificial system have any effect between us and our relationship with our fellow man?"*** Looking back at the way things were done before the New Covenant, I do see a few interesting things that took place between our fellow man. Remember... the Law didn't solve anything, but it exposed everything as far as man's sinfulness is concerned. As a result it opened up man to **pride**, also to **arrogance**. The pride came as men compared themselves to one another. This continues to today as I brought out in the beginning of this series; we continually fail to realize that God sets the standard and He uses himself as the standard. It was made clear to man from the beginning that that in order for man to dwell with God it required perfection on the part of man. The law did not show mercy to anyone. Remember... Adam and Eve couldn't even keep one commandment, so how do you suppose we did after ten and eventually hundreds of laws were imposed on man? Even today, most people when asked what makes them worthy of reconciliation, they start listing their good attributes, always comparing themselves to someone worse than themselves. This is pride and it makes a mockery of what Jesus did on the cross! Long before the law, God made it clear how He considered man's self righteousness through Prophet Isaiah.

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Isaiah 64:6 (King James Version)

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Try to imagine how God must feel when we ignore the fact that He sent Son to die in our place; and we continue to offer out pitiful gestures of our righteousness (Our Filthy Rags) instead of accepting His grace and mercy that was manifest in Jesus. All I can say is we're quite lucky that God is as merciful as He is... If I was god and you treated the death of my son in that manner you'd be dodging a lot of lightning bolts at the very least. Continuing on, I also mentioned that Arrogance was another result of the law. Although arrogance and pride go hand in hand, I am going to focus on the arrogance that festered within the priesthood. The priests were given great responsibility as the mediators between God and the common man. However, just as modern politicians start out as humble and poor servants and soon acquire great wealth and power the same can be said of the priests of the Old Covenant. They became an arrogant ruling class who looked down on the very people they were supposed to be serving. It got to the point that they would even have people killed if challenged. One only has to look at how they treated Jesus and his followers to see how their power eventually blinded them to their own Messiah. I ended Part Two with a hint as to where the truth can be found... "it is hidden in the shadows." I have tried to illustrate how the truth of God became distorted over time by religion, and we have become blinded to the truth by false doctrine. I leave you with the following passages to ponder until the conclusion of this series coming soon.

Colossians 2:16-23 (King James Version)

¹⁶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: ¹⁷ Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. ¹⁸ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, ¹⁹ And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. ²⁰ Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, ²¹ (Touch not; taste not; handle not; ²² Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³ Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.

Think of how these passages fit in with what you have been taught.