

## Contemporizing the Gospel

### Faith Contemporizes the Redemptive Act

Where does faith come from? It comes by hearing. Hearing what? A sent one. It's hearing our Master through a sent one who is qualified for Him to speak through. Otherwise what you hear cannot save you. He can only pass on the spirit he's under the power of. It cannot be someone who is as Jn 7:18 describes, who has unrighteousness in him. A lot of times this has happened. We've sent people on evangelistic events, and they were just going for the adventure. Then our Master can't speak through them, and no one gets saved. Whoever is sent out has to be chosen and judged to be qualified to be sent out in order for people to be saved.

Faith is a miracle, because something that happened 2000 years ago has to be brought to the present — contemporized — through the Word that is spoken, so that people can apprehend it. It is hearing the good news of what happened in the past. How can our Father reveal Himself in the present through something that happened in the past? The Word is being preached, proclaimed, telling the truth to someone, explaining something that happened 2000 years ago and bringing it into the present. Faith is a link between our Father's great redemptive act in the past and man's apprehension of it now. It has to be done through people who have believed it in their heart, know it, and communicate it. Faith is a timeless link between what our Father has done in the past and man's apprehension of it now.

What is a medium? It is someone who stands between you and the spiritual realm like a conductor. We already know from 1 Tim 2:5 that the man Yahshua is the Mediator between God and men, but we are mediators between men and Yahshua. We bring them to Yahshua and He brings them to the Father. That's reconciliation (2 Cor 5:20). We are the mediums our Father uses to bring to the present what happened long ago in history.

Faith is the Holy Spirit's disclosure or revelation of Messiah. That self-disclosure offers man an opportunity to respond to His persuasion. He is persuaded — He wants to save people and therefore wants to persuade them also. We're the channel, the medium. We have to be persuaded also. His persuasion comes upon our hearts by hearing the truth of His Word.

A lot of people may not know that they are of the truth. Derush was of the truth. All those who are of the truth will hear His voice (Jn 18:37). This is almost the same as Jn 7:17 — all those who are willing to do His will, will know the truth. They will know the truth because they are on the side of the truth. Jn 10:27,14 — His sheep hear His voice. Rom 10:17 — How does He speak? Through us. We're the mediators in that sense. We have to declare what we know, and then revelation comes to the hearer. We tell the truth of what happened 2000 years ago and bring it to the present — contemporize it.

### **Obeying the Commandments Results in Community**

Christians can't face up to the way the Way was when it was the Way — the way the first church was when it was called "the Way." Our Master said He was the way, the truth, and the life. It came from Abraham who was commanded to keep the Way (Gen 18:19). We also have to keep the Way. If we aren't the Way, then there's no way anyone can be saved. They think the church is now some other way than the way it was back then. They simply ignore plain history as recorded in Acts 2 and 4, which was the result of the apostles doing what our Master commanded them to do. He didn't tell them all the details. He just told them that they should command others to keep the commands He'd given them. Then community happens. You can't help it if you start obeying commands like loving one another, laying down our lives for the brethren, etc.

If Christians believe the Bible they should see the historical evidence. Mt 28:18-20 records how our Master commanded the apostles to teach others to keep the commandments He'd given them. Peter did so at Pentecost with the many other words.

These many other words are not recorded in the book of Acts. It would have taken up the whole book. But you can see in Acts 2:44 what happened as a result of having heard these commandments. The believers had all things in common. They had given up their possessions, as the gospel says.

What if the apostles hadn't obeyed what Yahshua commanded them? What if they had thought, "We'd better not say these things — that's a hard gospel"? But they didn't do that. The gospel is something to be obeyed. Both the apostles and those they preached to had to obey what they were hearing. Those who heard received the Holy Spirit's power to obey those commands. Christians can't obey them because they don't have the Holy Spirit's power to obey them. Living in community without the Holy Spirit is a torture chamber. By obeying the commandments community comes about, and in order to be able to obey, you have to have the Holy Spirit.

