

Popular, But False

I remember watching Christian-based movies back in the 1970s and '80s having to do with the end times. They were not very well done, and I found one aspect of these movies to be a little bit hard to grasp. They always showed Christians under great persecution. Society had changed so much that Christians were now portrayed as haters – as a dangerous faction that had to be done away with. Christians were, in fact, HATED, because they were perceived as being hateful. They were attacked in the streets, churches were burned, some were hauled off to concentration – or “re-education” camps. Many had to worship secretly in private homes, and even these home meetings were made illegal.

At the time, I could not understand how such a scenario could possibly happen in America, even though Scripture warns about persecution in the last days. But today, I realize these scenes portrayed in movies a generation ago were not so preposterous, but instead, prophetic.

Indeed, how quickly things have turned around. Today, in our age of unbridled tolerance, everything is readily accepted, and no one is willing to judge right and wrong or declare moral absolutes. No one, that is, except the bible-believing Christian. In a world that seeks not just acceptance, but celebration of any act, any lifestyle, it is only the Scripture-studying Christian who recognizes a law higher than man's, it is only the Christian, seeking to proclaim God's Word, that represents a thorn in the side of the sinner.

The tide has turned, and the direction is irreversible. Those who hold to the Scriptures cannot, at the same time, turn a blind eye to sin and evil. We can't look at the great wickedness of abortion and ignore it. We can't watch the militant efforts of the homosexual lobby to indoctrinate even our children into an aberrant lifestyle, and look the other

way. We can't, in good conscience, watch in silence as millions embrace the demonic religion of evolution, as they declare the existence of a Creator to be a fairytale of the ignorant. And as we seek to obey the Great Commission, we cannot help but speak out, and share our faith in our Savior with a world heading full speed down the road to hell.

Christianity is not for everyone. It is not INclusive. It is EXclusive. Jesus said, *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*

This is why the world will hate us. Because we dare to proclaim the words of Christ. In a world that wants no personal responsibility, no "judging," no moral absolutes, no such thing as "sin," when we dare to speak otherwise, we will be called "haters." And so, today, we are.

But we don't want to be. And so many of us try to compromise. There are many so-called "Christian" groups out there that now pick and choose what to embrace from God's word, or worse yet, they re-write Scripture to fit the new world order. We have large denominations that have rejected God's plan for Holy Matrimony and replaced it with the world's definition. These same denominations go even further by ordaining as pastors and priests those who are without natural affection.

Meanwhile, in the past decade we have seen the emergence of "Mega-Churches" – where thousands gather weekly, where their message goes out to millions via television and radio, and where the Mega-church pastors, such as Rick Warren, Rob Bell, Joel Osteen and others have now become the most popular preachers in America. The trouble is, you really can't be speaking the full and true Gospel of the Lord and at the same time be "Mega-popular." You can be popular, or you can speak

the truth. It is not possible, in these last days, to do both.

Rick Warren, whose Purpose Driven movement, I have personally seen destroy dozens of churches, openly embraces Islam and has partnered with Southern California mosques, proposing a set of theological principles that includes acknowledging that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. This may sound sweet and lovely, and it may appeal to many who desire peace and unity among religions, but the bottom line is, it's simply not true. But it IS popular. The ignorant masses love it.



Time Magazine called Rob Bell, "the most exciting voice in the church today." Perhaps this is because Bell preaches a more popular "gospel," of Universal Salvation, where everyone goes to heaven, and in which hell does not exist. Like so many others, he also embraces homosexuality and is constantly seeking ways to cast doubt on the authority and reliability of Scripture, choosing instead to "reinterpret" Scripture to fit more comfortably with cultural whims. Bell's teachings are decidedly NOT biblical. But in a world where the truths of Scripture are said to be antiquated and obsolete, they ARE popular.

