

“Truth without Love is too hard; Love without Truth is too soft”

Through

the

Maze

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Getting to the High Priest

Returning to the Promise of the Book of Hebrews

A paradox surrounds the New Testament use of the word priest. We are called a royal priesthood, a holy nation (I Pet. 2:9) and yet, for us there is but one High Priest, Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:14). It is no wonder that so many views exist, within Christendom, about the nature of priesthood.

Everyone agrees on the general definition of the duties of a priest. He is someone who intercedes between men and God. In the Old Testament, the tribe of Levi was set apart by God to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. Only the priests could enter the Tabernacle and officiate in the Temple. Those who were not of the tribe of Levi could not enter the Holy Place. They did not have access to, or direct contact with God.

What changed in the New Testament is that God took on flesh and dwelt among us so that we could behold His glory. (John 1:14) And after He lived with the Apostles for three years He told them that He would leave them, but He would send another Comforter Who would be *in* them as He had been *with* them. Although the Apostles did not un-

derstand what He meant at the time, later they would begin to understand.

In fact, most of the New Testament attempts to help us come to grips with this new and living relationship opened up when God became Man.

When Jesus ascended into heaven He took on a new role—that of the High Priest who ever lives to intercede for us at the throne of God (Heb. 7:25) A new priesthood era dawned. Now those who accept the priesthood of Christ have bold access to Him. They are invited to go directly

who show men and women into the presence of Jesus. We have no power to heal them or to change

them. But we know Who does. We do not possess inherent wisdom, righteousness, or holiness, rather:

...Christ Jesus...has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our right-

(Continued on page 2)

into His presence to find real help in time of need.

What does it mean, then, about *our* priesthood—that we are a holy priesthood? It means that we function in the role of introducing others to the High Priest. We are those

Most of the religious error of the cults during the past two thousand years has been confusion about the nature and role of Jesus Christ. Religious systems attempt to reinsert a human priesthood between man and God, thus encumbering the free access we have with Him.

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teousness, holiness and redemption.
(I Cor. 1:30)

Whatever keeps men and women from Christ keeps them in bondage. Whatever moves them towards the High Priest secures their liberty and healing.

The Book of Hebrews was written to Jewish converts to Christ. Apparently soon the bloom of liberty in their relationship with Christ began to fade. Now they looked longingly back to Judaism. Like many modern-day Christians they were in danger of abandoning their open relationship with Christ in favor of a religious system. In response to this the writer of the Book of Hebrews issued a strong warning: "If you do not enter into the promised rest you have been offered in Christ, you are in grave danger!"

What was that danger? Was it that they were in danger of "losing their salvation?" Let's don't get sidetracked in that discussion. It is enough for us to realize that they are warned that if they went back to their old religious ways they would deeply regret it. They would live in the Old Way rather in the New and Living Way. (Hebrews 10:20) They would fail to enter boldly into the throne room where they would find mercy and grace to help them in their time of need.

The temptation is as strong today—the temptation to seek help somewhere other than at the throne of grace. The other (or Old) ways include religion and self-help philosophies of every sort. Ultimately, these methods leave us worn-out and discouraged. Only the Presence of the High Priest can offer us the grace and mercy we need for *real* help.

And how do we enter that throne room. Simple. Through prayer. I do not mean a prayer service, or a prayer vigil, although there is a time and place for both. But what the Book of Hebrews teaches us is that God is near us. His Son is ever ready to give us the help we need. It is our job to ask Him for that help.

We must enter the throne room regularly to maintain our open lines of communication and relationship. I pray we take the advice of the writer of Hebrews and enter the throne room of the High Priest—with open-faced confidence—so that we find rest, relationship, peace, wisdom, and joy.

