

"Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching ..."

(1 Timothy 4:16)

... about the danger of false doctrines

In the following treatise you can learn why we believe and how we understand that **Jesus' teaching is God's truth. Who has wrong teachings does not worship God. False doctrines have a "yeast-effect" and are leading astray.**

In the person of Jesus Christ is defined what Christianity is, what Christians believe and what they hope. Whoever teaches different things than Jesus taught disregards his authority that means the authority of God. From this point of view, the arrogance of false teachers becomes obvious and it becomes understandable why the New Testament uses so severe words against them.

Nowadays a lot of theologians hold the opinion that many accounts about Jesus bear the character of a legend and that the main part of the words handed down as his words grew out of the pious fantasy of his adherents. So they have a "good" reason for not taking the New Testament seriously, for not obeying the words of the Holy Scripture and so they make up their own religion.

Despite the fact that the so-called liberal theologians reject self-evidently the Pastoral letters (Pastoral letters: The Pauline letters dealing with the practical life of the Church: 1-2 Timothy, Titus) as non-authentic the truth of Paul's words against false teachers in those very letters will certainly prove right in their case, as well as what he says in **Galatians 1:8-9**:

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!

Many people do not regard the teaching as something important, often because they do not want to assess neither themselves nor others and so the argument goes that we should tolerate the other ones thinking and we cannot recognise the truth altogether. However, Jesus said in the gospel of John:

... If you continue in My word, {then} you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. (John 8:31-32)

How important the right teaching really is will hopefully become understandable through the following thoughts.

Jesus' teaching is God's truth

So Jesus answered them and said, My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or {whether} I speak from Myself. (John 7:16-17)

Here in these words Jesus emphasises that **God himself is the origin of his teaching**. So what he said is what God says, through Jesus' words we can get to know what God wants and who he is. Yet **the most important prerequisite is the willingness to do the will of God.**

Who has wrong teachings does not worship God

Jesus warned his disciples **to be on guard** against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Matthew 16:6.12) He also declares:

'But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'
(Matthew 15:9)

He does not only call it a **useless worship**, he even calls them **hypocrites** and says:

You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.' (Matthew 15:7-8)

Every teaching that gets off the biblical fundament is a human precept, thought up and created by people pursuing different aims than serving God. So **false teachings are the result of disobedience and cannot have the effect of a relationship with God** or will certainly destroy it.

Teaching and life are closely connected

We can see this on different examples.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me {something} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me {something} to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.' Then the righteous will answer Him, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You {something} to drink? 'And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 'When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, {even} the least {of them,} you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me {nothing} to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. (Matthew 25:31-46)

If someone for example understands the parable above as referring to Christians, as it is usual nowadays, his concept of being a Christian will be restricted more or less to social activities. But **this parable indeed speaks about people who did not know Jesus, who are surprised that the good they did, they did for Jesus**. Christians know that they serve Jesus with everything they do. Here Jesus partially also answers the question of what will be in the eternity with those who do not get to know him here, on the earth. The Greek word ethnoi (nations) in verse 32 also contributes to this interpretation. The Jews viz. made a difference when speaking about themselves/their own nation (Greek: laos) and about the nations (Greek: ethnoi) that is every non-Jew. This can be seen from Acts 26:17 as well.

As Christians we are ambassadors for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20), actively making God known to the people by spreading Jesus' teaching and living a holy life.

The parable about the wheat and the weeds is a further interesting example.

jesus presented another parable to them, saying, The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. 'Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn. (Matthew 13:24-30)

Nowadays many people refer this parable to the church. They want to use it as an argument that within the church there can be believers and unbelievers together and only at the end of age, it will become clear who really belongs to God. Therefore, they say that we need not keep distance to unbelievers or even should not assess people because only at the very end God will decide. If you read a little further, you can see that this is not what Jesus spoke about.

He explains that **the field is the world** and in the world are living good and evil people although **God** created everybody for a good purpose. However, God does not want to exterminate all those who do not obey him from the earth. **He grants everyone his free will to live his life until he dies, however, he decides.** Moreover, we can see from other passages in the New Testament that **we as Christians cannot have spiritual community with unbelievers:**

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me, Says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

False doctrines have a "yeast-effect"

That is why the Scripture warns us to...

... keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. (Romans 16:17)

In his letter to Titus Paul says:

Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned. (Titus 3:10-11)

False doctrines are leading astray

The truth is going to be adapted to concepts that seem to be more pious, more attractive or more

comfortable to the people, concepts that grant them more "security" or allow them to make compromises.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but {wanting} to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

False doctrines are spreading quickly. The wide road is easy to go, but leads to destruction. In the New Testament we find a very strict rejection of false teachers:

Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into {your} house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. (2 John 9-11)

In New Testament time, to welcome somebody was connected with receiving this person into the house and having fellowship by eating and speaking together. This is what John wants to say: **with a false teacher one cannot have fellowship** to show clear limits to all the things he teaches wrongly, for what can truth and the distortion of the truth have in common?

So **every Christian will be eager to get to know what the right teaching** is which is an expression that he loves the truth and the basis **for going forward on the narrow way**, that is why Paul admonishes the Christians:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming. (Ephesians 4:14)

If someone is not consciously led by Gods Word he must not be surprised if he is led astray. **A lack of thinking already opens the door for the deception of false teachers.**

Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.

(1 Timothy 4:16)

© 2011 www.christians.eu - All rights reserved.

The content of this article may only be republished or reprinted in an unchanged, complete form for private use. Content may not be reproduced in any other form without written permission from **www.christians.eu**

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations taken from the NASB.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Last modified: 9th December 2011