

True Life

The goal of the gospel is to prepare people for heaven. Its emphasis centers upon happiness in a life to come rather than upon this life. "For what profit is it to a man," Jesus once asked, "if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" The Lord would teach us to look through faith beyond the suffering and heartaches of this life to a life free of suffering and heartaches; to lay up treasures in heaven rather than upon the earth. He wants us in our preaching to proclaim a message of salvation through His blood, to bring to people's consideration those things that are eternal. But when we succeed in leading men and women to surrender their lives in favor of the life to come, we lead them into gaining, not only heaven, but also the peace and contentment that make for real happiness upon this earth. "He who finds his life shall lose it," Jesus said, "and he who loses his life for my sake shall find it."

- by **Bill Hall**

Do Not Be Conformed To This World

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

Is it just me or does it seem like, in many ways, that Christians are just exactly like the world?

We are supposed to be so different from the world that everyone can tell the difference. Do you think that distinction is as clear as it ought to be these days?

Christians are referred to in the Bible as "sojourners, strangers, and pilgrims." See Hebrews 11:8-16 and 1 Peter 2:11. Those terms indicate the idea that as foreigners, whose citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21), we are temporary non-residents of the earth - in the world, but not of it. We are to live here without involvement and defilement by the wickedness that is here.

Two specific words in the New Testament show this separation from the world. The first is the word "church" itself. The *ekklesia* of Christ is to be called out of the world. We are called out of Satan's domain and power and into the kingdom of Christ. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Pet.2:9).

The second word is "sanctified." This emphasizes the set apart nature of the children of God. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). This is also the basis for the common word "holy." We are to be pure and holy, just as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16).

In the first century there was such a marked difference between Christians and the people of the world that the disciples were easy marks for persecution. Their purity condemned the ungodly and the Christians were often punished by the heathen. Is there still that marked difference? Or do we blend right in?

All too often, Christians wear exactly the same fashions as the world. Clothes that are too tight, too short, too low cut, or too revealing are sometimes seen on Christians. Not all in-fashion clothes are immodest (1 Timothy 2:9-10), but many are. It is the very worldly that set the fashion standards, not the godly.

Some Christians are just as covetous as the world. Materialism is eating up the people of God and we are often blind to it. We can see and recognize greed in others, but it is harder to admit in our own lives, isn't it? Covetousness is a form of idolatry (Ephesians 5:5). "

When it comes to recreational habits, I am really amazed at some of the things that some Christians try to defend — R-rated movies, social drinking, smoking, mixed swimming. We are not supposed to do things just because they are popular! And if we don't, some will ridicule us. "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles - when we walked in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of

dissipation, speaking evil of you" (1 Peter 4:3-4).

Christians have the same problem controlling the tongue as the people of the world. We lose our tempers, gossip, and sometimes tell or laugh at dirty jokes.

Worldliness is not just immorality. It is an attitude of heart and mind that puts anything else before God.

Part of our problem in converting people to the Lord is that they often do not see any difference that being a Christian has made in our lives. We live like the world, talk like the world, go where the world goes, and dress like the world. Some serve God on Sunday and live like the world the rest of the time. We must do better

- by Roger Hillis

Jeremiah's Prophecy Concerning Jeconiah

The prophet Jeremiah made an important prophecy about Judah's King Jeconiah. It has some interesting implications concerning premillennialism. This false doctrine, of course, teaches that Jesus will return to earth and establish a physical kingdom over which he will reign for a thousand years. Jeremiah's prophecy proves that this will never happen.

Jeconiah, also called Jehoiachin or Coniah, was the next-to-last king of Judah (2 Kings 24:8-17). He reigned for three months in the early 6th century B.C., shortly before the Jews went into captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah 22:24-30 contains a prophecy about Jeconiah which showed God's anger with Judah. God said that "**none of his descendants shall prosper sitting on the throne of David and ruling any more in Judah**" (22:30). Jeconiah had children, but none of his descendants reigned. The last king of Judah was Zedekiah, Jeconiah's uncle, whose sons were all killed when the Babylonians overran Jerusalem. Thus the royal ascension of Judah ended.

A fundamental doctrine of premillennialism is that Jesus will return to literally reign in Jerusalem on David's physical throne. They claim correctly that He is a descendant of Judah's royal line. However, we know from Jesus' lineage (Matthew 1:11) that He is, in particular, a descendant of Jeconiah. Thus He can never reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem!

Of course, we know from other passages that Jesus' kingdom is not earthly (Jn. 18:36), that it now exists (Col. 1:13, Dan. 2:44), and that Jesus now reigns over it in heaven (Acts 2:30-33, 1 Cor. 15:25). However, Jeremiah 22:30 shows also that God put an end to the line of kings of earthly Jerusalem. Jesus is a descendant of the royal line of Judah, but through a branch which will never more reign on the throne of David over an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem.

- by Greg Gwin