

HELLO JESUS IMAGE

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This is a very serious message directed to those young (and not-so-young) enthusiastic Christians I see on the "Jesus Image" live-streamed meetings Sunday mornings and evenings. The issue is money, your money, and more specifically, the money you donate.

My name is Larry Jones. I live in Kelowna, BC, Canada. (Unlike Florida, there is snow on the ground... brrr!) I have grandchildren older than most of the people I see on the Jesus Image screen. I discovered Lord Jesus fifty plus years ago and He is still my "first love". I consider myself a New Testament, New Covenant disciple of Jesus Christ and as such I write only what I discern He moves me to write, fully aware that I must one day give an account. ("We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ." 2Cor.5:10) Thus this message to you. I suggest you consider my words and determine for yourself if they be Biblically sound. Okay?

First, I quote from the statement Jesus Image makes regarding itself, as found on Google's search page: "Jesus Image exists to bring Jesus to the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit. We want this reality to permeate our hearts and lives as we love Him." Lord Jesus most certainly wants you, individually, to reveal Him "to the world, by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Of the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "He will guide you into all truth." And Jesus also said, "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak." Whatever the Holy Spirit hears from Lord Jesus, "the head of the church", that will He speak to you individually. Individually? Yes, individually, personally.

Do you think that Jesus Image people will be bunched together at "the judgement seat of Christ" to give an account? No, you will give an account of yourself, by yourself. ("The fire will test each one's work." 1Cor.3:13) The Holy Spirit guides you personally; said another way, Lord Jesus guides you personally through the Holy Spirit. However, that doesn't necessarily mean you will be guided...

You are on a tour of a faraway country. There is a guide quite capable of escorting you to all the sights. But you decide to go your own way, refusing to be guided, even at the risk of getting lost. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide you, but you must decide for yourself to accept or ignore His supervision. If you're smart you will submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in every aspect of your life, including the stewardship of your money. Yes, we are back to your money.

If you are not guided by the Holy Spirit in the matter of WHERE you direct your donations you cannot consider yourself a Spirit-guided (or Spirit-led) christian. Amen? If you respond instead to the directives of other christians you are a christian-led christian. A follower of Jesus Christ is guided by the Holy Spirit, a follower of christians is guided by christians. Simple, yes?

Jesus said, "Where your treasure is there your heart will be also." (Mat.6:21) Like a subservient puppy, your heart will follow your treasure; most of us treasure the money we work so hard to earn. The one who captures that money captures your heart. So you must be cautious who receives and who does not receive your donations. When your donations are directed by the Holy Spirit you are, in reality, giving to Jesus. Giving as christians prescribe is one way your affection and loyalty stray from Jesus and settle onto christians.

After a stirring time of worship onto our Lord Jesus, it is collection time at Jesus Image Church. (Have you noticed that this is the pattern of every church?) You are strongly encouraged to be generous. Generosity is good. ("He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." 2Cor.9:6) But you are never (repeat never!) admonished to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to WHERE to direct your generosity.

Do you know that the New Testament speaks of one collection only? This one collection was not to benefit the donators, paying for service rendered, but rather to be directed toward the needy in another location. Now keep in mind that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." (2Tim.3:16) God (your God!) did not advocate the collection of money during the gatherings of His saints. So who gave evangelicals permission to collect money? It certainly was not Jesus. There certainly is no New Testament precedent. No, evangelicals have given evangelicals permission to collect money from evangelicals. Everybody does it because everybody does it.

There is constant pressure on you to NOT be governed individually by the Holy Spirit. No, that is certainly not taught directly but rather indirectly by what is NOT taught. (Bonhoeffer: "Not to speak is to speak.") Religionists (religion's officers) want to oversee your christianity. They do this by bunching people together; every bunch requires a leader, you see, and religionists are eager to fill that position. Everyone wants to be included, accepted, appreciated. The bunch provides all of this. Most will pay a heavy price for acceptance; I am of the opinion that that is why many forfeit a portion of their income to the supervision of religionists. It assures them inclusion, acceptance, appreciation. Don't we all abhor exclusion, rejection, disapproval? And yet that is often the cost of maintaining (or recovering) a healthy relationship with King Jesus.

What is most important to Jesus, the One you call "Lord, Lord"? (Lk.6:46) Surely it has to be His Great Commission. ("Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Mk.16:19) Jesus completed the task the Father gave Him. ("It is finished!" Jn.19:30) He did His part and now you are to do yours. Jesus: "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." (Jn.20:21) From this moment forward consider yourself a sent-one.

Most christians have not heard of the 10-40 Window, a rectangular area between 10 degrees and 40 degrees north latitude. This area consists of North Africa and the highly populated Middle East and Asia. More than half of the world's population live in the 10-40 Window, many who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Only between 1 and 2 percent of the world's total missionary donations are forwarded to the 10-40 Window.

