

R H M Testimonials

Herb, we were richly blessed and humbled to have you at Island Camp Meeting this year. You brought a unique and wonderful perspective to understanding Christianity. I left filled with joy and happiness. Thank you very much – **KP**

Thank you ...from a renewed heart. – **SL**

Hi Herb. I just started listening to your Extravagant Love series. Thanks for allowing God to use you. I'm being blessed – **RC**

You met my wife and I at Island Camp Meeting this weekend. I just wanted to say that I appreciate your coming so much; my wife commented that I have never talked about my faith so much than after listening to your sermons. You speak to everything the both of us have concerns about, and I think there are far too many people who need to hear what you have to say – **ES**

Sermon of the Month



At the risk of being redundant, about half of this month's free presentation contains very similar information to the presentation *Why Think This Is True?* that we offered at the beginning of this year. So why are we offering some of this information again? Because the other half of this presentation's application of this information to becoming "Jesus centered" rather than simply "Bible based" (See John 5:39-40) is REVOLUTIONARY. Listen

to Jesus' own emphasis that He placed on Himself as the source of our identity and life (in comparison to simply having correct doctrine) and experience a whole new understanding of how to take our unique truths to the world today in a way that is inclusive, relevant, and stunningly Beautiful in this month's free presentation — *Concentric Circles* by Herb Montgomery.

Schedule

AUGUST 12-13, 2011

Hollister Seventh Day
Adventist Church
Hollister, CA
831-245-8841

AUGUST 19-28, 2011

Fairfield Community SDA
Fairfield, CA
704.426.6720

SEPTEMBER 23-24, 2011

Red Willow Community
St Albert, AB Canada
780.458.4644

OCTOBER 7-22, 2011

Honolulu Central Seventh Day
Adventist Church
808-524-1352

OCTOBER 31 - NOVEMBER 4, 2011

Fletcher Academy
Fletcher, NC
828-209-6800

NOVEMBER 11-12, 2011

Lakeport Community Seventh
Day Adventist Church
Lakeport, CA
707-263-6002

NOVEMBER 18-19, 2011

Pullman Community
Worship Center
Pullman, WA
509-332-8782

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Awakenings

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries ::::: Volume 5 ::::: Issue 3 :::::

More Thoughts on Jesus versus the Old Testament God

by Herb Montgomery

When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them and said, "*You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.*" *And they went on to another village (Luke 9:51-56, TNIV).*

I have to admit that this is a very confusing story for me personally. I'm going to ask you to put yourself in James' and John's sandals for a moment as we begin this month and consider some very important questions. The first question is this: Why did James and John ask if they should call fire down from heaven on these Samaritans? The answer is even stranger because it is rooted in an Old Testament way of seeing God.

Two bold historical events give James and John's question some basis. The first is the fire that God rained down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). The second is Elijah and his interaction with actual Samaritans (2 Kings 1).

But it gets worse before it gets better. We have to add to these the numerous other accounts (I will only list a few of them here) and prophetic statements that also form the basis for their question. This exercise may seem tedious, but I encourage you to look up each of the following texts to get the full impact of just how different Jesus was from what we find in the Old Testament. Regardless of the theological implications, and troubling as it may be, we must be honest with these differences. (Leviticus 10:2; Numbers 11:1; 16:35; Deuteronomy 4:24; 9:3; 32:22; Isaiah 5:24; 29:6; 30:30; Ezekiel 20:47; 22:31; Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5; 5:6).

The point I want to make is that James and John were fully "Biblical" in their response to the Samaritans' rejection of Jesus. And yet Jesus REBUKED them. Don't gloss over that word "rebuke." It's a strong word describing Jesus' strong



reaction to them.

I am becoming more and more alarmed at modern Christians in their use of the Old Testament to justify their refusal to follow the clear teachings of Jesus and the principles of His kingdom. I recently encountered this in some responses to comments I made on Facebook about the execution of Bin Laden.

Jesus taught us:

*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what credit is **that** to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is **that** to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is **that** to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same **amount**. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil **men**. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-36).*

I know this is going to raise some significant questions for some of you. That's OK. Live in those questions for a moment. Put yourselves in the same head-scratching position as those who listened to Jesus in His own day.