Overview of the Promise and Warning of the Book of Hebrews

The Promise: You will find real help from the hand of the High Priest at the throne of grace

1. The Old Way vs. the New Way:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son (Heb. 1:1-2)

2. Pay attention lest we drift away:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. (Heb. 2:1)

3. Jesus shared our humanity to conquer death:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. (Heb. 2:14)

4. Fix our thoughts on Jesus, our apostle and high priest:

Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. (Heb. 3:1)

5. Be careful we do not fall short:

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. (Heb. 4:1)

6. Enter our rest today:

Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Heb. 4:7-11)

7. Approach the throne of grace with confidence and receive real help:

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are --yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

The Warning: If you fail to enter boldly into the throne room, you are in danger of drifting away from the help an presence of God.

Letters

Jim,

I left the Mormon organization a bit over seven years ago after a very traumatizing experience with several active members. Up until a couple of weeks before Thanksgiving this year [2001] I hadn't even opened a book of Mormon and every time I was even near a book with "Mormon" in the title, whether in a bookstore or a library, I quickly moved past it. For some reason, one evening last November while I was at the Ada Community Library and absent-mindedly looking around the isles of books, I saw the title *Beyond Mormonism*. Something triggered the idea that it was just simply time to try to deal with it. In looking through the other publications that they had on the shelf, I was amazed at how much there was dealing with my own personal problems and concerns with them.

That night I checked out *Beyond Mormonism*, *Whited Sepulchres* and the reprint of Rev. Lamb's *Golden Bible*. I read the entire book of *Beyond Mormonism* the next day and I could hardly believe all the old stuff that kept coming up inside me remembering my own personal experience with that organization. *Whited Sepulchres* was painful to go through because it further confirmed my experience that I had seven years ago. Finally, when I began to read and study *The Golden Bible*, I just broke down many times, realizing that 'the book of Mormon' really is spurious.

Upon returning some of the first titles that I had checked out back to the library, I then checked out *Temple of Doom* and the Tanner's big book *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality*. Upon reading *Temple of Doom*, I was so shook up knowing that I had taken satanic oaths and covenants and I'm still beside myself wondering if we've invoked some kind of generational curse on our children. Our names are still on their records and we just simply want OUT, lock stock and barrel! Needless to say, after studying *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality*, I'm totally blown away at the complete subversive, dysfunctional mess

that Mormonism really is.

I still have a lot of questions and I am really hoping that there is a resource for help here in the Boise area... Thank you for your fortitude in speaking out.

Barbara

Dear Mr. Spencer,

I just wanted to tell you Thank you Thank you Thank you for your book, *Have You Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?* About a month or so ago, my daughter and her husband told me that they had been attending the Mormon church for 3 months. I got your book from the church library, read it, watched *God Makers* and stuff. Well we just panicked.

My husband and I did everything that we could do to try to convince them that they were going down the wrong path. I gave her your book and told her to read it.

Well within the next week she called me and thanked me for making her read it. She has studied and studied and now has decided that she needs to tackle the people that tried to brainwash her. She has become much more solid in her own beliefs, radically so. She told me about your website, and says that she has already written you thanking you. Her name is Jennifer.

Thanks so much for helping me to keep them straight (and to protect the lives of my grandchildren as well) Your book has changed our lives. I intend to learn more too, I guess all I need to do now is to ask her...

Very truly,

Anita

Honest,
Jim ☺

Dear Mr. Spencer,

We would like to thank you for writing "Have you Witnessed to a Mormon Lately?" We recently considered joining the Mormon church! It seems so crazy now that I look back on it.

They made themselves appear to believe the very same things that we do. They put on the mask of this perfect church and everything we wanted to hear they told us. I am so angry and hurt that we almost wanted to raise up our baby girl in this church! After reading your book (which my mother pleaded for me to read) I cannot believe that they covered up all of the things that the church was really built upon!

I am so enraged because they are misleading thousands of Christians everywhere! They are literally wolves in sheep's clothing. And we were spared because of the way that you shed light on the part of the mormon maze we could not see. The part that they claim is just rumors intended to keep people away from the "truth". We owe so much to you, because you have led us back to the Bible where the only truth can be found.

