



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

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ANSWERING “THE PASTOR QUESTION” . . . AGAIN

Not once, but three times. Recently, within a span of five days, I had conversations with three different people about whether or not I or someone else is a pastor. I call it “the pastor question.”

At a funeral parlor, prior to the beginning of a funeral service, one of the directors asked me when I entered the door, “Are you the pastor?” My honest answer was, “No, sir, I am not. I am a gospel preacher.” His smirk and facial expression were unprofessional, as if he were rolling his eyes and saying, “Whatever!”

A second person asked me if I know a particular brother in the Christ. I affirmed that I do. He went on to say that the brother is “the pastor” of a local church. I know that the brother whom we were discussing is *not* a pastor. When I corrected the one speaking to me by saying, “No, he is not ‘the pastor’ of anything, he is a preacher,” his reaction was, “Yes, he *is* the pastor. He preaches every Sunday.”

The third instance involved a former teammate of mine whom I have not seen for over four decades. Not long ago, he said that many years back a mutual friend told him that I am a pastor. He was wondering, “Are you still a pastor?” My reply was that I have never been a pastor, but have been serving as an evangelist since 1979. He asked for clarification and I gave it.

“The pastor question” comes up frequently. A common assumption made by many is that the one who preaches on Sunday must be “the pastor.” That is, in their minds, “pastor” and “preacher” refer to the same individual. Biblically speaking, that is not accurate. Our duty is to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11), is it not?

Many denominational people use the word “pastor” as a religious title, such as when they refer to a preacher as “Pastor Lee.” Yes, “pastor” is a biblical term, but it is not employed in the Scriptures as a title. It is a job description, a role designation, not a title.

In the English New Testament, the word “pastor” is found only one time — in Ephesians 4:11. In that context, Paul is writing about the gifts that the Christ gave to His church, including various roles played by some of His followers: “*And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and*

some pastors and teachers.”

In Ephesians 4:11, the word “pastors” is from the Greek word “ποιμήν/ποιμῆν.” In every other instance in the New Testament, translators of all English Bibles with which I am familiar translate that Greek word as “shepherd.” An angel announced the birth of the Christ to *shepherds* (Luke 2:8), Jesus called Himself the good *Shepherd* (John 10:11), and the Master saw multitudes of people as sheep without a *shepherd* (Matthew 9:36). The word “pastor” means a shepherd. It can be one who literally takes care of literal sheep, or it can be a pastor/shepherd in the spiritual realm.

For a moment, let us step away from the word “pastor” and ask this question: In the first-century church, who was given the responsibility to feed/shepherd the flock of God, that is, to act as spiritual shepherds over God’s people? In 1 Peter 5:1,2, we read, “*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder . . . Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.*” What do we see in those verses? References to “elders,” “shepherd,” and “overseers.” In God’s plan, elders are overseers, and those brothers are the ones who have the duty to shepherd God’s family.

What should we conclude? Pastors are shepherds, but God says the role of *elders/overseers* is to act as shepherds. Thus, in God’s plan, pastors and overseers/elders/bishops/shepherds are the same folks. We say it again: in the Bible, saying someone was a pastor does not mean that he was a preacher/evangelist. Those are two different roles . . . look again at Ephesians 4:11.

Brothers and sisters in the Lord need to cease calling a brother who works as an evangelist a “pastor.” And, when we have our eyes opened to and accept the truth that God’s gospel preacher is not a pastor, we need to stop expecting our evangelists to act like a denominational “pastor.” A one-man pastor system where one person is expected to do all of the visiting and “call the shots” is man-made, which means it did not come from heaven (Matthew 21:25).

In the Lord’s body, we have one “Head Pastor,” our Chief Shepherd. His name is Jesus (1 Peter 5:4).

-- Roger D. Campbell

“THE DAY OF THE LORD” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Did you know that when we read the words “the day of the Lord” in the Bible, in the great majority of cases those words are found in the Old Testament? The specific words “the day of the LORD” can be found in at least nine books of the Old Testament, all part of the portion of the Bible commonly called “the books of the prophets.” Throughout the Old Testament, the reading in the ASV (American Standard Version) is “the day of Jehovah.”

“The day of the LORD” pointed to a day/time of judgment — not “the day of judgment” on which Jesus will judge all people (2 Peter 3:7; Acts 17:31), but God’s judgment on a nation or city because of its evil. In the Old Testament, “the day of the LORD” commonly referred to a local judgment, not a world-wide one.

“The day of the LORD” was a day of destruction: “*Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty*” (Joel 1:15). That day also was known as a day of darkness, as we read in Amos 5:18: “*Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! For what good is that day of the LORD to you? It will be darkness, and not light.*”

It is not uncommon to read of God’s anger or wrath being associated with the day of Jehovah. For instance, in Isaiah 13:9 it is written, “*Behold, the day of the LORD comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate, and He will destroy its sinners from it.*” In that one statement about the day of Jehovah coming, mention is made of wrath, anger, desolation, and destruction. No one living in rebellion against the Lord God should have delighted in the prospect of His day coming upon them. It always has been a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God for those who fail to obey Him (Hebrews 10:31).