Consider what the account of Jesus' Transfiguration is whispering to us today.

Follow closely. The Jews based everything they believed about

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MINISTRY

UPDATE

Charleston SDA Church
Charleston, WV
May 20-21, 2011

Delmer is the resident “Evangelist” at the Charleston SDA Church. Delmer is a constant reminder that we are called to live in what some scholars call the already/not yet reality of the kingdom. You see, Delmer is an 80-something-year-old quadriplegic. Honestly, in the half hour I spent with Delmer, he taught me more than I could have ever shared with him throughout the entire weekend. I spoke Saturday morning on the paradigm in which Jesus understood human suffering. We looked at examples of Jesus’ own understanding of God, human suffering, the ageless question of “why,” and the way Jesus, therefore, responded as God (and a man) to human suffering on Earth.

When I finished the presentation, I walked to the back of the church to shake the hands of those who had decided to spend their Saturday morning with me. At the end of the line came a dear gentleman named Delmer. He moves his chair with a straw-like apparatus that he operates with his mouth.

Delmer’s speech is severely slurred; one sentence can sometimes take minutes to communicate. But after hearing everything I had just said, with tears in his eyes, he whispered, “One day, I’m going to dance with my Jesus on streets of gold.” Capturing and translating the emotion of that moment is difficult, but

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God on the Law and the Prophets. (The cultural symbols for these were Moses and the greatest prophet, Elijah, himself being translated.)

To the law (Moses) and the testimony (the prophets represented by Elijah)! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isaiah 8:20).

But the picture of God that the people in Jesus’ day took from these two sources was imperfect. It was partial. Incomplete. In the Transfiguration, what we are witnessing is a special transfer of authority from Moses and Elijah to Jesus, to be witnessed by Jesus’ disciples. Peter, James, and John witnessed Moses and Elijah, figures that, in their culture, stood for the source of all of their beliefs about God and how He calls us to live, standing there with Jesus. Then the Father speaks audibly:

*Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is **My Son**, My Chosen One; listen to HIM!” (Luke 9:35, emphasis added).*

What is this saying? As you have based everything you believe about Me on the teaching of Moses and Elijah, now base everything you believe about Me on My Son! Listen to Him now!

You see, although what they believed about God was based on

suffice it to say, I just about fell apart. You see, Delmer is the resident expert on this question of “why” when it comes to human suffering. The traditional answers don’t cut it for him. He has wrestled all his life with this question—not as a scholar, not as a theologian, not as a preacher, and not as someone who has never suffered. He’s wrestled with this question from his electric wheelchair, which he operates with his MOUTH! I wish you could have heard him yelling “Aaaaameeeeen!” each time I made a significant point about freedom, control, risk, what God can and can’t do, and the other variables that must be considered to begin to make sense of why life looks the way it does here on Earth. Delmer next shared with me the answers he has found in his own searching and crying out to God. This process took him about 30 minutes. His explanation was no longer theological; this was real. Delmer gave me more insight than I would have ever had the courage to ask for. After offering me the gift of his insight, he confessed, “I want to hug you for what you shared today. What you have presented this morning is the closest to what God has taught me about how I wound up in this chair that I have ever heard from anybody.”

As I looked at Delmer, God began to whisper to me, too. I began to imagine what Delmer’s life will look like in the kingdom. Then I began to imagine what Delmer’s life could look like right now if God’s will could be done for him. I began to imagine what Delmer’s life would have looked like if God’s will could have always been done for Delmer. Then I felt God

the Law and the Prophets, they had grossly misinterpreted the God they found in the Law and the Prophets. They took from these two sources a picture of God that was lacking. We are not to think that Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but rather, Jesus radically re-interpreted the Law and the Prophets in such a unique way that it gave the people of His day a completely different picture of God. (It also undermined the entire religious system that had been built on that wrong picture, and that is one of the primary reasons that they crucified Him.)