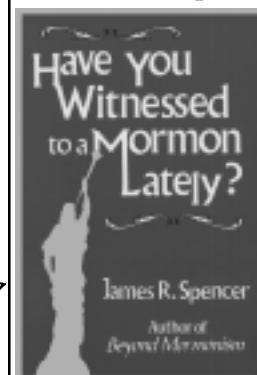
Thank You.

Jennifer and Family

Finally!

Back in Print Now being printed

Should be shipping no later than June 1



My sincere apologies for the delay to those who donated to this project. Thanks for your patience, your book will be shipped soon! (p. s.— my last newsletter mistakenly reported on this project as the reprinting of *Hard Case Witnessing*. That book has never been out of print.)

Witnessing To Mormons Answering Recurring Questions about Mormonism

What is "Baptism for the Dead?"

A lady wrote me asking about the Mormon concept "Baptism for the Dead." Anyone who has dealt with Latter-day Saints knows that the Church does proxy baptisms for dead people. It is this practice (along with other temple rites) which drives Mormonism's genealogical research. They collect the names of dead people from throughout the world and do baptisms for them. That is so just in case those dead people (who now supposedly inhabit a place called "Spirit Prison") want to become Mormons they can do so by accepting the proxy baptism (and other ordinances) done on earth in the temples.

My first response to the woman was that we really have no idea what the obscure reference in I Cor. 15:29 means:

Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?

Nowhere else in the Bible is there a reference to such a practice. Of course, it is conceivable Paul was referring to water baptism on behalf of dead people. However, he may not have been thinking of that at all. We just don't know. He doesn't elaborate. This chapter is not in any other way connected to baptism

This chapter is about the resurrection of the dead. Basically Paul is arguing that after we die we will be resurrected. He made that argument because many Jews did not believe in bodily resurrection—notably the Saducees. Here Paul says the dead are resurrected and that their new bodies are gloriously more wonderful than their original earthly bodies. He said the glory of the resurrected body is as different from the earthly as the brightness of the sun is from the brightness of the moon.

Besides making up an imaginary doctrine to go with "baptism for the dead," Mormonism makes another grave mistake in this chapter. It turns Paul's analogy of the glory of the resurrected body to the earthly into a doctrine about "many heavens." It decides this passage refers to a telestial heaven, a terrestrial heaven, and a celestial heaven. Again, no such doctrine is taught in the Bible.

So, Paul's reference to baptism for the dead seems out of place. We are left to speculate about what he meant. Some have suggested that, since the chapter is really about the resurrection of the body, Paul may have been suggesting that it is foolish to be baptized if Jesus is not resurrected (ie. is "dead").

It is OK to speculate about obscure passages of scripture. What is not OK is to develop a hardened doctrinal position from such a passage. A primary rule for interpreting scripture is that you never build a major doctrine on such an obscure reference. For example, we have lots of scriptures telling us about water baptism, about adultery, about idolatry, etc. But we have this one, single reference to "baptism for the dead."

It is plain wrong to build a whole theology on something that the Bible does not expand upon. But Mormonism does that repeatedly. That is because Mormonism has isolated itself from the healthy body of Christ and has denigrated the Bible as the only rule of faith and doctrine. In Mormonism other books of scripture and other "prophetic" imaginings determine doctrinal positions. ■

Boise Area Bible Study

I teach a Bible Study in Meridian, Idaho each Wednesday night at Meridian Assembly of God. Meetings are at 1830 North Linder Road. We are currently studying the Book of Hebrews. For directions call 888-0063. ■

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Please consider running an ad in your paper. Here are a couple of suggestions. Please don't change anything in the ads because, ultimately, I have to be responsible for the wording.

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"The Disappointment of B. H. Roberts." How one Mormon General Authority and well known author discovered that the Book of Mormon is not Divine.

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