

“On the Verge of Turning Back”

“Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi,
An enclave of idol worship, (the source of the Jordan river), the god of Pan.

He {began} asking His disciples, saying, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is? And they said, "Some {say} John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said to them, **But who do you say that I am?** And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:13-16).

How does your belief system identify Jesus of Nazareth? This is a vital question because how you view Jesus Christ determines your destiny. Are you convinced that there is no one else whereby you might be saved and “there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved?” Acts 4:12.

On the Verge of turning back.....

There were believers in the First Century, having believed in Jesus, but allowed false teachers and persecution to affect their mind-set about Jesus. The Letter to the Hebrews was written to stop those believers from forsaking Jesus and going back into bondage of the Law of Moses.

The origin of the problem

Most of the places that Paul evangelized had a population of Jews and normally they met in synagogues (gathering places). Paul’s principle was “to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (Ro. 1:16). (*Salamis in Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Thessalonica, Bera, Corinth, Ephesians*)

Therefore, both Jews and Gentiles were converted and they formed a New Testament Church, but in time invariably conflicts would arise. What developed was two basic groups:

Christianizers
Judaizers

“And some men came down from Judea and {began} teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1).

This group is identified as Judaizers. These Jewish traditionalists refused to accept the Apostolic teaching (Acts 15:1-31).

Two Letters were written by Paul to counter the teaching of the Judaizers.

The letter to the Galatians was written by Paul to counteract their subversive tactics of influencing the new converts to add the requirements of the law to their Christianity. They felt that they had the copyright on Jesus. Judaizers insisted that non-Jewish believers in Christ could not be true Christians until they would submit to circumcision and keep the law of Moses.

In the Letter of Galatians there are a series of important contrasts:

A different type of gospel versus the authentic Gospel
man’s reasoning versus God’s revelation
law versus grace
works versus faith

the curse of death versus the blessing of life
condemnation versus exoneration
servants in bondage versus sons in freedom
defeat versus victory
the old covenant versus the new covenant
living in the flesh versus walking in the Spirit
the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit
falling from grace versus standing firm in grace
the world as the object of boasting versus the cross of Christ.

Paul declares, “There is not another gospel” and if one does preach a gospel contrary to the one I preach, “Let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8); or given over to destruction!

The Letter to the Hebrews was a superb and persuasive argument to halt believers from falling away from the grace of the Lord and returning to the requirements of the Law of Moses.

“For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame” (Heb 6:4-6). (Heb. 10:29)

“Who have once been enlightened”
“Have tasted of the heavenly gift”
“Have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit”
“Have tasted the good word (Rhema) of God”
“Have tasted the powers (Dumanis) of the age to come”

This can be seen in the spies sent out from Kadesh-Barnea who saw the land, its fruit, and brought back “a taste” or a sample (grapes, pomegranates, figs) to the people, then turned back in unbelief.

“Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God” (Heb 3:12).

“But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul” (Heb 10:39).

“...Who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace

Some had already fallen away and others were on the verge of turning their backs on the salvation that is in Christ, and this was because of persecution!

“Discerning the Times” and understanding what to do (1 Chr. 12:32) is vital. Peter identified the beginning of the “Last Days” by quoting the prophecy of Joel concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit. Paul referred to the first coming of Jesus as the “consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9:26), and again as the church being the “administration suitable to the fulness of the times”. In Ro. 8:22 Paul writes about the end of this age using the metaphor of a woman in labor and travail to give birth. We are in the birth canal of Creator God, the water sac has bursted (Day of Pentecost), we, ourselves are travailing in concert with Father God to emerge into a new heaven, a new earth with a new body!

We live in the “last of the days” of this Age. The Bible has plainly stated that these days would be dangerous, difficult, lawless, loveless and filled with conflict. Whatever happens to our nation financially or politically, one cannot lose faith and trust in God. Even if we don’t understand why things happen, we must stand firm in our faith and not turn back to those things in the world.

There are thousands of Christians who have left the physical body of the church because of unfair treatment of fellow-believers, misunderstandings, unforgiveness, offenses, and persecution. Many of them refuse to go to church, watch TV Christian programming as a substitute, and many have turned back to their old ways and tell their story of misgivings and disappointments in taverns.

Jesus and the New Testament prophets have clearly spoken about the last days and warned us of the stress, conflicts and difficulties, so let us firm up our faith and stand and withstand the evil day.

Argument I: The founder of the New Testament is superior to the founders of the O.T.
Why turn back to something inferior?

Jesus is superior to the prophets: 1:1-3 (Seven superiorities)

1. The prophets were merely instruments used by God as mouthpieces.

God spoke, not through Christ, but in Christ. He was the word of God manifested in the flesh. Jesus was the total expression of God’s word and nature. He was God’s Voice!

God came down on Mt. Sinai and spoke the law as given to Moses

God came down on Mt. Hebron and said, “This is my Son!”