Take note of Jesus’ reinterpretation of what the Law and the Prophets were actually teaching with James and John’s original question in mind:

*In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for **THIS** is the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12, emphasis added).*

This is the message of the New Testament. The Old Testament, although true, was misunderstood. Jesus had come, by contrast, as the exact, full, complete representation of the character of God.

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son . . . And He is the radiance of His glory and the

say to me, “This, THIS, is how I have always looked at Delmer. Not as a quadriplegic! But as I intended him to be and how he one day will be.”

You see, none of us asked to be born. And none of us asked to be born into the circumstances or condition into which we were born. Some say, “God made you just the way you are.” And I understand what sincere folks are trying to say by this, but nothing could be further from the truth. What we are is nothing like what God originally intended for us to be. Each of us has been to some degree (and some more than others) affected by “free will.” And too often it has been “free will” *abused* rather than “free will” *used* for the purpose it was originally given (to love and be loved). My interaction with Delmer taught me, in my own heart, that God was calling me to look at Delmer in a radically different way, to see more than my eyes perceived. God was asking me to look at Delmer with an imagination sanctified by a belief in how God sees Delmer, and not to apply this only to Delmer. God was impressing upon my heart the truth that I must apply this to everyone with whom I come into contact. God looks at *none of us as we are*, or as we

have become. Rather, God looks at us as what we were originally intended to be and what we could be again through restoration of His love. He sees each person on Earth as “holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4). And God works diligently in each and every person’s life to restore them to a way life that is so beautiful that we can hardly imagine it.

exact representation of His nature (Hebrews 1:1-3).

*For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained **Him** (John 1:17-18).*

Once again, I’m not saying that Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 5:17). But the picture of God that the people in Jesus’ day took from these two sources was imperfect. It was partial. Incomplete. Paul understood this when he wrote to the Corinthian believers:

For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial [picture of God] will be done away (1 Corinthians 13:9).

It was this tension between the Old Testament and the Teachings of Jesus that caused the religious leaders of Jesus’ day to reject Him. It is this tension that we need to live in today as followers of Jesus. And it is this tension that should give us grave warning not to base our treatment of our enemies on Old Testament stories but on the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. When we find tension between the Old Testament and Jesus’ clear commands, we must, by default, choose Jesus’ clear commands and assume

This week, don’t just look at people as they are. First remember that God loves all of us not based on what we were intended to be, what we are, or what we will be. Instead, God loves us because of what He is, and that is love. Loving others is simply what Love does, regardless of the attributes, traits, or condition of the object. Second, none of us asked to be born into this condition. God realizes this. Therefore, in light of God’s unconditional love, imitate God and look at the people with whom you come into contact the way God does. Look at them through the lens of what they were originally intended to be and ascribe to them the infinite worth that Calvary bestows on each and every one of them. Live in Love toward them. And do so in the hope that one day, all things will be restored. Simply by doing this, you are setting in motion the very qualities that bring that future restoration of the kingdom into the present age; you confront life as it is tragically done in this age and enlarge God’s future kingdom in the present here and now.

*For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. **So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view** (2Corinthians 5:14-16, emphasis added).*

For all of you who were praying this past weekend in Charleston, thank you. Many were blessed by what God did through those four presentations. However, I have to confess that I believe I’m the one who walked away with the biggest difference. Thank you for praying for last weekend. And Delmer, if you’re out there, most of all, thank YOU.

we are misinterpreting the Old Testament. Remember, Jesus interpreted the Old Testament in such a way that allowed Him to still give the Old Testament authority in His life but that simultaneously gave Him a radically different picture of God than what others had gotten from the Old Testament.

Lastly, I hope those who need to hear this right now will understand what I’m saying and what I’m not. When we look at the violent history of the Christian Church, and even at today’s American (nationalistic and violent) version of Christianity, we do not find that the teachings of Jesus have been tried and found wanting. We find that the teachings of Jesus have been found difficult and left untried.

Think of all those who are not believers but who are watching us today from the outside. I hope one day soon the label “Christian” will be used, once again, to designate those who are following the teachings of Jesus. I want to be a part of that, don’t you?

Something worth wrestling with.

Imitate God. Live in Love. Love like Christ. And go build the kingdom.

Much love to each of you this month.

Herb