In several different settings in history, God’s prophets foretold of a coming day of the Lord. They did not refer to a single day at the world’s end, but to *several different days* of the Lord’s visitation. In order to find out upon whom the day of the Lord was to come, we must study carefully the context in which the term “the day of the LORD” appears.

The first Bible verse in which “the day of the LORD” is noted is Isaiah 2:12. The general context of that verse points to God’s judgment on Judah for its idolatry and other transgressions (Isaiah 1:1; 2:8:11).

In Isaiah 13:6, we read that the day of the Lord was at hand. It was going to be a cruel day of wrath and fierce anger (13:9). In the context, which nation is under consideration? Go back to verse one, where it is written, “*The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.*” So, those words in Isaiah

13:6,9 about the day of God’s wrath being at hand – it was not the end of the world, but the fall of Babylon. When God raised up the Medes and Persians to bring down Babylon, that was Babylon’s “day of the Lord.”

Another element connected with the day of the Lord is seen in Isaiah 13. As Isaiah described what would happen to Babylon, he said, “*For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine*” (13:10). All of that was symbolic language. The stars, sun, and moon would not literally cease shining. The wording simply indicated that in connection with the day of the Lord, things would not be “the same old, same old.” Extraordinary things would happen, so you better get ready for it! The language pointed to catastrophic events, events that would shake the earthly rulers and governments which were in power.

Move on to Jeremiah 46:10, where we read, “*For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour . . .*” On which nation was the Creator going to unleash His might and anger? The context makes it clear: “*Egypt . . . Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt . . .*” (46:2). God was going to punish Egypt for her transgressions, and He called it “the day of the Lord God.”

What about in Ezekiel 30? “*For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near . . . The sword shall come upon Egypt, and great anguish shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain fall in Egypt . . . Thus says the LORD: ‘Those who uphold Egypt shall fall . . .’*” (Ezekiel 30:3,4,6). In this instance, “the day of the LORD” would be God’s judgment on ancient Egypt and her supporters, a judgment which He carried out via Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.

In Amos 5:18,20, the message is that the day of the Lord will be a time of darkness. On whom? The context points to the house of Israel, that is, the Northern Kingdom (5:1,4,5), which fell in B.C. 722.

Examine the message of Zephaniah 1 about the day of the Lord and you will see that in that context, the day of judgment pointed to God’s coming against Judah and Jerusalem (1:4,7,14,15,18). When did that happen? In B.C. 586. When Zephaniah spoke of that occasion being at hand, he clearly was not referring to the Lord’s final coming, which has not occurred yet.

When Sodom was destroyed, Lot was spared. In the same way, while “the day of the Lord” meant doom and destruction for the wicked, it was a day of deliverance for the righteous.

-- Roger D. Campbell

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS DEAL WITH THEIR ENEMIES?

Does this question make you feel uncomfortable? Does it bother you to think that a child of God would even have enemies? Does it trouble you that you have to deal with people who count you as an adversary?

Each of us may have our own idea about what it means for someone to be an “enemy.” Here are a few definitions for “enemy”: “a person who hates another and wishes or tries to injure him; foe; a nation or force hostile to another; military or wartime adversary . . . a hostile nation; a person hostile to an idea, cause, etc.” [www.yourdictionary.com]. Two “h” words stand out in those statements about enemies: hate and hostile.

I would suggest that not every foe or adversary is an enemy. When people are pursuing the same political office, in the process they may speak of their political “opponents” or “foes,” but in many cases there is no animosity or ill will between them. They are not hateful enemies per se, just as competitors in an Olympic sporting event, while each desires to win, do not necessarily look at those who compete against them as bitter enemies.

In some instances, one party looks on another as a hated enemy, though the second party involved may be unaware of that sentiment or does not share the same feeling toward the first party. For instance, there was a time in King Saul’s life when he counted David as an enemy, though David had no animosity toward Saul and had done nothing to harm the king. The Bible says, “*And Saul was still more afraid of David. So Saul became David’s enemy continually*” (1 Samuel 18:29). David was popular with the common people. That incensed Saul, and in his irrational, jealous way of thinking, that made David his enemy.

“There is no way that a Christian should have even one enemy. There is something wrong when a child of God has people who consider him/her to be an enemy.” Do you agree with those sentiments? Jesus had enemies, would you not agree? There were people who hated Jesus and wanted to do Him harm. They are identified as “His adversaries” (Luke 13:17). Jesus was kind, gentle, and sinless. He spoke the truth in a loving fashion. Still, some despised Him. What does that indicate? That even though a person behaves properly, treats others well, and speaks a message that came from the God of heaven, some will not like him and may even count him as an enemy.

If Jesus was mistreated and counted as an enemy by some, it can happen to us also. Jesus told His apostles, “*A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you*” (John 15:20). When we study the book of Acts and observe the preaching done by Paul, we often see him

being persecuted. More than a few people counted him as an enemy. Why? Because he taught the truth and spoke out against false teachings (Galatians 4:16).