Mt 28:18-20 actually happened. It is recorded in scriptures. Christians don't like to look at that or talk about it. Lk 14:33 is the only way to become a disciple. I was a Christian all my life until I became a disciple. In order to become a disciple you have to even hate your own life, and your wife — whatever or whoever would keep you from following our Master. *Hate* here is in the sense of Mt 10:37. You can't love them more than Messiah. You have to leave them if they're not willing to come with you. In Lk 14:26, *hate* is to not love to the point of obeying them rather than the Master. They feel like you hate them.

Acts 2:44-45 is the only way one can survive after becoming a disciple, for what else can you do after you've given up everything? Beg? But if we seek first the Kingdom, then all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek for will be added to us. In some translations "wife" is not included in the list of Mk 10:28-30, although it should be. (It's included in the parallel passage in Lk 18:29 in every translation.) If you give up everything in obedience to the gospel you'll receive 100 times as much in this age. This is our spiritual family. In Mk 3:31-35 our Master was talking about His new family and our

new family. So this is the only way you can survive after you become a disciple. The Holy Spirit is only given to those who obey the gospel. And we know from 2 Tim 2:4 that we can't be involved in civilian affairs anymore, making our own living.

When Peter preached the many other words in Acts 2:40, it was *before* those who listened were baptized. They had asked, "What must we do?" He told them what they had to do — repent and be baptized (verse 37-39). Then in verse 40 he gave them the many other words. We know what he said. Christians don't know it. Then in verse 41 they were baptized, and then in verse 42 they sat at the apostles' feet, in fellowship with them, they broke bread and had the minchah in the temple court complex. They carried on the priesthood in a new and living way. All who believed and were baptized received power to obey all He commanded.

Acts 4:32; 2:44 — All my life as a Christian I never heard these things mentioned. It wasn't a feasible lifestyle. It wasn't viable or practical. If it was mentioned it was only as "the way it was back then." But now after there are two billion Christians it is not practical anymore. Of course, all these Christians "believe" as Jn 2:23-25. He knows whether someone believes in his mind or in his heart. He entrusts himself only to those who believe in their heart. *Believe* and *entrust* is the same word in the Greek (#4102).

Mk 10:29-30 is only a parable to Christians. They can't say that the lifestyle of the first church was correct, because then they would have to admit that their lifestyle is incorrect, and they would have to correct it. They have to say that the lifestyle of the first church is incorrect, like Matthew Henry's commentary, that persecution came upon them because they were doing the wrong thing. But our Master said we'd be persecuted for doing the right thing.

So I guess everyone who believed back then the Holy Spirit led them to live as heretics. Christians believe that groups that live like that today are cults. The Bible then obviously was written by cult leaders. They ignore how the first church lived and hope that no one brings it up. The way Christians live assumes that it was not right the way

the first church lived. People are very strong in this way of understanding. They claim to see, but they are blind. If the blind lead the blind, both end up in the ditch. Our Master came so that those who claim to see may be made blind (Jn 9:39-41). If they claim to see while being blind, their guilt will remain, and their torment will go on forever. *Remain* means eternal, never-ending, still, continually throughout eternity.

1 Jn 2:4-6 — There is no way to obey His word except in the way it was when it was the Way, in the first century. We can only walk as He walked in the community He established. 1 Jn 2:2-3 — If you evangelize and aren't keeping His commandments something is wrong there.

1 Jn 3:16 is the definition of love, along with verses 23 and 14.

Jn 13:34-35 cannot be done except how it was done when the Way was the Way.

Jn 17:21-23 — This unity is the corporeal witness. It is tangible, touchable, observable.

Jn 12:25-26 — Where do we serve Him? *There* — where He is, where His Spirit dwells.

1 Ths 2:14 — Paul had traveled all over Judea, from community to community, when he persecuted the Way. He knew exactly how the disciples lived. He was there when Stephen was stoned. After he was saved, he patterned his churches after them.

