

SEED AND BREAD

For the Sower

Isa. 55:10

For the Eater

BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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* *This is another of Otis Q. Sellers' unfinished studies. The handwritten manuscript was complete enough for John S. Ribbens (a long time associate) to pick up the train of thought and complete this four-page leaflet*

“YOU GOTTA HAVE A CEREMONY”

By Otis Q. Sellers, Complement by John C. Ribbens

Those who saw the amusing stage play or motion picture called *The Music Man* will probably remember that the opening scene was set in a railroad passenger coach in which a group of traveling salesmen were discussing business and one bumptious fellow kept interrupting with statements such as: "*But you gotta know the territory*" or, "*But he doesn't know the territory.*" I have listened to preachers, talked to seekers, overheard conversations, and read letters from correspondents who have touched upon God's expectations and requirements of men at the present time. The bottom line of most of these has seemed to be: "*You gotta have a ceremony.*"

An increasing number of professing Christian people have been brain-washed with the idea that God now accepts and blesses men on the basis of some ceremony that has been performed on or over them by some other man. In Christendom today idolatrous attachments to some ritual or ceremony go so far as to dethrone the Lord Jesus Christ from the place that should be His in the hearts and lives of those who claim relationship to God. This is a manifestation of that spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:3) which John declared was already in the world in his day.

The Greek word translated antichrist means instead of, in the place of Christ; thus when a ceremony is substituted for Christ, that ceremony becomes antichrist. Those who think a man's sins are washed away in the waters of baptism have substituted a ceremony for all the work that Christ did upon the cross. Those who think that forgiveness can be obtained by some ceremony or confession, sorrow, or regret are putting something else in Christ's place. They have a substitute for Him; they have an antichrist.

Scripture speaks boldly when it tells us that in Christ we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7). The religious world will not accept this plain statement. It contradicts it by saying, "*Not so, you gotta have a ceremony.*"

Thus it is that Biblical illiterate multitudes now think that God accepts men and they become related to Him through some kind of ceremony. And since this is what people want, this is what they are being given. This is true of Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, Muhammadanism, and Buddhism. Strip any of these of their elaborate ceremonies and rituals and what would be left?

A constant conflict against the deification and aggrandizement of rituals, ordinances, and ceremonies, has ever been the history of Christendom. In about 1726 Johann Mosheim in his famous Church History had this to say concerning the church of the third century:

It is certain that to religious worship, both public and private, many rites were added, without necessity, and to the great offence of sober and good men. The principal cause of this I readily look for in the perverseness of mankind, who are more delighted with the pomp and splendor of external forms than with the true devotion of the heart; and who despise whatever does not gratify their eyes and ears. Also, there is good reason to suppose that the Christian bishops multiplied sacred rites for the sake of rendering the Jews and the Pagans more friendly to them, for both had been accustomed to numerous and splendid ceremonies from their infancy, and had no doubt that they constituted an essential part of religion. Hence, when they saw the new religion to be destitute of such ceremonies they thought it too simple, and therefore despised it. The simplicity of the worship which Christians offered to the Deity had given occasion to certain calumnies, spread abroad both by the Jews and Pagan priests. The Christians were pronounced atheists, because they were destitute of temples, altars, victims, priests, and all the pomp in which the vulgar suppose the essence of religion to consist. To silence this accusation the Christian doctors (teachers) thought they must introduce some external rites, which would strike the senses of the people, so they could maintain that they really had all those things of which Christians were charged with being destitute, though under different forms.

Interestingly, these ideas prevalent in 1726 still prevail. Great confusion continues to persist in the minds of men today who cannot perceive of a relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ apart from some ceremony or ritual performed by some minister or priest. The basic issue which pertains to eternal life and men's salvation is based simply upon believing the record that God has given concerning His Son. Its simplicity is repugnant to many who believe *you gotta have a ceremony*.

Scripture declares and this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" I John 5:11-13.

Men hold steadfast to the idea that somehow they can perform a work to relate themselves to the Savior of sinners. All such ideas are foreign to the truth of God. Isaiah the prophet declared "but we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags..." Isa. 64:6. No man, however ethical, moral or well principled he may be, can achieve a standing before God based solely on human merit. Human accomplishments cannot substitute for God's righteousness which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This great truth is clearly revealed in the book of Romans. Paul declares in Romans 3:21-23 "**but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.**"

Every man stands before God in need of redemption, in need of forgiveness, in need of His righteousness. These gracious provisions have been provided through "**Christ Jesus whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood...that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**" Rom. 3:25-26.

No religious organization, no priest, no man, can confer these blessings upon us. The recitation of prayers, deeds of penance, or the offering of sacrifices are of no avail. The Bible declares now to him that worketh is the reward not of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted to him for righteousness. Rom. 4:4,5.

Men err while they insist on adding something to God's requirements for our Salvation, when His only condition is that men believe the record that He has given concerning Jesus Christ. **Belief is faith:** both are the very same word in the original Greek, and God's word is that we are saved through faith (believing). Salvation is God's gift to men for believing.

Faith is taking God at his Word and responding accordingly. It is the beginning of our relationship to God, and also should grow into a way of life. Faith in Jesus Christ will bring us the assurance that our dealing with God has been God's way, not man's way, **for in Him (the Christ) dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, which is the head of all principality and power. Col. 2:9,10.**

When men asked Jesus what shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, **This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent. John 6: 28,29.**

Nothing in these passages of Scripture even remotely suggests a ceremony. God in his infinite wisdom has provided mankind with a book to believe, John's gospel. In this book God holds out the promise of eternal life; **believing** is the key.

Search through John's Gospel. You will look in vain for any ritual or ceremony required for men's Salvation. The searcher will find that Jesus Christ is declared to be the Creator of all things, affirming the Deity of the Son of God who has now become flesh. Further reading will reveal a series of special signs or miracles performed by Jesus, the very nature of which credential him as the long awaited Messiah (Christ). Following the record of His death and resurrection, the Apostle John by inspiration writes: **Many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name. John 20:30-31.**

Putting one's faith in Jesus Christ is at the first a very private, personal matter. An individual dealing with God on His terms, a one to one basis, this is what God desires.

There is no ceremony.

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