Is someone counts me as an enemy, how should I deal with him? If I am made aware of his animosity towards me, I need to ask myself, “What have I done wrong which would cause this person to hate me?” If I have sinned against him/her in any fashion, I need to repent of such and apologize.

What did the Master say about dealing with enemies? He declared, “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*” (Matthew 5:43,44). Lord, you cannot be serious! Oh, He was one hundred per cent serious. In dealing with those who are hostile toward us, the Christ calls on His followers to do certain things. It is not simply “stay out of the line of fire.” When it comes to how we should treat an enemy, read again the verbs in the above verses: love, bless, do good, and pray for. Wow. “There is not a human being on earth who is capable of doing those things!” That is the wrong response. Our Lord would not require us to do anything that is impossible to carry out.

When emotions are involved, it is so difficult to think properly and keep our tongue under control. And yet, our loving Lord calls on us to do those very things: think rationally and control our tongue. God instructs Christians to “*do good to all*” (Galatians 6:10). Our Father wants each of us to be compassionate, tenderhearted, and courteous (1 Peter 3:8), and He wants us to show such traits unconditionally, meaning we are to treat others in a good, kind way, regardless of how they treat us. No one should conclude that following Jesus and living up to His lofty expectations will be easy!

Not only am I supposed to try and live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:18), but the Lord wants me to take action which actually benefits my enemies. Hear these God-given instructions: “*If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him a drink . . .*” (Romans 12:20). “But an enemy would never do that same thing for me.” That is hardly the point, is it?!

As Jesus’ disciples, we are called to a higher standard than the way the world “plays.” I am to love my enemies, pray for them, and do good to them, including helping them with their material and spiritual needs. How well are you and I applying these teachings of Jesus in real life in the real world?

-- Roger D. Campbell

Matthew 18:1 – WHO IS THE GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

Someone asked Jesus that question. It certainly is a thought-provoking one.

Jesus had predicted His death and resurrection (Matthew 17:22,23). Following that, Peter found a coin in a fish's mouth (Matthew 17:24-27). The next statement in the Bible reads, "At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?'" (Matthew 18:1).

What do you suppose was the motivation behind such an inquiry? To get the full picture of what was going on, in addition to the opening section of Matthew 18, one also should read Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48. What we find in Luke 9:46 is quite revealing: "Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest." The reference is to the apostles: they were debating/squabbling among themselves over who was/would be the greatest.

Human beings can be very competitive. At times, we observe that in the spiritual realm, too. The hand-picked disciples of Jesus, at least some of them to a certain degree, were interested in outdoing Jesus' other followers or being rewarded in some fashion that exceeded what their working mates would receive. It may be that the apostles did not yet understand that the Lord's kingdom would not be an earthly one.

How did Jesus respond to their inquiry about who is the greatest in the kingdom? Listen to the message of Matthew 18:2-5:

Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

The apostles' question and Jesus' answer included a reference to "the kingdom of heaven." What is that? Prior to this occasion, John the Baptizer, Jesus, and the apostles all had preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand (Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). When we cross-check other verses, we learn that the records of Mark and Luke show that those preachers were saying that "the kingdom of God" was at hand. What should we conclude? Were John, Jesus, and the twelve preaching about the coming of *two* different kingdoms or only *one* kingdom? The answer: one kingdom, which was known both as "the kingdom of heaven" and "the kingdom of God."

When Jesus spoke about being the greatest in the kingdom, He was pointing out the type of character

He wanted His servants to manifest in His church. That character is not limited to one person, but is expected of all the Master's followers.

What kind of person is the greatest in the Lord's kingdom? One who becomes/acts like a little child. In what sense? By manifesting humility. Hear the Master's words again: "Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:4).

When we take into account another statement Jesus made to the apostles in this same situation, His meaning becomes even more clear. Consider what is written in Mark 9:35: "And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, 'If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.'"

Put those two ideas of the Christ's together: (1) being humble and (2) serving others. Jesus basically declared that if someone is entertaining the idea of being first/greatest in the kingdom, he/she must be prepared to *humble* themselves . . . to the point of *servicing* others . . . yes, be willing to be a servant of *all* people. It is easier to serve those who look, think, talk, and smell like we do. It is more challenging to step up and serve those who do not have such things in common with us. It definitely is more difficult to humble ourselves to the point of serving those who have an annoying personality, disgusting behavior, or even have mistreated us. Yet, Jesus said to serve all.

In the eyes of many folks in the world, the "greatest" person is one who has authority to boss people around and has a bunch of people serving him/her. How different Jesus' teaching is from that way of thinking! According to the worldly concept, great is the one who *is served*; our Lord's concept is great is the *server*.

You and I need to "buy into" what Jesus said. His expectation for citizens in His kingdom is that they be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), that is, view themselves as spiritually bankrupt without the Lord. Without the Lord, we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is by His grace that we are what we are (1 Corinthians 15:10).

The greatest example of a humble servant? Jesus, of course. Let us learn from Him, to be humble to the point of serving others and submitting to God. May we all strive each day to be a humble, faithful servant.

-- Roger D. Campbell

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