Joel Osteen has openly admitted that he does not preach on sin, or call sinners to repentance, and I am not sure he has ever preached the actual soul-saving Gospel message in his life. But he does put on a very encouraging pep rally. Unfortunately, these uplifting messages are extremely popular. It is unfortunate, because so many hear these messages and believe they are hearing Scripture. They are not. He uses the Bible as a lucky charm. As he begins his church services, he advises the congregation of more than 43,000 people to hold their Bibles in the air and proclaim,

"This is my Bible: I am what it says I am; I have what it says I have; I can do what it says I can do. Today, I will be taught the Word of God. I'll boldly confess. My mind is alert; my heart is receptive; I will never be the same. I am about to receive the incorruptible, indestructible, ever-living Seed of the Word of God. I'll never be the same – never, never, never! I'll never be the same, in Jesus' Name."

The trouble is that he does NOT teach the Word of God, but instead teaches a false, prosperity gospel where God becomes our errand boy. The gist of his theology is stated in his book, "Your Best Life Now" – "If you're struggling financially, go out and help somebody who has less than you have. If you want to reap financial blessings, you must sow financial seeds in the lives of others. If you want to see healing and restoration come to your life, go out and help somebody else get well." These are nice, happy thoughts but they are NOT the gospel. But they ARE popular.

When Pope Francis was chosen by the Roman Catholic Church, Time Magazine declared him "The New World Pope," and he has made it clear that ecumenical outreach and inclusivity is going to be his top priority. This includes more dialogue with other religions. In his first ecumenical meeting he stated, "I then greet and cordially thank you all, dear friends, belonging to other religious traditions; first of all the Muslims, who worship the one God, living and merciful, and call upon Him in prayer..."

He later included even atheists in the big tent, by saying, "You ask me if the God of the Christians forgives those who don't believe and who don't seek the faith. I start by saying...that God's mercy has no limits if you go to Him with a sincere and contrite heart. The issue for those who do not believe in God is to obey their conscience. Sin, even for those who have no faith, exists when people disobey their conscience."

Most recently, Francis declared that the Church must end its "obsession" with gays, contraception and abortion. All these statements of the "infallible" Pope have met with wholehearted acceptance and celebration by the world at large. Left-leaning celebrities have gone on TV talk shows declaring him a "breath of fresh air," and the world has celebrated his statements because now the leader of the largest church in the world is finally getting on board with the program. His statements and actions may not be biblical. But no one can argue, they ARE popular.

Friends, the issue here is biblical literacy. It's been said that the Bible is the number one best-selling book of all time, even today, but it's the one book that few people ever read. Those who hold to biblical truth will understand that Christianity is not a big tent. It is a small gate and a narrow road. FEW, the Bible says, find this road. MOST, the Bible says go through the wide gate and the broad road that leads to destruction.

Just because a speaker sounds good to you does not mean he is speaking the truth. Do not trust your heart. God's Word tells us the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. As fallen, sinful human beings, we will always seek validation and permission for our wicked, sinful desires. Many will come, even in God's name, to grant such permission and soothe our consciences, and such people will be very popular. But do not be deceived. 1 John 4:1, *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world."*

Rather, we must be redeemed, by the blood of our Savior, and then we must live according to our new nature in Christ. 1 John tells us, *"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to*

cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Christians are sinners, saved by God's grace. As we walk by the Spirit, and obediently declare His truths, we will inevitably come into conflict with the unsaved, those who wish to have no authority or moral absolutes, other than those they construct in their own imaginations. These people will seek a utopian world of inclusiveness and permissiveness and acceptance for any and all behaviors. They will seek to create a world without judgement or consequences. Those who oppose them will be labeled as haters.

Matthew 10:22, *"You will be hated by all for My name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."*

These should be startling words. None of us wants to be hated. But the time is coming when we will have to make a stand. In fact, it's here today. Each day we have many choices to make as we go about our daily affairs. Do we compromise with the world? Do we go along with the crowd to avoid conflict? I'm not suggesting we seek out conflict, but when error is spoken, do we speak up to correct it? Or do we go along to get along? Remember Luke 9:26, *"Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."*

That which is called the "Church" is being corrupted at an unprecedented pace today. Be vigilant and be in study in the Scriptures so that you can discern the truth from the lies. It is the responsibility of each of us, individually, and our duty as Christians to know the truth and to daily proclaim it, unashamedly.

Audio versions and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com. Ask for message

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E-Mail Rob Pue: Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com