

# Misplaced Faith

By: Jim Hohnberger

My wife and I had just returned from conducting a series of meetings over 5 days. We were sharing how well the meetings went and how the Holy Spirit moved upon the hearts of many, when a friend of ours, shared a sobering thought about the sin of Moses. His sin didn't solely consist in striking the rock when God had said, "Speak ye unto the rock." Numbers 20:8. Moses' sin was also in saying, "Hear now, ye rebels; must **we** fetch you water out of this rock?" Numbers 20:10. We are told that, "He spake **unadvisedly** with his lips." Psalms 106:33. Moses said **we**, when he should have said **God**. Moses was ascribing the power and glory to himself and God, not God alone, in bringing forth the water from the rock. He allowed himself to be magnified and lifted up before God's people, as though there was some credit due him. He inadvertently drew the people's attention to himself, and not to God alone. This can never be, not then nor now, because it misplaces the people's faith to man, rather than to The Man, Jesus Christ.

For this, Moses would not be allowed to bring the congregation into the land of promise.

When I heard this, the spirit of the Lord said to me, "*Jim you have attributed some of the credit to yourself in your recent seminar. I could not excuse this sin in Moses nor can I in you.*"

Friends, we are never under any circumstances to ascribe to ourselves that which God's power alone can perform. Yes, hearts were changed in the seminar my wife and I just conducted, but all the glory, all the honor and all the power must alone be ascribed to God. How terribly rebuked I was in my own heart. God has forgiven me but has also shown me how sensitive I must be that it is not the man that brings the Word that is to be exalted, but the **Word** that the man brings. How easy it is to inadvertently misplace the faith of the people to man or man's institutions, rather than the Word made flesh, Christ himself.

In all this God was saying to me, "Hear now ye rebel," why? Because I was

inadvertently pointing someone to myself rather than to God. Oh, it was done in a nice sort of way as far as man's eyes were concerned, but not as far as God's eyes. The apostle Peter, when he stood before the rulers, elders, scribes as well as Annas and Caiaphas, rightly said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. God was forewarning me that I was to be a transparent vessel and that I was always, in all places and at all times to point everyone to the only One that was mighty to save, the man Jesus Christ. Yes, we are all to be transparent tools, pointing everyone to the living water, to the spiritual rock as Paul says in I Corinthians 10:4, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ."

"That Rock was Christ," it was not the man Moses, nor the belonging to the assembly of Israel, nor is it a ministry, nor a prominent individual, nor a church organization. Christ Jesus is the Rock, He is the living water, He is the remnant's salvation. God will bring us all into the promised land, but our eyes must be focused on Him, **not the instruments** he chooses to use. The history of the Jewish nation was placed on record for the instruction and warning of coming generations. It drew attention to itself, saying with Moses, **we**. It ascribed honor to itself and allowed its people to seek their safety within its membership. But it failed friends, miserably failed because of the **we** attitude. It gathered to itself rather than to Christ, and thus its members entered into a grave deception; believing they were all right when they were all wrong. The Jewish church was merely to be a transparent tool, not the solution. It made the same mistake

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as Moses, drawing attention to itself, and it never repented of its sin and it still exists today as a monument to itself. It misplaced the faith of the people to a system of worship which became an end to itself. The Jews forged their own downfall with the **"we"** attitude. This downfall of the Jewish church is a fearful and solemn warning to us all. It misplaced the faith of the people to the "tool" rather than the solution. Let us not exalt the church that Christ raised up, but the Christ that raised up the church.

Whenever this **"we"** attitudes takes over, instead of Christ **only**, Christ is forewarning us, "Hear now ye rebels." Do not draw my people's focus to anyone, any system or any institution, but to **Me alone**, lest ye be counted amongst the rebels. For, "many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:22-23

How could God say, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." All that they did they did in "Thy name." But were they really bringing the people to Christ, or to themselves? I think of the scandal of the TV evangelists. They did it in "Thy name," but who in essence were they drawing the people to? To themselves, their ministries, their church? They misplaced the faith of the people.

Friends, this is a serious problem today. I call it misplaced faith. The Christian is led to believe that he should invest his confidence in "the church,"—whatever that very broad all-encompassing term may apply,—or a ministry, or the individual is lead to place his trust in the pastor, the

evangelist, the speaker, the person who has touched his life, or the doctrines and reforms they believe in. This is a matter of misplaced faith, such as Israel being lead to look to Moses rather than to God alone. So God had to deal very firmly with this sin of turning the people's faith or confidence or security to anyone, or anything but Himself. Moses was merely to be God's transparent instrument, not the solution. Just the same as to the church, a ministry or an individual is to be a transparent instrument to draw people to God alone, and not unto itself.

