

# Back to Bible Basics

Issue 29

## The Core Gospel

Brett Rutherford

The concept of the core gospel promotes the idea that one only has to hold to the core belief that Jesus was born of a virgin, that He was God incarnate, and that He was resurrected from the grave. This is what Rubel Shelly calls the “bull’s eye” doctrine. According to Karl Ketcherside, Rubel Shelly and other false teachers of this ilk, all one has to do in order to be pleasing to God is to hold to these “orthodox” truths about Christ. In other words, the people of God are defined only by their common belief in the deity of Christ.

In a speech Rubel Shelly made at a Pentecostal denomination he suggested that *“our tastes in worship style in manner-the way we organize our churches, the ministries we focus on. We’d better learn to affirm that there are things larger than those inconsequential differences that allow us to be the body of Christ, the body of Christ!”*<sup>1</sup> Essentially, those that adopt this way of thinking ignore everything that God delivered to us through the inspired men of the New Testament. Shelly went on to illustrate his point by saying that the wearing of modest apparel was part of those peripheral beliefs that are not essential to our having fellowship with God and unity with other men.

Rubel Shelly would have us believe that we ought to accept those as the family of God who promote homosexuality, women elders, drinking, mechanical instrumental music in worship, immodesty and various other forms of immorality. To him all of these doctrines are peripheral. According to Shelly, we are not going to be condemned for ignoring these immoral practices nor should we use them as a basis for judging whether or not we are conducting our lives in a manner that is pleasing to God.

The Core Gospel doctrine is being promoted in many churches worldwide. Lipscomb University’s administration recent acceptance and promotion of the practice of homosexuality on its campus is a perfect example of the influence of Core Gospel teaching.

The Core Gospel doctrine is also infecting the church in Australia. I have seen young people being drawn away from the church into denominations because they have been taught that it doesn’t matter what these denominations believe about the way the church should be organized or whether or not they approve of homosexuality. As long as these denominations believe that Jesus is the virgin born son of God it matters not what else they teach. When denominations perform activities in their worship that make for a more entertaining worship than that offered by the churches of Christ, why not go to these denominations? It doesn’t really matter how you worship because all you need to have is a conviction that Jesus Christ is deity.

The Bible does condemn homosexuality (Romans 1:24-32; I Corinthians 6:9-11). The word of God forbids the Christian from wearing revealing clothing that accentuates the body and exposes a great deal of flesh. Dressing in a manner that causes lust in the opposite sex may even lead to fornication. Dressing in an immodest manner is a work of the flesh that is condemned by Christ and Paul (Matthew 5:27-29; Galatians 5:19-21).

Those who hold to the core gospel theology mock those who respect the Bible’s silence on the use of the mechanical instrument in worship. We are only authorized by Scripture to use the instrument of the heart in our worship to God (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

The core gospel proponents suggest it does not matter if the church is led by men or women. However, the church is to be organized with elders overseeing the local congregation. The qualifications for these MEN are given in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The inspired Scriptures also teach that Christians are to be “sober” (I Thessalonians 5:6, 8; I Peter 1:13; 5:8). The Greek word translated as “sober” in these passages means “to be free from intoxicants” according to Greek scholar James Strong. One day we are going to be judged by how well we have observed all of the law of Christ (John 12:44-50). It is not enough to just believe that Jesus is deity. We must also do all of His will (John 14:15). 

1. Quoted from David B. Jones, “The Core Gospel Heresy,” Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ (Memphis School of Preaching Lectureship, Memphis TN, 1995) pp. 308-309.

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## Is Everything Worship?

Ian McPherson

Some among us today, are teaching that everything a Christian does is worship. Those who believe this say worship is simply a way of life, and cannot be defined by certain acts. The main Scripture they use is Romans 12:1 which says "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (KJV). According to this theory, the KJV has got it wrong. They say that "reasonable service" (Greek "latrea"), should be translated as "spiritual worship" as the NIV translates it. Although it is admitted that some Bible Lexicons include "worship" as a secondary meaning for "latria," its primary meaning is "service". Bullenger defines it as "service, divine service, obedience and adoration rendered to God". It is clear from both the immediate context as well as the overall teaching of the Bible that the Holy Spirit meant that the primary meaning be applied here. The word "latria" appears five times in the New Testament. Conservative versions such as NKJV, KJV, ERV, and ASV consistently use the primary meaning and never translate it as worship.

When he spoke to the woman at the well, Christ said that "true worshippers must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). The word for "worship" is "proskuneo". Advocates of the "everything is worship" theory say that Christ re-defined the word and changed it to simply mean living a sacrificial life. However, this word is used 54 times in the New Testament. There is no other way it can rightfully be translated. W.E. Vine's definition is "To make obeisance, do reverence to". This is its consistent use throughout the New Testament, it is always translated "worship".

We are also falsely told that there is no such thing as a "pattern for worship" in the New Testament. If this is true, then the work of the Restoration Movement throughout history has been in vain. All the teaching material that has been produced would have to go in the rubbish bin. The millions that have been converted through viewing the Jule Miller films or through a brotherhood Bible Correspondence course etc. would have to throw up their arms in despair, and admit that they have been deceived.

However, we praise God that the pattern for worship is still in the Bible. The church of Christ met for worship each first day of the week to take the Lord's Supper together in memory of our Lord's death. (Acts

20:7, 1 Cor 11: 20-26). This assembly is commanded of all Christians (Hebrews 10:24 - 31). At this gathering there are five acts of worship. The Lord's supper and public exhortation (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:20), singing and prayer (1 Cor 14:15-19, Eph 5:19-20) and giving a free will offering to the Lord (1 Cor 16:1-3, 2 Cor 8:1-5). Faithful Christians have met every Lord's day from the time the church began on the Day of Pentecost which was always on the first day of the week.

Acts 24:11-12 proves categorically that Christ did not change the meaning of proskuneo, and that worship is still an act of reverence towards God entered into intentionally at a certain time and place. In Acts 24:11-12 Paul is giving his defense after he was arrested in Jerusalem. He said, "Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city." The word for worship here is "proskuneo". There is no doubt whatsoever that the worship which he came to Jerusalem to participate in was the church assembly of the Jerusalem church. The "twelve days" that he had been in Jerusalem are taken from the time he arrived there with his brethren from Caesarea (Acts 21:14-19). The twelve days are calculated by adding the five days he had been in custody (Acts 24:1), to the seven days he was in Jerusalem with his brethren (Acts 21:27). After they arrived in Jerusalem Paul greeted the brethren and elders at Jerusalem, and declared to them the things he had experienced on his long journey among the Gentiles (Acts 21: 8-19). He had with him the contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem which he had collected throughout his long third missionary journey (1 Cor. 16:1-3, Acts 24:17). He said of this journey "I go to Jerusalem to minister to the saints" (Romans 15:25).

Thus, the worship assembly that he enjoyed with the saints at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (The first day of the week) was the same assembly he attended with the saints at Troas (Acts 20:7). Paul was a faithful apostle, therefore, the worship he performed at Jerusalem was in keeping with the command of Jesus in John 4:24.

Brethren, let us return to the old paths and not be led astray by the persuasive words of man's wisdom (1 Cor. 2:4). 