

The Bridge

As I mused one morning in 2008, my mind drifted to that simple little sketch that is so effectively used to show the seeker how Jesus, by way of the cross on which He gave His life, can be the bridge to our eternal life. The sketch depicts a chasm, the bottom of which is hell. All of mankind exists on one side while heaven and eternal life are on the other side. Then when the cross is drawn with the arms spanning the chasm, and thus forming a bridge, it becomes the way in which man can escape hell and cross over to heaven. As descriptive as this single two-dimensional sketch is for illustrating the Gospel message, the image that I saw in my musing was three dimensional and complex. I hope that in sharing this vision it may characterize a somewhat broader perspective of man's predicament, and how he is being led and misled to deal with it. Being absent of any effective artistic ability, I can only hope that through words, at least some expression of the image can also enter the reader's imagination. I see the bottom of that deep chasm as a huge burning dump into which all unsaved souls must one day descend. Its length and depth resemble the Grand Canyon.

On the earthly side, teeming billions of souls, yet in their mortal bodies, mill around the vast expanse of this world nearly all of them lost, and many of them wondering as to their eternal destiny. Many know of the great chasm, fear it, and seek ways to avoid it from becoming their eternal residence. Others live in denial, or in some fantasy "faith" that somehow through their own efforts, they will be "o.k." and not have to fall in. As Scripture tells us, many are called by God to seek the "Jesus Bridge" to heaven. These drift toward the edge of the chasm looking for the bridge to see what it's all about. Some of these, when they have learned a little about it, may be likened to the throng that assembled to hear Jesus speak of Himself as the bread of life eternal, and who then followed Him no more. (John 6:66) His way was too difficult for them, so they went away seeking an easier more pleasing and less demanding way than the "Jesus only" bridge to heaven.

Time has not improved this aspect of mankind. It seems to be human nature for most people to shop for what looks like the “best deal” for the money, even when it comes to how to get to heaven. I remember something that W.C. Fields, an early 20th century comedian is reported as having once said. He apparently was known to not be a religious man. Therefore, when one day he was seen reading the Bible, he was asked as to why he happened to be so engrossed. His reply was “I’m looking for loopholes.” Isn’t that what most of humanity seeks, even the majority who fill Christian churches? Don’t we all, to some degree, even as Christians look for “loopholes” in God’s Word, or pick and choose from it the easiest way that looks “good enough”?

If nothing more, our modern culture could be characterized as one of continuous pursuit of comfort, pleasure, convenience, and the easy way through life. This desire in itself is not sinful. However, when it is lived excessively, it will erode the moral fiber, the resolve, and the ability to prevail in a God honoring way, over the inevitable temptations, hardships and challenges that everyone must face in this life. It also causes many to seek some easy, comfortable and non-convicting religion that promises some form of “heaven.” The discerning eye can readily see that degrading potential having manifested at every level of society, even in the visible Christian church where there seems to be little, if any difference between it and the world. Liberal Christian teaching today seeks to accommodate that quest for the easy way by empathizing the seemingly “no sweat” portions of God’s Word while avoiding the more demanding, but absolutely essential requirements so clearly stated by Jesus Himself, as represented by such requirements as “repentance” and “obedience.” Also avoided is the necessity for humility and a commitment to Jesus as Lord in the sense of a life-long servant-hood to Him as Master. The word, expressing this required relationship, is “doulos” which more accurately translates as bond slave rather than servant.

Now back to the chasm/bridge image. The “Jesus Bridge,” as Scripture states is approached along a straight path that ends at a narrow gate through which only the redeemed may pass. Because of the many hardships and difficulties to be encountered along the way to that gate, only a relatively few actually pass through. This we know

because Jesus said so when He told us that “Many are called but few are chosen...” (Matthew 20:16) What is unique and wonderful for those who do pass through this gate, which one passes through at the moment of death, is the immediate presence of the holy love that greets and continues on into eternity.

Now picture the vista presented, as we look further along the earthly side of this chasm. Intermittently, as far as we can see along the escarpment, we observe what appear to be numerous other bridges that also seem to extend to the heavenly side. Compared to the somewhat “plain vanilla” narrow way to the Jesus Bridge, these all have grand promenades leading up to them. Lush landscaping, billboard-like signs, each uniquely attesting to the ease of access and to the great things to be found along a particular way and on the other side. One even assures every man who kills and dies for Allah that there are 70 virgins waiting there for him. What the women are expected to find doesn’t seem as clear and surely not as inviting. Satan has provided a way and a bridge to suit every imaginable taste and desire. His proudest achievement is the counterfeit Jesus Bridge. This is to where most of the many that are called but not chosen gravitate. His program of perversion within the church has been most successful in attracting these many to his counterfeit Jesus Bridge. His infusion of false gospels and the appealing “easy ways” to salvation have been incredibly effective in filling pews with these hapless and hopelessly deceived victims.