The possibility that Christians are heretics never enters their minds when comparing themselves with the first church. They call those who live like that heretics. All these Bible-believing Christians are serving a Christ that is divided into 22,000 denominations, or according to a later count even 36,000. There are more and more splits. They are so divided, it's unbelievable. There are so many different ways to look at scriptures among Christians. If anyone in those denominations disagrees, he goes out and starts another denomination. Everyone believes the Bible differently. If you believe differently from the way your denomination does, then you are a heretic, a dissenter. Well, then you just go out and start another denomination.

But there is no diversity between the Father and the Son. They are one in essence. 1 Jn 2:27 is the reason there are so many denominations in Christianity. They stopped receiving only what the anointing teaches. But being taught all things by one anointing is the only way to be made ready when He returns (verse 28).

How will Jn 13:35 or 17:23 ever be done with 36,000 divisions and dissensions? 1 Cor 1:2,10,13 — Is Messiah divided? The false Christ is divided 36,000 times. 1 Tim 2:8 — What about all men in every place holding up holy hands without wrath or dissension? How is that going to happen? Paul's writings are not outdated, antiquated, or old-fashioned.

So how can a Christian be sure he is right and has the right denomination? They are all Christians and they are all in the Bible-believing churches that Billy Graham's converts go to. What are the "essentials" that all agree on? Is everything else then *not essential*? What causes all the divisions?

Acts 5:20 — What kind of angel was this to tell them to go and talk about this new life? "Well, that was back then. But I share about what my life is like now," Christians say. They believe they are living a new era, the age of the church. The church has gone through a developmental process, becoming more mature (changed beyond recognition). God is now making it easier for people to believe. The church grew ten times faster and greater after Constantine took over. He made sure there was no more persecution.

We have to be careful. I just read in the New York Times how everyone praises us on how we fixed up things in Cocksackie and Oak Hill, and they interviewed people in town who said we're such good neighbors and we never try to convert them. We have to be concerned when all men speak well of us.

The Anabaptists compromised and came under the power of the state after the government forbade them evangelizing. Then they turned in on themselves and divided into so many schisms.

**ha-êmeq** — I got some pictures from my cousin in California today, and there was a big picture of my whole family. It was right after I had met Yônêq and he'd taken me back to California. It was a family picture taken on the front porch of our house. I hadn't even seen or thought of such a thing in all these years. And I was right there in the middle of this group of people who were all my blood relatives.

I thought, "That's me in there!" I was kind of smiling, as if to say, "What now?" Yônêq had just told me about our Master Yahshua, and my life had just been enlightened. So there I was, on that front porch in a little town in California, standing there in the midst of these blood relatives, like a little seed. Right after that, within days, I was gone to Tennessee. At that moment I actually didn't know I was going to marry Yônêq. I didn't know I was going to go to Tennessee. I didn't know anything. But within the next three weeks we got married and left from our wedding, out the door, heading east for Tennessee.

I had walked away from that front porch and never looked back. It had always been my front porch. I was born there. I'd grown up there. And I walked away from that front porch and all those people. Now I look at their faces and wonder, "Who are those people?" I thought of that when we read from Mk 3:33-35, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And I looked around for a minute, remembering that picture I saw today, and I thought, "That's it! The recipe worked!"

When you asked, "How can we make it be like it was in the first century?" I thought it's like saying to Ishah Ruth, "That's the best dinner you ever made. How could you possibly make it again?" And Ishah Ruth would have this puzzled look on her face as if to say, "Of course, I can make it again. I know how to make it." But then if I snuck in behind her and slipped in some extra things and took some things away while she wasn't looking, so that it wouldn't turn out the same, and then it turns into this grotesque thing. And she would wonder, "Huh, it didn't come out the same..."

