

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

A Visitor From Houston

Scenario:

You arrive at the building here for a normal Sunday of study and worship. When you arrive you learn that we are expecting a visitor. Just as you learn this, a man walks in and identifies himself as a member of the Bering Drive church of Christ in Houston, TX. In his hand is a Bible. The spine of that Bible reveals that it is the English Standard Version (ESV). He sits amongst us and our class begins as normal. We are studying the book of Ezekiel. In particular, we are in chapter thirty-three. About 10 minutes into the class, he begins to speak.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

A question: "The book of Ezekiel seems to be very negative to me. Why are you all studying this?"

A Later Statement Is Made:

(Context, we are discussing Ezekiel 33:12): "I don't agree with what Ezekiel is saying here. It is the Old Testament. Jesus is much more loving to us in the church today than Ezekiel was towards his brethren who seem confused to me."

For Discussion:

What do you see in those statements?

- Each time there is a "visitor" I have two conflicting thoughts. The first, is one of concern about who might be coming in amongst us (**Matthew 7:15-20**, **Galatians 2:1-5**, and **Jude 1:3-4**). The second, which is outweighed by the first because Scriptural truths that teach few will be saved (**Matthew 7:13-14** and **II Timothy 3:1-4:5**), is a level of excitement for a possible opportunity to help someone obey the Lord's will (**III John 1:4**).
- After learning this individual is from the "Bering Drive church of Christ in Houston, TX"; I am going to quickly look online (phone) and see if this is a brother in Christ, a lost soul, a wolf, or a combination of the latter two. In principle, trying this person (**I John 4:1-6**). Quickly, I see things that reveal we have a lost soul and a potential problem amongst us. The congregation that this man is a member of tells us some things about him (**II John 1:9-11** and **Revelation 2:14-16**). If that congregation was wrong on things, and he were faithful, he would not stay nor identify with them (**II Corinthians 6:14-7:1** and **Ephesians 5:6-11**).
- The website of this congregation reveals that "everyone has a place" in their assemblies as you first come to the webpage. The wording on their front webpage, at the time I looked (7/20/2019), says this: "We are a fully inclusive church. Everyone participates in leadership, worship, and the life of the church. Men, women, and children all serve together. No matter your background, past,

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or present, you are welcome at Bering. Please join us this Sunday morning” (<https://beringfamily.org>). There are many Scriptural errors in that wording.

- * The Lord’s body is not “fully inclusive”. Your “present” does matter as to whether or not you could be welcomed into the assembly of a faithful congregation (**Romans 16:17-18, I Corinthians 1:10, I Corinthians 5:1-13, Ephesians 5:25-27, II Thessalonians 3:6-15, and II Timothy 2:19**).
- * Everyone cannot participate in “leadership” (**Matthew 15:14, I Timothy 2:11-12, and Hebrews 5:12-14**).
- * What is meant by children serving with men and women?
- I saw all sorts of events on their webpage that the Scriptures speaking nothing of. To name a few: “Sunday, July 21 – Tenth Anniversary Luncheon in Honor of Cynthia Own by, following Worship; Saturday, July 27 – Church-wide Service Project and Movie Night, 5:00 p.m. Wednesday, July 31 – DBS Prep Day; Saturday, August 3 – Bible Time Market Place (Daycation Bible School), 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m...” (<https://beringfamily.org>).
 - * We must have authority for all that we say and do (**Matthew 28:17-20, Luke 6:46, Luke 11:28, Acts 17:10-11, Galatians 1:6-10, Ephesians 5:10, and Colossians 3:16-17**).
 - * Where is the authority for things such as those listed above?
 - * The emphasis on the carnal/social is revealing (**Romans 8:5-8**) and unscriptural (**Romans 14:17**).
- Their beliefs include false doctrines on the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit of God is the personal, powerful presence of God the Father and of the Risen Christ. The Spirit convicts of sin, regenerates sinners, and gives us repentance and faith. The Holy Spirit of God lives in believers, empowers them for service, changes them into Christ’s likeness, and distributes gifts by which we serve each other. The presence of God’s Spirit assures us that we are God’s children. John 14-16; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 1:11-14” (<https://beringfamily.org>).
 - * The Holy Spirit is not longer given to man nor are the gifts He gave. Holy Spirit baptism only occurred twice and was unique to the situations (**Acts 1:1-2:4 and Acts 10:1-11:18**). As the New Testament progressed, Holy Spirit baptism no longer occurred (**Ephesians 4:4-6**). The only other way the Holy Spirit was given under the New Testament Law was through the laying on of Apostle’s Hands (**Acts 8:5-24 and Acts 19:1-7**). There are no Apostles today. As a result, spiritual gifts have ceased as the word of God promised they would (**I Corinthians 12:3-13:13**).
 - * How this group of people used the Scriptures they referenced also is revealing (**II Peter 3:15-17**).
- They make baptism a matter of conscience: “We teach and practice believer baptism by immersion, seeing it as most consistent with baptism’s meaning and with apostolic example. Respecting individual consciences, we also receive believers who were baptized by another form” (<https://beringfamily.org>).
 - * While water baptism ought not be emphasized above any other instruction of God (**James 2:10-12**), to demote it to a matter of conscience is erring as

