

“Who concerning the Truth Have Misaimed” — 2 Timothy 2:18

Misaiming concerning the Nations and the New Jerusalem

Misaiming: “The reference to ‘nations’ reminds us that our national distinctions, like our personal appearances, are God-given. Revelation 7:9 refers to ‘a great multitude...of all nations,’ and Revelation 5:10 refers to believers as ‘kings and priests’ who reign with Christ” (Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible, AMG Publishers, p. 1404).

Truth: This footnote to Revelation 21:24 in the Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible presents a rather astounding interpretation of the term *nations*. In essence, the nations are equated with the chosen and redeemed believers who constitute the New Jerusalem, and then the differences inherent in national distinctions, which are a consequence of the fall and, hence, the old creation, are supported, justified, and to a certain extent glorified as being integral to the new creation. This erroneous correspondence, in part, may have been influenced by the translation in the King James Version and the New King James Version, which are the source text in this study Bible. The verse in this translation says, “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it [the New Jerusalem]; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it [the New Jerusalem].”

The inclusion of the phrase *which are saved* is not supported by the Greek text, other than the text used for the King James Version, the Textus Receptus, nor is it supplied in the American Standard Version, the New American Standard Version, the Revised Standard Version, Darby’s New Translation, or the New International Version. It is unfortunate that this mistranslation opens the door to a fundamental misrepresentation of the divine revelation. National distinctions are the product of the fall, a consequence of God’s judgment at Babel. They are not, in and of themselves, a positive development. If they can be considered “God-given,” they are only the product of God’s given judgment, not His given blessing.

Christ’s death on the cross eliminated national distinctions among the believers by creating them in Himself into one new man and by bringing them into Himself as

the new creation, “Where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). A distinction between the nations and the believers, who along with the Triune God constitute the New Jerusalem, should be apparent from the verse itself. There are *nations*, and there is *it*, the New Jerusalem. The *nations* are not *it*; they walk in the light of it; they bring their glory and honor into it. But if the nations are not believers, then who are they? A footnote to the word *nations* in the Recovery Version explains,

After the millennial kingdom, a part of these nations, deceived by the devil, will rebel against the Lord and will be consumed by fire from heaven (20:7-9). The rest will be transferred to the new earth to be the nations, which will live around the New Jerusalem and walk by its light. They will be the peoples mentioned in vv. 3 and 4. They, as created but unregenerated men, will be maintained to live forever in their created state through the healing of the leaves of the tree of life (22:2). Even for them there will be no more death (v. 4). Under the shining of the New Jerusalem with the divine glory, neither will they be in darkness. (Note 1)

As the New Jerusalem, the believers will glory only in Christ, not in any national distinctions.

Misaiming concerning Holiness

Misaiming: “Jesus said there would be both good and bad members in the Church (John 6:70), and not all the members would go to heaven (Matt. 7:21-23).

“But the Church itself is holy because it is the source of holiness and is the guardian of the special means of grace Jesus established, the sacraments (cf. Eph. 5:26)” (*Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth*. Catholic Answers, Inc., 1997, p. 4).

Truth: The passage cited above is an excellent example of misapplying Scripture for the sake of maintaining an unscriptural tradition. In an attempt to explain and excuse the Roman Church’s moral lapses, this misaiming inappropriately relies upon John 6:70. This verse

says nothing about the coexistence of both good and bad members in the church. Rather, it records Jesus' exposure of the treachery of Judas Iscariot: "Was it not I who chose you, the twelve? Yet one of you is a devil." It is quite a stretch to invoke Judas Iscariot as the prototypical "bad" member in the church.

This passage also misuses Matthew 7:21-23 to justify the existence of false Christians within the church. In fact, these verses refer to the kingdom reward given by the Lord to the overcomers, not to false believers. Every regenerated believer—that is, every genuine member of the Body of Christ—receives eternal life, because it is the gift of God to those who believe (Rom. 6:23). Yet not every believer will earn the reward of reigning with Christ in His millennial kingdom (1 Cor. 3:14; Rev. 20:4). These verses in Matthew speak of that reward in particular, not of going to heaven.

Finally, Ephesians 5:26 makes no reference to the church as the "guardian of the special means of grace,...the sacraments." Rather, it says, "That He might sanctify her, cleansing her by the washing of the water in the word." That is, the church is the beneficiary and recipient of the Lord's grace through His marvelous sanctification by means of His living word. This washing is the spiritual sanctification and refreshing we receive when we contact the Lord through the word. This is something accomplished in the believers in the church through their enjoyment of Him. The church is holy because she is sanctified by Christ, the holy One, not by outward sacraments.

Misaiming concerning the Way of Worship

Misaiming: "Since we have so miserably lost our way in the labyrinth of sin, as Calvin liked to say, can we not use all the help we can get, whether visual or oral (or even kinesthetic or gastronomic!), to point us in the right direction?" ("Methodology and Theology in the (Visual) Arts," *Catalyst* Vol. 28, No. 2, February 2002, p. 5).

Truth: Visual, oral, kinesthetic, and gastronomic devices offer no assistance, either in escaping from sin or in worshipping God. This statement flies in the face of the Lord's words to the Samaritan woman in John 4:23-24 concerning outward forms of worship:

But an hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

The Lord was pointing her to a change of age from the old covenant to the new, when man's worship would

correspond to God's essence, which is Spirit. In the New Testament age, worship is no longer a matter of the outward, physical environment, which included, in this instance, both the temple and Jacob's well with their visual, kinesthetic, and gastronomic elements. Instead, the Lord told the woman that from the time of His incarnation, genuine worship had begun to shift from the outward to the inward, from the visible to the spiritual. Christians should treasure the truth that we are the mystical temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). Christ Himself is now with our human spirit (2 Tim. 4:22).

Therefore, deliverance from sin is realized as we heed Christ's call to worship God in our spirit, without being distracted by physical stimuli. Yes, we are miserably lost in sin, but the Lord does not grant us the liberty to "use all the help we can get." In fact, He clearly cautioned Nicodemus not to pursue Him according to the physical realm, because "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Only by the Spirit can we be properly directed to know and worship Christ as the Spirit.

Misaiming concerning the Church

Misaiming: "The Catholic Church is the only universal Christian Church that has existed since the time of Jesus. Every other Christian group is an offshoot of the Catholic Church....Only the Catholic Church existed in the tenth century, in the fifth century, and in the first century, faithfully teaching the doctrines given by Christ to the apostles, omitting nothing. The line of popes can be traced back, in unbroken succession, to Peter himself. This is unequalled by any institution in history" (*Pillar of Fire, Pillar of Truth*. Catholic Answers, Inc., 1997, p. 2).

Truth: According to the New Testament record, the church in Rome began not as a papal hierarchy, but with the God-ordained way of eldership according to locality only (Acts 14:23). In the first century the church's leadership was locally administered by a group of elders. It was not until Ignatius, a leader in the second century, that the notion of senior elders, or bishops, began to be promoted. These bishops exerted authority over elders within their local church and eventually over other local churches as well. This hierarchy gradually developed, consummating in a complex administration headed by a supreme pontiff. It is commonly acknowledged that it was not until the sixth century that the first pope (Gregory) was not recognized.

by the Editors