



The Wonder Springs Chronicle

23 May 2007 ; Volume 9, Number 20

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The Great Evangelical Diaspora

As we begin our ninth publishing year we shall take a little different track this week. While still dealing generally with stupendous change and Business Ecology, this week we shall digress a little to try to put these teachings into a more historical context, the context of diaspora or dispersal.

Shortly before his death to cancer Francis A. Schaeffer published "The Great Evangelical Disaster." In that 1984 book Schaeffer basically described a church that no longer stood for truth as truth. The church had accommodated and embraced the worldviews of the culture. The church is and was supposed to challenge society on the basis of the Bible as the Word of God. Without its true God given mission, the church has followed culture calling this lack of a spine, a quest to become culturally relevant or to be seeker sensitive.

Since nothing has fundamentally changed for the better in the last two decades, can consequences of this disaster be all that far over the horizon. This cataclysmic future more than likely holds true not only for the evangelical church but also the society that the church was supposed to minister. If you look historically, in the world and in the Bible, most of the times these consequences show up as a diaspora or dispersal from temporal security into the cold hard world of the reality of survival. As a consequence of evangelical neglect of truth and mission, this week we will look briefly at "The Great Evangelical Diaspora."

Perhaps one of the most interesting accommodations of church development in recent months is the almost deafening silence on the issues of climate change and global warming. Wasn't it just a few years ago that the great rage within the church



was the religious fiction of the “Left Behind” series of rapture books? It seems that if left behind might happen at any time, the present time seems more relevant to the left behind rapture mindset than any known historical era.

Instead of the church becoming more Rapture and Second Coming of Christ visible, they have left the arena. That environment is now being increasingly occupied by secular prophets of gloom and doom. This is not all that strange, when current Christianity’s real message is worldly accommodation and centers around “personal peace and affluence” the church as nothing to say, because these secular prophets proclaim messages of anything but!

So we see a worldview developing of no peace and poverty, may one also question the reality of the Rapture and is left behind, really now mean never left?

Into this context of an uncertain future, perhaps we should look at the Bible’s first diaspora, the Genesis Flood. That dispersal had only eight survivors, but while today only a very small minority ever believe that this worldwide flood ever occurred, even as a myth it’s truths tell us a lot about global warming and what will happen shortly thereafter. If even a smaller minority of those who believe the Genesis Flood was an actual event, then even fewer believe that it could have happened thousands of years ago. That slim minority could however see, that our actual observable reality in nature today is best described by the Genesis Flood account.

Scientists know that water vapor has a much greater effect upon global warming than carbon dioxide. Once the polar ice cap melts, a greater circulation of sea water around the world will take place, eventually increasing the evaporation of the oceans, raising the total water vapor in the atmosphere to levels presently unknown to our sophisticated climate models.

Last winter along the Great Lakes they had some very heavy “lake effect” snowfalls, something like 12 feet in one day and many feet each day for a week thereafter. Now imagine if you can, an “ocean effect” snowfall, triggered by some weather system, volcano, terrorist attack and you cover much of the landscape with say

100 feet of snow. It doesn’t all melt in summer, because the snow’s reflection sends much of the summer heat back into space. Presto in a few years you have an ice age, similar to what happened after the Genesis Flood.

In times like that “personal peace and affluence” truly takes on a whole new perspective.

More to the near time heart of the diaspora situation however, is the accommodation of the church’s teaching to the Mosaic Law, not the New Testament gospel.

God’s law is written on the heart of every human being. For most people that is called conscience. It is that law that is the basis for all morality in the world. The law however, demands a standard of excellence to maintain social order, without that standard, law and morals quickly degenerate into relativism. When that happens people justify themselves by their own standards, which are not as strict as some outside or Godly absolute.

The Mosaic Law was given by God as a code of conduct, blessing and curse. Simply if you keep the law you will be blessed, if you do not keep the law you will be cursed, chastised, disciplined, or sent into diaspora.

Turn on the television anyplace in the world and you will hear so called Christian preachers telling you what you need to do to be blessed materially. Much of this centers around doing what God wants you to do to be prosperous personal peace and affluence . Of course the easiest way to be faithful to God is to financially support that particular ministry that you are now watching. Well it really isn’t as blatant as giving to get, what you really are doing is planting a seed to obtain a reward of a bountiful crop. That distantly planted seed will soon bear its fruit locally on your doorstep, mailbox, or life, if you have enough faith.

What is missing from this blessing however, is the curse of disobedience, not to the preacher, but to God directly if this seed varies from God’s absolute holiness.

This blessing only teaching is a rather strange way of looking at the situation, because many purely secular speculators base their objections to the Bible and Christianity because of the perception that the God of the Bible is a stern unloving judge who is just

looking for reasons to zap people in various ways, if they can not tow the line of some arbitrary unattainable God standards.

