
Words of Truth

Amongst Familiar Terminology

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Back in January we studied the song "Upon The First Day Of The Week" to see if the wording was in accordance with the truth (<http://www.wordsoftruth.net/songs/uponthefirstdayoftheweekanswers.html>). You might recall that as we studied this song we found that the first three verses and the chorus were in accordance with the Scriptures. This is significant because we teach by song (Deuteronomy 31:19 and Colossians 3:16) and we're expected to always teach the truth (Proverbs 8:7, Ephesians 4:15, Ephesians 4:25, II Timothy 1:13, and Titus 2:1).

You might also recall that, during the study of this song, many amongst us missed something in this song that is not true. In the fourth verse that song says this: "Upon this day "beloved" John, Saw Christ, and heard his trumpet voice; We, too, in spirit worship Him, With pray'r and song our hearts rejoice!" In my first read through of this song, I missed the error in the statement I just quoted. In my second read through of this song, I missed the error in the statement I just quoted. When I sat down to put Scriptures to this song, I missed the error in the statement I just quoted. It was not until my FOURTH time through this song that I read the fourth verse in context. While I found the error before we assembled to discuss it, it was not until my fourth time through that I saw it. Why did I miss it several times? Why did some brethren amongst us not find it until we exposed it in the class? The answer to these questions is the basis of our study today.

Why Did I [We] Miss It?

The false doctrine in that fourth verse is something we're aware of. We all know that we come together on the first day of the week to worship God the Father. In fact, Jesus Himself teaches us that the Father is whom we are to worship. Notice this: *"The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, **worship the Father**. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship **the Father** in spirit and in truth: for **the Father** seeketh such to **worship him**. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:19-24).

Also, we know that we do not do things such as offer up our prayers to Jesus. This is another error that was in this song. Again, notice the Scriptures as a reminder of these things: *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name... Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ"* (Matthew 6:9, Ephesians 5:20, and I Peter 2:5).

Since we know these truths, which are contradicted by the song, why did we miss the errors in that song? The answer is simple and it is twofold. For one, we failed to read the whole context of the song. We dissected the song into mini sections and missed what the song and the entire verse was teaching. Secondly, and this is vital for us to think about, we saw familiar terms and automatically assumed that this meant the statement was true. We saw the terms “in spirit worship Him, With pray’r and song our hearts rejoice” and we let our guard down. As some said in our class, John 4:23-24 came to mind immediately and thus the conclusion that the statement was right was made. Think about the danger of this weakness that we had, even momentarily, while examining this song.

Familiar Terms Are Good Hiding Places For False Doctrines

What about the phrase, “God’s law rules over the laws of men”? Is that a true statement? Of course that is a true statement (Mark 7:7-9, Acts 5:29, and Colossians 2:18-23). So, what could a false teacher do with such a statement? Well, that false teacher can cause people to drop their guard. Notice this statement: “And so, in conclusion from this, we learn that an unscriptural divorce releases neither party from marriage. When you have an unscriptural divorce, as men count it, it’s not so with God. That bond is still in tact. And that little piece of paper is nothing in the sight of God. Just as well use it as Kleenex and blow your nose and drop it in the toilet. It doesn’t mean a thing to God. God’s law rules over the laws of men. And furthermore scriptural divorce, even when there’s a scriptural divorce, and that would be...” (Ron Halbrook; MDR sermon preached in Wilkesville, OH, 6-14-90; <http://www.mentaldivorce.com/mdrstudies/WrittenDebateInvitationForVariousMen.htm>).

Many “brethren” have been pulled into the “Mental Divorce” error by crafty wording. Ron Halbrook does not have to tie Scriptures together to convince people of his error. He only needs to use terminology that unsuspecting “brethren” agree with. In the midst of that terminology he can spin his web of deception. The terms “unscriptural divorce”, “bond”, “scriptural divorce”, etc. are familiar terms for members of the body of Christ. People wouldn’t think that a false teacher would use terms like “unscriptural divorces” when he is teaching error on that very subject.

So, what is wrong with Ron’s statement above? For one, any divorce (scriptural or unscriptural) causes both parties to be UNMARRIED. Notice God’s wording: “*And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she depart, let her remain **unmarried**, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife*” (I Corinthians 7:10-11). Thus, two married people have become just as unmarried as a widow or a person who has never wed before (cf. I Corinthians 7:8-9). Without wrangling over terms, the same Scriptures that teach those two are unmarried also shows whom they are permitted to be married again to in the future – each other! How simple it is, yet familiar terms can cause confusion.

Conclusion

We have to be very aware of reading the context of a statement and of not allowing scriptural terminology to blind us from seeing the whole statement. Falsehood hides best when it blends itself with that which appears right (Matthew 7:15). Familiar terminology does not mean that an entire truth is being taught. Let’s be ever so cautious (II Timothy 2:14-18)!