The recipe had been planted in my heart. At the time that picture was taken I was the only person besides Yônêq who knew the recipe. I knew I wasn't part of this little group of people I was in. And the recipe worked! And it grew into the Judean Pattern. And I thought there's the Judean Pattern and there's the Constantinian Pattern, and somehow we got past the Constantinian Pattern and were grafted right into the Judean Pattern (root system).

So right in the midst of all these great churches and ministries and everything, there's this little insignificant sprout. And people would come over and say, "What's growing over here? What about our great ministries? You can come and be our youth pastor and you can sing in the choir..." And there are all these Jesus rock festivals, and we're just over there, singing, "Love, love one another..." And they'd say, "But what about your family?" "Oh, my family... Yeah, I have a family..." And they'd say, "Well, don't you want to go back to California?" "No!"

I'm just so thankful that our Father was able to graft us into the original Judean Pattern. It was anti-Semitism that caused the Constantinian Pattern. We are not anti-Semitic because our root goes right back to the truly Jewish Judean Pattern (Rom 11:24). It was totally Jewish at the time — totally Jewish Messiah, totally Jewish members. Our roots go right back to that pattern — our recipe made the same kind of cake. When it grew up, it was exactly the same kind of cake as the Judean cake.

It was because it was the Way. We kept the commandments. He said, "I command you to command them to keep the same commandments I commanded you." Those were all the ingredients that Ishah Ruth would use. She knows the ingredients. She knows the commandments. And it always makes the same beautiful cake.

But if you don't "command them to keep the commandments that I commanded you," then it grows up into this bizarre thing. Like we were walking to work on First Day, and we saw our neighbors getting in the car and they were going to church, because they are grafted into the Constantinian Sunday-go-to-Church Pattern, and of course that pattern would even have a room for a special set of people like they are, because it has to allow almost anything because it doesn't have the commandments anyway. So of course, that one commandment which is obvious that they're breaking wouldn't matter in the Constantinian Pattern.

So we walk on by and say, "Hi, have a good day!" And we didn't stop and try to evangelize them, or whatever we could have said that would have made them hate us at that moment. So they could say about us, "Oh, they're the nicest people. They never tried to convert us or condemn us." And that would be true (but we hope that our witness as their neighbors will win us the opportunity someday). I could have said, "You are going to church because you are grafted into the Constantinian Pattern, but we are not!" But I don't think they would have understood that.

I'm just thankful that the way the Way was when it was called "the Way" is the way we are!

**Migdala** — I'm thankful for what we heard at the beginning that in order to pass the truth on to others it has to be firmly in you so that you can give it to someone else. And I was thinking when ha-êmeq was sharing about how if we're changing the recipe, then when we're talking to people we won't have confidence to stand on what we say. It made me want to make sure I'm not changing our ways in any way, but that I'm continually pulling myself back, making sure that I'm on the way and not making it wider.

**Eben** — I sensed my responsibility, too, when he read from Jn 7:18 and the things he shared in the beginning. Somehow it never hit me like that, that we're the only mediators between men and our Master Yahshua, and what an important place that is. If it wasn't for Yahshua and what He did there would be no way for us back to the Father, and it's the same with us toward the men of this age. We're in the same place of being a bridge to Yahshua. And it's easy to compromise; it's easy to water down the gospel, to make it more palatable, but I know there are huge repercussions for doing that. And in what ha-êmeq shared about the recipe, I thought how we have to have convictions, especially us who grew up here, as to why those things are put into that cake. Because if not, then why not take a few things out? Why not make it a little less spicy or a bit sweeter? What's the big deal? Slip a little of this in there, and take a little of that out...

We have to stay on that way. We can't compromise as we grow into the nation. I see it in myself. There are ways you can despise the poverty and want it to be more comfortable. The stem came to Island Pond, and what they did was based on faith. But it's so easy now to compromise and add things and make our life more comfortable and more appealing. This put a fear in me that we wouldn't do that. I want to be on the pure foundation and stay in a pure place, so that when I talk to people I can be a mediator between them and our Master Yahshua.