As a consequence they say they want nothing to do with such a God. They forget in this pseudo analysis a couple of things. Just because they don't like God's judgments on Israel really doesn't give them a pass on righteousness just because they don't want to play the game. And more importantly, the Old Testament people were volunteers as a people because they had committed their nation to be God's people.

The Old Testament is full of stories and consequences of a religious people not keeping their religious vows, warnings for them to make amends or suffer the fate of either outside oppression, or eventually what becomes known as the Jewish Diaspora.

Modern evangelicalism is really not that different from Old Testament Israel. One of evangelicals prime statements is that we are under grace not under the law, but that is not theologically true anymore than teaching moral character Bible studies about Old Testament people is really a model of righteousness.

The New Testament axiom of grace should be that the Old Testament law was fulfilled for us by Jesus Christ alone. Alone means fulfilling the requirements of the law is something that I can not do on my own, even if I continually give my best efforts. The Christian gospel is about sacrifice and a propitiatory or substitutionary death in my place and a resurrection from death as a visual seal that Christ's sacrifice for the sins of mankind really works.

Rather than proclaim that eternal truth however, and exhort people to walk in that love in gratitude, modern evangelicals are continually chastised not to smoke, chew, go with girls that do, and a whole host of other does and don'ts. Our works become more holy than we were the day, hour, minute, or second before because we define them that way. We really want to do what Jesus would do, because what Jesus did truly makes us exceedingly uncomfortable. Simply because it is unmerited grace and we have been brainwashed to believe that there is no gift in Christ's election. What these well meaning

people do not realize is that our works are not any different than Old Testament works righteousness, that is eventually going to end in an evangelical diaspora, just like it ended in a Jewish Diaspora in the Old Testament era.

At the end of time and at the moment of our death on this earth. Jesus Christ will ask everyone who enters eternity, "Who do you say that I am?" At that point feeling good about what you have done in the world really is of no consequence. That is a truly future reality that each human being will answer whether they like it or not.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is not the good news of accommodation with the world and knowing Jesus as a good moral teacher. It is also not about attempting to model your life around some character from the Bible or elsewhere who did a better job than you in this world. The Good News of the gospel is simply that there is nothing you can do in this world or the next to earn your salvation, it is a free gift of God, which is bestowed upon who God chooses to bestow it. Period!

Now the straw argument is raised about the people in the jungle who have never heard about Jesus and asking him into their heart to change their life. There are a few significant problems with this line of reasoning. First and foremost is what are you doing about the revelation and the consequences of Jesus Christ in your present life, not in the jungle, but where you are? Second the Bible clearly states in the Book of Romans and elsewhere, that God has handled that, even though we may not understand. Finally, again we come to a type of works righteousness that by sacrificing our lives for the jungle mission we in some way will hasten the return of Christ or help bring about the Rapture. It sounds good and noble, but it is really a substitution of personal righteousness for saving faith in Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ did not know the time of His return, how should we then live?

So are we to ignore proclaiming the gospel around the world in all types of means and venues? Absolutely not, but we should be sure that, if we want to be effective that should be the gospel that the foreign righteousness makes you holy, not a gospel of accommodation to western social values of personal peace and affluence. As much as we would like to divorce our witness from affluence, the very

nature of our presence and present affluence has a greater influence as a model than we should wish to convey.

The Jewish Diaspora sent God's people into the world, and it is only now that they have a homeland in Israel to which they can return. Little is ever taught about it, but there was also an early Christian diaspora also. That was when persecution forced many early Christians to forego the comfort of Jerusalem, the Holy City, to flee to all parts of the world, not to be missionaries, but to survive. As they fled they learned that only Christianity, among all the world religions, has answers, real answers to how did I get here, what am I to do with my life, how can I live my life as a moral agent, and what will happen to me when I die.

Those truly meaningful life lessons, they really don't teach you in evangelical churches today, or anywhere else for that matter. But once you truly have made them part of your life, you will never be the same again. For it is not in the reason for living that you find the power to change the culture, the power to change the culture comes from the knowledge and love that deeply changes the inner person to the extent that you realize that the gift of redemption offered alone by Jesus Christ can only be appropriated personally by giving it away, freely as it was given to you. There is nothing else in this world that can compare.

Does the thought of a new diaspora scare the hell out of you? If all you have now is a lifestyle of accommodation to modern western culture of personal peace and affluence, it should. Praise the Lord. So in diaspora you may begin to understand the true meaning of life. That may cause you to pack up and leave, or you may be able to stay where you are now planted. The one thing is true however, as that transformation takes place, you will quickly realize that your success does not rest in your merit, but in the merit of Jesus Christ alone. That makes all the difference, it is a gift that has changed the world forever, even though in these times we are way too busy pursuing worldly stuff to admit it.