Christ's act in cursing the fig tree which His own power had created stands as a warning to all churches and to all Christians. Why did Christ curse the fig tree, which represented the Jewish nation, the chosen people of God? Because Jesus found nothing in it but a mass of pretentious foliage. Or as the apostle Paul said, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." II Timothy 3:5. The tree drew people to itself with the hope of receiving life, but it had no life to give, only pretentious leaves. When any church draws followers to itself rather than pointing them to Christ, not in theory but in practice, it usurps the place of Christ and in turn becomes a curse rather than an instrument of grace. As a church draws people to itself and the "focus" becomes the support of the system, the allegiance to the system, the connection with the system and an elevation of the system, it is then that it becomes a curse. There is no system or church that has ever saved a man. Not the ancient Jewish church, nor any church of the Middle Ages, nor in any modern church is there to be found salvation. The Jews based their hope of salvation on the fact of their connection with Israel. But Jesus says, "I am the real Vine. Think

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**not** that through a connection with Israel you may become partakers of the life of God, and inheritors of His promise. Through **Me alone** is spiritual life received."

"Through **Me alone** is spiritual life received." The church is to be a transparent medium pointing everyone to Christ. Not just theoretically but practically. If not it becomes a rebel just as the Jewish church did.

This church that Christ raised, up, that was to point the people to the coming of the promised Messiah, was the very church that stole the allegiance of its adherents from the Messiah in order to lift itself up and to insure **its own welfare**. How very sad that the very One the church was to point all men to, it crucified! **This same danger still exists today**. Everywhere we hear the cry, support the system; be faithful to the system; don't leave the system; this focus is misplacing the faith of the people!

Is your church drawing you to itself or to a moment by moment dependence in the **only One** that is mighty to save. My plea to you is not to abandon the church, but to so attach yourself to the Leader of the church, Jesus, that through you Christ can awaken and revive His church. Let us not utter one word of cursing against the church, but let us rather cry over the sins found in her, as Christ did over Jerusalem. We cannot and must not throw out the church, no more than we would throw out the truth. The church has no power in itself, no more than Moses did, nor that I do, nor the reader of this article does. All the machinery in the world is useless, if it isn't attached to an engine. If it is attached to the engine, it will never attribute any power to itself, only to the engine, which is Christ.

This same danger exists in inde-

pendent ministries today. Many of them are drawing adherents to themselves. The tragedy in Waco, Texas with the Davidians should be enough to startle all of us. Whenever a man or a ministry draws people to trust in it, beware, for they are surely rebels against the Lord. God will use ministries to help finish His work, but if they begin to draw unto themselves, He will surely have to curse them as He did the fig tree which had only pretentious leaves.

While writing this article, I invited my wife and two sons up to my room for a test. I stated the names of present day ministries and then asked them to share the first thought that came to mind, their first impressions of what they did. I was pleased at some of their responses and wept, truly wept at other responses. I'd suggest you try the same test on yourself. Many of the ministries today are **not** majoring in the **real gospel**. They are not bringing souls to Christ, nor preparing them for heaven. I believe that the instruction given by the apostle Paul is advise in regards to our relationship with some of today's ministries, from those "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." II Timothy 3:5.

Friends, I wouldn't throw out a Moses, neither would I the "church" or a ministry. But I would caution, not only myself, but also the church, as well as all the ministries of today, to take heed not to misplace the people's faith. Individual after individual, ministry after ministry, and church after church have fallen again and again into the sin of Moses. Let us all learn not to misplace the people's faith. Let us all learn that when we have done all that it is possible for us to do, we are to count ourselves as unprofitable servants. Luke 17:10. Let all see that we really do believe that Christ is the only perfect **One**, who will never, never disappoint anyone.

It is absolutely imperative that as

ministries, individuals or as a church, that we place the people's undying faith, loyalty, trust, focus and dependence in Christ alone. Their total faith and utter trust must be in the only One mighty to save. It is our solemn obligation to direct them there, in every sermon, every article, every video and every conversation we are involved in. For if we don't, we too will be guilty of the sin of Moses and for this failure on the part of Moses, God would not permit him to lead the people to the promised land.

There is an invitation that has gone out through out all generations to every nation, kindred, tongue and people, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth come ye to the waters." Isaiah 55:1 Christ himself re-echoed the cry as He stood in the midst of His church, "If any man thirst, let him **come unto Me** and drink." John 7:37 And in the closing pages of the sacred Word, this gracious call is ringing down through the ages to you and I, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17 Friends, our faith must stand not in a man, a ministry or a church, but in **Christ alone**.

## Power for Living



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