

Crazy Dog Look

It is always interesting to speak with individuals about spiritual concepts and how to serve God. I had one lady tell me that she didn't have a religious preference. She said, "I just have a relationship with Jesus."

That's one of those statements that generate a curious dog look: one of those, what-did-I-miss looks. Language is intended to convey thoughts. Words are simply vehicles upon which thought travels. Now, the problem with the statement above, concerning a religious preference, is that the individual assumed I understood what she meant by the statement "I just have a relationship with Jesus."

In some cases, individuals will say, "All you have to do is follow Jesus." That's all well and good, as a general statement is concerned, but what does it mean to "follow Jesus"? Therein lies a problem among men. It is true that an individual needs to have a "relationship with Jesus," but that "relationship" must be defined by scriptural principles.

Let's put this in the realm of our responsibilities to the government, regarding taxes. Every year the government requires everyone who has income, subject to taxation, to file a tax return. You walk into an accountant's office and ask the question, "What do I need to do to file a tax return?" The accountant says, "Mail in the appropriate paperwork." Now, the statement is a true statement: To "file" a tax return all you have to do is mail it in or efile the return. What the statement does not address is the gap between bringing in the income and the mailing. When you begin to examine the "gap," you find that before you can mail, or efile the return, you must gather your receipts, put them in their proper category, total them up, make sure the deductions you are taking are according to the laws which regulate taxes, put the proper figures on the proper form, in the proper place, total them up and subtract your non-taxable from the total income to arrive at the total amount on which you are required to pay taxes. After you have completed the task and arrived at the correct amount, then you "file" it. Once it is filed, it is then subject to an investigation on whether or not your deductions were in accordance with the tax laws. The same is true regarding a "relationship" with Jesus. Prescribed laws define the relationship.

When Jehovah gave Israel the law, He command that incense be burnt every morning, and every evening. (Exodus 30:7-8). The law regulated who could burn incense: "no stranger, that is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to burn incense before Jehovah" (Numbers 16:40). When Uzziah the king "was strong, his heart was lifted up, so that he did corruptly, and he trespassed against

Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense" (2 Chronicles 26:16). When he did, "the priest went in after him...and they withheld Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It pertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto Jehovah, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from Jehovah God. Then Uzziah was wroth; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy brake forth in his forehead before the priests in the house of Jehovah, ...And Azariah the chief priest, ...thrust him out quickly from thence; yea, himself hasted also to go out, because Jehovah had smitten him" (2 Chronicles 26:17-20). Uzziah did not abide by Jehovah's prescribed laws. In like manner, an individual can only affirm they have a relationship with Jesus, if they abide by the word Jesus spoke, for he said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:48-49).

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