

"Contend Earnestly For the Faith" Part 4

by Erik Olsen

"...contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." – Jude 3

I. REVIEW:

- part 1: 6 practical steps to gain a solid grasp of the Word of God
- part 2: Satan is the mastermind behind all false teachers / two examples of how he distorts what God has revealed by His Word – encounter with Eve and encounter with Jesus / Jesus' example in how to respond
- part 3: profound nature of the Word of God – it is the means through which the Holy Spirit brings about spiritual birth and spiritual growth in our lives / greater appreciation for the danger of distorting the Word...

II. GOD HIMSELF IS "THE WORD" (JESUS CHRIST IS THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE BIBLE)

--John 1:1-14: "**In the beginning was the Word**, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ... 14 **And the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

--Revelation 19:11-14: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God.**"

--the essence of focusing on the Word is focusing on Christ

--the essence of distorting the Word is distorting Christ

--the essence of preaching the Word is preaching Christ

--Both Christ and Scripture bear the designation, "The Word," the former being the living Word and the latter, the written Word. In the declaration of the psalmist, "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (138:2), the whole body of Holy Scripture is included. ... [John Calvin translates it] "Thou hast magnified Thy name above all things, by Thy Word." As for Martin Luther, he translates it, "Thou has made Thy Name glorious above all, through Thy Word." The evident meaning of the verse is that beyond all works of creation and providence, or other ways God has made Himself known, He has exalted His written Word. (excerpt from *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible*, by Herbert Lockyer)

III. THE ESSENCE OF FOCUSING ON THE WORD IS FOCUSING ON CHRIST

- who He is, His power, His character, what He said, what He did, where He is now, what He has yet to do, the example He gave us to follow ... all creatively revealed through the 66 books of the Bible in various ways... narrative, dialog, letters, prophecies (different perspectives of Christ *before*, *during*, and *after* His life on earth)
- when we love God, God's message to us in the Bible becomes a kind of love letter from God to us
- Heaven will begin with an event called "the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9). It is natural for Christians to learn as much as they can about Christ through the Bible just like it is natural for a bride to learn as much as possible about her bridegroom.

--Hebrews 12:1b-2a: "...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith..."

IV. THE ESSENCE OF DISTORTING THE WORD IS DISTORTING CHRIST

--Hallmark of most false teachers: denial that Jesus Christ is God.

--denial of His deity deflates His role and inflates our role... which leads to the other hallmark of most false teachers: salvation by good works

--takes glory from Christ and gives glory to man.. Ephesians 2:8-10: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works..."

--evidence that Jesus Christ is God:

--historical evidence:

--The reason people died for Christ in the early church: *The Da Vinci Code* claims that the doctrine of the divinity of Christ was invented by the Roman emperor Constantine in the fourth century for political reasons. ... but His divinity was one of the main causes of persecution under the Roman empire beginning in the first century!

--The Roman government was very tolerant of foreign religions, as long as they worshipped Caesar as God also. This wasn't that big of a deal for most because most people had many gods.

--To worship Jesus as God is to worship no one else as God:

--Luke 4:5-8: "The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

--Christians were viewed as atheists because of the lack of idols in their homes and worship of only one God. Their lack of participation in rituals to placate the myriad of nature gods caused them to be blamed for natural disasters... If the Romans only knew about the 10 plagues in Egypt designed to show the uselessness of the Egyptian gods...

-- **The reason Christ was crucified:** The Jews interpreted what Jesus taught as a declaration of His deity and therefore accused Him of blasphemy. Under Levitical law, blasphemy was punishable by death. The Jews argued that Jesus violated this law and should therefore be crucified

--Leviticus 24:16

--Matthew 26:59-68:

-- (historical/scriptural) Supernatural fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the promised Messiah ...

--scripture directly states that Jesus Christ is God:

***other scripture references listed online: www.lettersofchrist.com/qa_deity_of_christ.htm*

--John 14:8-10 -- "Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"

--Colossians 2:9 -- "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

--Hebrews 1:3 -- Jesus is "the brightness of His [God the Father's] glory and the express image of His person."

--other scriptural evidence:

***scripture references listed online: www.lettersofchrist.com/qa_deity_of_christ.htm*

--The angels in heaven only worship God. The angels in heaven worship Jesus Christ, therefore proving His deity.

--Jesus Christ is "the Word" (logos) that "became flesh and dwelt among us". "The Word" is God.

--Jesus Christ is also the "Immanuel" which means "God with us," therefore proving the deity of Jesus Christ.

--Only God is holy. Jesus Christ is holy. Therefore Jesus Christ is God.

--God created and sustains all of creation. Jesus Christ created and sustains all of creation, therefore proving the deity of Jesus Christ.

--The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ", therefore proving the deity of Jesus Christ.

--the battlefield of the mind...

--Satan's lies may not cause us to suffer physically like the early Christians, but how do his lies cause us to suffer mentally and spiritually? How many of our personal struggles are caused by believing satan's lies? We live in a society that worships man (just as the Romans did but in a different way... humanism) and a society that sets up oppressive standards (however so subtle)

--2 Corinthians 10:4-6: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought** to make it obedient to Christ."

--Mark 14:38: Jesus put it succinctly: "**Watch and pray**, lest you enter into temptation. The **spirit indeed is willing**, but the **flesh is weak**."

V. THE ESSENCE OF PREACHING THE WORD IS PREACHING CHRIST

--Colossians 1:27-29: "**Him we preach**, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. 29 To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily. .

--2 Timothy 4:2: "Preach the word..."