

BOOK III

PAUL AND JESUS

Introduction

In Book II, in investigating Paul, I showed how he erred in one of his doctrines, that of the imminent return of the Lord, and how that error influenced other doctrines and may have interfered needlessly with the normal lives of his converts. In this case, his error is easy to establish because it is falsified by history. If he could err once, he could err in other doctrines as well, including what may have been the most important concept of his gospel, and therefore could have misled many others and set the stage for two thousand years of erroneous testimony by the churchmen. In these cases, that I will bring to light below, I will be content to demonstrate his errors by comparison with the teachings of Jesus, for they involve matters of faith that are not subject to historical proofs.

Nevertheless it will not be difficult to show him in error in the light of our Lord's words. The weight of this hinges on the significance we accord to the words of Jesus, and the basis of our interpretation of those words. I frankly and forcefully acknowledge that the words of Jesus are the only valid basis for all spiritual Truth, that they are in themselves perfectly consistent with accurate history and with true science, and that they are simple and straightforward, requiring little interpretation. To give an example, Jesus' command,

Do not resist one who is evil (Matthew 5:39),

is simple and requires no explanation, meaning exactly what he says, nothing less and nothing more. He knows how we identify those who are evil and used this word as we understand it. Attempts to relax this commandment are pursued by those who are overwhelmed by a clarity they cannot accept.

Paul had different standards of Truth. He founded his doctrines on revelations received, as he believed, directly from the risen Christ, through visions and other paranormal experiences and gave little attention to the utterances of Jesus. He specifically denied that he received his gospel from man (Galatians 1:12). This must be interpreted to include the man, Jesus of Nazareth, of whom he said,

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer (II Corinthians 5:16).

Therefore, when he erred in doctrine (and we have already seen that he did err), we conclude that his doctrine, which was received through paranormal experiences (based on his own assertions) invalidates his revelations. This conclusion assumes, of course, that his claims as to the source of his doctrines are true, which is doubtful in view of our evaluation of Paul's veracity. The character traits we discussed above make it far more likely that Paul received his knowledge of Jesus and the Jesus tradition through contacts with those who were disciples of Jesus before him. Then he devised his account of revelations received from the heavenly Christ in order to establish independence from and superiority to the Jerusalem apostles and others of the original

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disciples of Jesus. In what follows we must also suggest sources for Paul's doctrine, since it will become evident that the source was not Jesus. This is not the place for an extensive study of his sources, a topic that would require another volume.

Now to set the stage for what follows by pointing to one of Paul's radical contradictions of the Word of Jesus, one that illustrates his ignorance of both Jesus and the Father. From Jesus we have this statement:

Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him (Luke 20:38).

But from Paul we have this:

For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (Romans 14:9).