That's right. Just a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Cor 5:6). That's what Christianity is — the fully leavened lump. It starts with just a little leaven.

**Havah** — It makes me thankful for something we heard earlier, that if our Master had complained one time He would have stayed in death, and He wouldn't have been the sacrifice for our sins, and He wouldn't have been that Bridge, that Mediator back to the Father. It makes me thankful that we're being brought to that same high standard of being ready at all times to be that mediator between men and our Master Yahshua. It's not a

mystical thing and it's not unreachable for us. We're demystifying grace, like we heard earlier this week. We have the way back to the Father, and we're learning to be the way for other people. One line really struck me in the teaching, that if we're not the way the Way was when it was the Way then there's no way anyone can receive eternal life. I want people to be able to receive eternal life through me. I want to treasure what we've heard from the beginning and make it the way it was then.

We have to be in fellowship with one another. If there's one person in this room that I'm not in fellowship with, that means I'm not in fellowship with our Master. And I won't be until I get back in fellowship with that person I'm out of fellowship with. We can't go into the breaking of bread if we're out of fellowship with anyone. We have to understand that. That's discerning the Body (1 Cor 11:27-29). So look around. Just look at every person. Is there anything between you? Is there anything separating you? Can you look into each other's eyes? Good, our whole household is in fellowship. We could go in and break bread if we were breaking bread here. But we certainly couldn't if any one of us were out of fellowship with anyone.

**ha-êmeq** — I love how the anointing teaches us all things, and that's why the pattern is pure. Because not long after that picture was taken that I saw today, we were going to get married, and good people that we were, we went down to the mall and got wedding rings. Of course, we didn't have much money, so all we got was little gold bands, but maybe later on if he liked me enough he could have gotten me a big stone on another ring to go with it. Or maybe when my inheritance came in, I could have worn my mother's ring. She had a really big one. And that would have been part of the pattern, and then in the whole twelve tribes, all the ladies when they got married would have a big ring on their hand to prove how good of a wife they were and how much their husband loved them. What a good thing! A symbol of loyalty!

But that is part of the Constantinian Pattern! But we didn't know any better. In our first weddings we had a little allowance so couples could go out and get their wedding rings. Oh, where were we going to get the ring money from? But then it wasn't like a big voice came out of heaven and said, "Remove your jewelry, women!" That wasn't part of the pattern. Then we would have feared Him in an ungodly way. But instead, love made us give up our rings.

You never would have thought we would have gotten so poor that our brother, who was really starting to surge forward in his industry, made some bad choices and he had a big debt. What were we going to do for the chain saw shop! We didn't have any money! But then someone said, "Silver and gold have I none!" and all of us with our little rings on said, "Well, almost..." So we gave up what we had — all the rings and the necklaces we got from our grandmother and all of these sentimental things. Everybody brought every piece of gold, anything that they had, and that was part of our pattern, that we don't wear rings.

Recently someone came in and he kept his wedding ring on for months after he was baptized — a really good disciple. So someone said, "Oh, well, I guess nobody is saying anything to him. Are we getting a little bit looser on this? Are we going to allow that now, that in special situations people might wear rings? I guess we won't say anything, because he's a really good disciple." But then someone else said, "Hey, what's going on here?" And when the brother heard what the anointing had taught us about wedding rings, he said, "Ugh, get this thing away from me! I don't want this wedding ring! Take it away!"

In our pattern we don't accumulate wealth. We don't have wealth piling up around us to look like rich people. That poor lifestyle — you've got to maintain it. Your child has to love that poor lifestyle, or else she won't be satisfied with the Salvation Army carpets that get brought in. She'll say, "Why can't we get one like the Cypress Club has?" They'll never be satisfied unless they love poverty and are always willing to give up everything to meet the pressing need. I love that pattern!