

Doctrinal Views of Ron Wyatt and John Bishop.

We can be appreciative of the presentations of Ron Wyatt about Noah's Ark, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Red Sea Crossing, Mount Sinai, and the Ark of the Covenant. It is undeniable that God has used his search for facts, and led him to edify us in many important ways. Some of us will prefer to reserve judgment about some aspects until more evidence is available.

On the way out after the third lecture I picked up a sheet of paper he said people could take from the table in the foyer, and was disappointed. I want to pass on the reasons for my disappointment, and add a warning about the advertised series of 12 presentations focusing on Bible Prophecy by John Bishop in Toowoomba this coming week.

Ron Wyatt holds the view that after death people have no consciousness either in body or soul until the resurrection. One of the first passages he quotes is clearly against this view. Paul expresses his preference to be absent from the body and present with the Lord in 2 Cor 5:8. The thing that should not be omitted is that it is not nothing that is absent from the body and present with the Lord! When Jesus answered a question about the resurrection he also laid down an important principle about God: "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. For to Him all are alive."

More serious than this is Ron Wyatt's view about the Old Testament. He takes as a basic principle Psalm 89:34: "I shall not profane My covenant or change what has gone forth from My lips." The crucial question is "Which covenant"? The Old Covenant? The Book of Hebrews makes it clear that the Old Covenant has been superseded. It has been changed! We have better promises, and a better sacrifice, and a better priesthood. Ron Wyatt restricts this change just to the OT sacrificial system. He would probably insist that circumcision, sabbath observance (though he does not say so directly in this paper) still apply, and certainly does insist that prohibitions against eating pork still apply.

Jesus laid down the principle that it is not what goes into a person that defiles him, but what comes out of him. Commenting on this, Mark wrote: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean.'" (Mk 7: 19). Ron Wyatt misunderstands the threefold vision to Peter, in which the Lord told him not to call common or unclean what God had cleansed. In Romans 14-15 Paul writes about those who are weak and strong. The weak have scrupulous consciences about certain kinds of food and observing certain days. The crucial points are that God has accepted both weak and strong, who belong to the Lord; and that the kingdom of God does not consist in food and drink, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

It is important to observe that, though the moral parts of the Ten Commandments still apply to people of all races, there are elements in the Law as given on Mount Sinai that applied specifically to the Israelites. These are "who have brought you out of the land of Egypt" (Ex 20:2); and "so that your days may be prolonged in the land that the LORD your God is giving you" (v.12). The Lord gave Canaan only to the Israelites of the Old Testament. There is also the prohibition against making any likeness, which is nowhere repeated for Christians of the New Testament. Then there is the whole commandment about the sabbath, the largest section of the Ten Commandments. God gives as the reason for it the reminder that He made the earth in six days and rested on the seventh (Ex 20:11). In Deuteronomy Moses also adds the reason that the Sabbath was "to be a reminder that God had brought them out of slavery in Egypt (Deut 5:15).

We should remember that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, mentions the sabbath only once, and that to say that it was not necessary any longer to observe those shadows, which pointed forward to Christ. "Therefore let no one judge you in what you eat or drink or with regard to a feast day, or a New Moon, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come, but the reality is that of Christ" (Col 2: 16-17). It is very clear that more has been altered in the Old Covenant than only the laws about sacrifices.

It is wrong for Ron Wyatt to quote Gal. 1:8 about "no other Gospel." Paul is talking about the Gospel, not ceremonial laws. Rather, the whole of Galatians makes it plain that to insist on Old Testament circumcision and the rest of the Law of Moses is to be in danger of falling away from Christ. Christians are no longer under the guardianship of the Law, as the Israelites were. "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Rm 10:4). Ron Wyatt seems to have misunderstood what Paul is saying in 1 Cor. 8.

It has nothing to do with slaves being sold in the city market! Paul was not only discussing clean foods that had been offered to heathen idols. He nowhere limits what he is saying to "clean" foods according to the Old Testament rule. He says, simply, "Food will not commend us to God" (1 Cor 8:8). The plain context is against the idea that pork is still forbidden: "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, without asking any questions because of your conscience, for 'The earth is the LORD's, and all that fills it'" (1 Cor 10:25).

Ron Wyatt, like Jonathan Gray, holds that, when the world ends, unbelievers will be simply burned up or annihilated. That simply does not fit Jesus' description of eternal punishment as ongoing torment. Why should any unbeliever be afraid of straight annihilation?

Ron Wyatt's understanding of prophecy seems to be influenced by a tendency to avoid distinguishing between literal writing and apocalyptic writing in dealing with sections of Daniel, and Revelation, for example. The "sevens" for example, in Daniel 9 are nowhere defined as chronological years. We should beware of a tendency to set up a list of things that are going to be fulfilled in a "precise order before the end of the world. Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 give a series of signs pointing to both the destruction of the Jerusalem end of the world; but Jesus shows no interest in these chapters in any exact dating of the end or in calculations leading to its fixing. They will certainly occur, but the basic thrust is that we must be watchful, and expect His coming at any time.

Therefore we need to be cautious about what Ron Wyatt writes: "When the loud cry of the third angel, emphasising these facts, is finished, God's work on earth is finished probation (my emphasis) closes, and the plagues follow in rapid succession. But before probation closes, we will bring forth the Tables of Stone with the commandments that all who will be given access to the tree of Life will obey (his emphasis), and the world will see the Ark upon which His blood fell."

We have to be particularly on our guard against the view that Jesus completes His atonement in the heavenly sanctuary. Did He not say on the cross, "It is finished"?

I am sad to have to say that his emphasis on the Law has skewed his understanding of the Gospel. For example, on page 32 of his wife's book, which Ron Wyatt recommended during his talk, *The Ark of the Covenant*, there is the heading, "We must co-operate in the working out of our own salvation." In the paragraph she writes: "We must co-operate with His Holy Spirit. We are in charge of our own salvation in that we still have the choice to allow Him to work through us. But, we only have to let Him lead the way. In doing so, we find we keep His commandments"(my emphasis). Two serious errors seem to be affecting her thinking here. Rather, we have to say that, because of original sin, human beings as they are by nature cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, and are unable to apply themselves to the things of God. There is no possibility of a sinful human being co-operating with the Holy Spirit in either his conversion, or in the working out of his salvation. Paul immediately assures the trembling believer after Plp 2:12: "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" by adding: "For it is God who continues to work in you both to be willing and to be doing according to his good purpose" (v.13). The second serious error is that eternal life is gained both by Christ's shedding of His blood and our keeping of the commandments. No. Salvation is entirely by the work of Christ. He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being under the Law for us (Gl 4:4-5).

About John Bishop's "Discovery Seminars", always beware people who offer a series of lectures, especially about prophecy, when they do not identify which church body they are representing. Be suspicious of underhand ways. People should clearly identify who they are in denominational terms, and not latch on to good and edifying presentations in order to draw God's people towards false ways of understanding prophecy, and reintroducing legalism about food laws and sabbath observance.

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Pastor C Priebbenow