Mt. Sinai shook and the people feared

The Kingdom of Hell shook and fled

Zoroaster - 600 B.C. Battle between two spirits, good and evil (truth and lie), sons of the Wise God. Ultimately, one is rewarded on the basis of works.
(Iran)

Buddha - 600 BC -the enlightened one - four noble truths and nine characteristics. Suffering, its causes and self-discipline. (Nepal)

Confucius - 600 BC - Philosophy of social and governmental morality.
(China)

Mohammed - Islam - 600 BC (submission)

Joseph Smith and Brigham Young - 1844 AD -Mormons - the Second Testament of Jesus Christ.

Greater than ALL prophets. They have died and are in the grave!

2. He is the heir of all things

What Adam lost, Jesus recovered!

3. He is the creator of all the world

Not only the creator, but also the manager of the universe and its creatures

4. He is the radiance of His glory

The out-ricing of His glory

5. He is the exact representation of His nature (substance, confidence)

Impress of a signet ring.- authority and power
Pharaoh, Holy Spirit, Jesus

6. He upholds all things by the word (*Rhema*) of His power
Not like Atlas - rather maintaining something that is always moving

7. He had made purification of sins
Once-for all-act

He has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high
A finished work

Why would any believer turn away to something inferior?

Jesus is superior to the angels: 1:4 - 2:18 (Pharisee belief)

He has a more excellent name--Jesus
He has been super exalted and given as name above every name. Phil 2:9-
At the name of Jesus every knee with bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is
Lord!
There is no other name under heaven...by which we must be saved

To which of the angels did He ever say:
“Thou art My Son, today I have begotten Thee?”
He is the Son of God, the begotten One from the dead

His throne is forever

To which of the angels has He ever said:
“Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy Feet”
But to the Son He said just that!

He has a superior word over what has been said by angels

We see Jesus crowned above the angels
He became a merciful and faithful high priest in order to come to the aid of believers

He is superior to Moses: 3:1-19

He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses
The face of Moses shone brilliantly
The person of Jesus became like the sun

He is the *builder* of the house, and not the *servant*

He is superior to Joshua: 4:1-16

Joshua could not lead the people into rest
Jesus has sent the Comforter in His name

Joshua stormed the walls of Jericho
Jesus stormed the gates of hell

Joshua spoke to the sun and it released its influence on the earth
Jesus spoke to death, and thus, death has no power over us.

He is superior to Aaron: 5:1:14; 7:1-28

Aaron offered sacrifices for his sins
Jesus was sinless, and offered Himself for the world

Aaron could not continue as high priest because of death
Jesus is after the order of Melchizedek, a perpetual priest

Aaron became priest based on the law of physical requirement
Jesus became priest based on an indestructible life

Aaron was required to offer up sacrifices for sin daily
Jesus offered Himself once for all

Argument II: The New Testament is superior to the Old Testament

Why forsake the “Better” things for the inferior things?

We have a better hope

A hope in God that brings to us resurrection from the dead
We exult in hope of the glory of God. Jesus is our hope of glory
We have hope of a heavenly body
We have the hope of eternal life with Jesus
This hope we have as an anchor of our soul

We have a better covenant based on grace and not requirement: 8:6

A perfect covenant
A covenant written on the heart
An eternal covenant

We have better promises: 8:6

Every promise is “yes”: 2 Cor. 1:20
I will bless you, prosper you, give you power, you shall be a blessing to the world
By God’s promises you have been made partaker of His divine nature: 2 Pe 1:4

We have better blood: 9:14

The blood of Jesus forever covers your sins

We have better sacrifices: 9:23

His sacrifice was once and for all

We have better possessions: 10:34

Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ: Ro. 8:17
Heirs of the kingdom of God. Ja. 2:5

Our pledge of inheritance is the Holy Spirit: Eph 1:14

We have a better country: 11:16

This is a no brainer: compare heaven with Palestine

We have a better resurrection: 11:35

Resurrection of life and not a resurrection of judgment

God has something better for us: 11:40

Think of the best thing you can—then God has something better for you

Why would you turn your back on the following? Heb. 12:22-24.

But you have come to Mount Zion
and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,
and to myriads of angels,
to the general assembly
and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven,
and to God, the Judge of all,
and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,
and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant,
and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than {the blood} of Abel.

See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned {them} on earth, much less {shall} we {escape} who turn away from Him who {warns} from heaven.

And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, " Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven."

And this {expression} "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:22-29)

In light of the eternal economy, how can you walk on the blood of Jesus, go back to a form of godliness, live in the slavery of death, pain and disease.

Reaffirm you faith now! (Hold fast is a nautical term: hold one's course toward)

Hold fast to your confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end:3:6

Hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end: 3:14

Hold fast to our confession in Jesus Christ: 4:14

Hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering: 10:23

Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward: 10:35

The financial world is shaking

The political world is making major adjustments

The spirit world is shaking, but the Church is built upon the rock and it cannot be shaken, nor removed!