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such is commanded and necessary for sinners to be saved (**Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:41, Acts 18:8, Romans 6:1-6, Colossians 2:12, and I Peter 3:20-21**).

- All of the above is just a small bit of the many errors on their first webpage. As you read further in the site, you find that when they are all inclusive, they even mean homosexuals. Among the resources they recommend books such as “God and The Gay Christian” (<https://beringfamily.org/lgbtqfaithconversation/>). Among their MANY unscriptural “resources” and “ministries”, they have a LGBTQ support group for parents (<https://beringfamily.org/lgbtq-support-group-parents/>).
 - * Fornication of all sorts, including homosexuality, if unrepented of will result in one’s being eternally lost (**Genesis 19:1-13** [cf. **Jude 1:7**], **Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13, Romans 1:18-32, I Corinthians 6:9-7:5, Galatians 5:19-21, and I Thessalonians 4:3**).
- The ESV in his hand says a lot too. I would advise him not to read from that perversion for I’d have to correct it. Please consider this study: https://www.wordsoftruth.net/WhytheKJVOvertheNIVNASBorESV_handout.pdf
- His question about the book of Ezekiel shows he does not understand that we are to study and I am to teach the entirety of the Scriptures (**Psalms 19:7-11, Psalms 119:97-104, Matthew 22:23-33, Luke 24:44, John 1:45, Acts 8:1-53, Acts 13:13-42, Acts 20:26-27, Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 10:1-12, and II Timothy 3:14-4:5**).
- His problem with **Ezekiel 33:12** shows his level of ignorance and is a consistent error with the congregation he belongs to. What Ezekiel taught is not harsher than our Lord. The fact is, Christ expects more now under His law (**Acts 17:30 and Hebrews 10:26-38**). You don’t get “in store credit” that will cover future sins with our Lord (**Luke 13:1-5 and James 1:13-16**).
- Ezekiel was not confused. God was speaking through him (**Ezekiel 2:1-3:10**).
- This man can either sit back and learn as a student or leave. He would not be permitted to continue his ignorance in a faithful assembly of saints (**I Timothy 1:3-7, Titus 1:10-14, and Titus 3:9-11**).
- If a congregation can identify this possible problem before the assembly, it can be addressed in a decent manner and possibly prevent this situation from escalating. For example, if I see the website of this congregation and we have not begun yet, I will pull this man aside and politely tell him that his beliefs and the truth are not in alignment. I will invite him to discuss this later, in a private study. Then, without targeting him per se, I would certainly teach on things in his presence that would help him if there were any desire in him to do what is right (**Ephesians 4:15 and II Timothy 2:24-26**).