Well, there we have the whole panorama of what is being offered to all human beings as they reach the “end of the road” here on earth. The Jesus bridge from the earthly side is the most difficult to approach, and is rarely frequented by the rich, the famous and the powerful, or the many whose hardened hearts simply refuse to acknowledge the necessity of any form of accountability, servitude or salvation, and so do not even look for any bridge.

Looking carefully at the line of souls following the path to the Jesus Bridge, one cannot help but be struck by the uniqueness of what can be seen. These are the meek, the poor in spirit, those who thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure of heart, the

peacemakers and the persecuted for righteousness sake. They were once heavily laden with sin but they know that by a faith that has been confirmed by their humility repentance, obedience and love, that they have received God's grace of salvation, and are forgiven. Their eyes shine with that divine assurance that they are heading for His Bridge, His way, and the only way to eternal life. Depending on how thoroughly Satan's deceptions have saturated the soul, we might see quite a few of these same characteristics being expressed by those heading for a counterfeit bridge. However, a careful examination will reveal that there are also many who express uncertainty, fear and other emotions reflective of doubts and of the casualness with which they dealt with their preparation for that moment.

Let us also look more closely at the other bridges, and the countenance of those who proceed to these wider gates. On their way, we see in these people, various attitudes expressing themselves. There are those who are nonchalant, even oblivious of the fact that they must pass through any gate to anywhere after physical death, because they consider death as complete annihilation. Nevertheless, some may chose one of these, using the logic of "just in case" in order to improve their odds. Some embrace their beads, or their idols, or other fantasies, quite certain that these have guided them to the best bridge for crossing into heaven, or perhaps to an enhanced reincarnation. Satan has an attractive bridge for every lifestyle, culture, persuasion, belief, or attitude. All who choose one of his religions, and don't choose Jesus will by necessity pass through one of his gates. However, looking more closely across the abyss at each of these alternative bridges, there seems to be a dense fog or darkness somewhat off shore obscuring the far side from everyone's view. Each soul we see crossing is soon obscured in that fog. However, though we cannot see, we can hear many terrifying screams as each comes to realize that, like captured enemies on the pirate ships of old, they have walked not on a bridge, but instead on to a gang plank from which there is no return,. They have been cast into the smoldering darkness of that awful pit.

Before we leave this imagery, let's again look closely at some of the others that march toward that counterfeit Jesus Bridge. These are the ones who may have been prominent in

the church, taught the Bible, witnessed convincingly, evangelized and did all manners of good works. They are the professors of the faith who never really humbled themselves or strove to embrace Jesus and be His *doulos*. These will go with confidence based on their own seemingly good works. They will be shocked and devastated when they appear before Jesus, not at the Bema Seat, but much later at the white throne judgment, where they will hear the most horrible of words ever to be heard by man, “depart from me ye that work iniquity.” How particularly awful and unexpected it will be for this group, because they prophesied in His name (preached the Word), cast out evil spirits (witnessed to the unsaved) and did many wonderful works (hay and stubble) (Matthew 7:22) all of these will find that their Jesus “bridge” was also nothing but a gang plank to hell.

Which bridge are you marching toward? Are you absolutely sure? Do you periodically “come up for air” and examine your faith? You should do so, but not because I suggest it. Notice what Paul said in 2Corinthians 13:5 “*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves,...*” Because these words were given to Paul by God Himself, we should all take them seriously. Be assured, you are not a match for Satan, or his many false teachers. However, you can recover from the misleading messages you may have received from misinformed misguided evangelicals, or agents of false doctrine, who through their twisted and limited scriptural knowledge have fooled, and continue to fool the majority of the professors of Christianity. Study the whole word of God as if your life depended on it, because it does. I pray with all my heart that you are not one of those heading for any of those counterfeit bridges.

Perhaps you may conclude from these efforts that I am exactly what I am railing against, a misguided or false teacher. If you have followed the easy road, and find such things as a strict interpretation of the meanings of humility, repentance, faith, obedience, and servant-hood as being “over kill”, then my concern must seem pointless, if not down right offensive to you. On the other hand, if it’s possible that I could be right, are you willing to risk your eternal security to find out? It will be too late when you find yourself on the gangplank, instead of the “bridge.”