I estimate that for every \$100 donation deposited into a typical evangelical collection plate, between a nickel and a dime reach the 10-40 Window. Tell me, does this anger you? Speaking of church collections, suppose you made a \$100 donation to Jesus Image, how do you think your \$100 would be spent? You don't know, do you? Probably most will be spent on salaries. So let's look at the salary, a contract between a congregation and paid ministers.

The salary is not a New Testament concept. No apostle or other workers were salaried. Therefore a salaried 'pastor' is not a New Testament christian (a christian living by New Testament teachings and precedents). All preachers, including Lord Jesus, lived by contributions. Those contributions covered the basics – food and clothing. ("And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." 1Tim.6:8) Salaries cover much more than these basics, such as: house, vacations, second car, retirement plan, jumbo wardrobe, gifts under the christmas tree and hundreds of other non-essentials.

A portion of your \$100 donation is spent on the building you patronize, including utilities, maintenance, janitorial, etcetera. And then there's 'church-ianity' expenses: salaried staff, expensive guest speakers, sound systems, video equipment, etcetera. Did Jesus instruct the twelve or the seventy (Mat.10 and Lk.10) or anyone else to introduce a building program? You know the answer. Did Paul or John or Peter initiate a building program? You know the answer. Is there any hint of the building of buildings in the New Testament? You know the answer.

But suppose instead of making that \$100 donation to Sundays collection plate you invested it in Christ's Great Commission. \$100 can bear so much good fruit. ("By this My Father is glorified that you bear MUCH fruit." John 15:8) \$100 invested in a 10-40 Window resident evangelist could result in many names being added to the Book of Life. The Holy Spirit can do so much through your submission to Him.

My youthful sibling-in-Christ, Jesus does not want you to submit to the bunch, any bunch. ("You follow Me." Jn.21:22) You can be loving and respectful without being compliant to "commandments of men". ("And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Mat.15:9) To give a worthy account on judgement day there are only three things you must do. First, abide in Christ. ("He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears MUCH fruit." Jn.15:5) Second, submit to the governance of the Holy Spirit. ("He will guide you into all truth." Jn.16:13) And third, commit yourself to God's Bible. ("Your word I have hidden in my heart." Ps.119:11) That's it! These three things will guarantee a better (much better!) life here and eternal "treasures in heaven". (Mat.6:20)

Listen to Jesus as He is praying to His Father, "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (Jn 17:17) Tell me, what "word" was Jesus referring to? You must know. Why? Because that "word" that sanctified two millennia ago still sanctifies today. Assuming you want to be sanctified, it is crucial to know with a certainty what "word" Jesus was speaking of.

The Father's "word" is the same word that Jesus spoke, the red letters in your Bible, the same word that He imparted to his disciples. ("You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you." Jn.15:3) The Father's "word" is the Bible, Old Testament and New. ("All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2Tm.3:16) You must know that "tradition of men" (Mark7:8), "commandments of men" (Mat.15:9) are NOT the Father's "word". They cannot sanctify. They cannot produce good fruit. Adversely, they will erode your relationship with the Lord Jesus. I have witnessed this sad happening many times over my five decades of christianity.

I often quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer: "Not to speak is to speak." This brother was making the point that silence instead of rebuking injustice was signifying acceptance of injustice. But Bonhoeffer's words - "Not to speak is to speak." - can be seen in another way, equally true. If the Bible doesn't speak on a matter it is because God doesn't approve. For example, the Bible doesn't speak of denominations so we can safely conclude that God doesn't approve of denominations; if He did, He would have said so. The same is true of every evangelical teaching (there are many such teachings) that is contrary to the New Testament. The Bible's silence is God's disapproval. We can determine the will of God by what the Bible says and what the Bible does not say. Again, "Not to speak is to speak."

Seriously consider that you are, right now, being shaped. You are becoming. You are being molded either by the words of Jesus or by "tradition of men". If you are an evangelical it is because you have given yourself over to one of many sets of "commandments of men". If you are not an evangelical you soon will be unless you give yourself over to the New Testament - words directed to New Covenant believers (to you).

If you follow Christ you will lead many, perhaps thousands, to Christ. ("Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mat.4:19). If you follow christians the fruit of your future christianity will be meagre. The fruit you bear will be relative to your abiding relationship with Jesus Christ, and not your relationship with any christian or group of christians. ("Without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5) The Great Commission is your commission, and you must give an account as to how you responded. You are to be led individually by the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants you to build on His words, especially New Testament words. God has a plan for your life, something unique to you. Christ, not Christ-plus, is your sufficiency.

The most important question to ask yourself: "How does Jesus want me to live my remaining christianity? First, consider what Jesus would NOT HAVE YOU DO. Please permit me to offer some suggestions....

Don't love anyone more than you love Jesus. ("I have this against you, that you have left your first

love." Rev.2:4) Never surrender the lordship of Christ to anyone. ("Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" Lk.6:46) Don't be talkative ("Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." Jm.1:19) but do not allow yourself to be muzzled. ("Preach the word!" 2Tim.4:2) Do not enroll in a seminary or Bible school. ("Do not become slaves of men." 1Cor.7:23) Never compromise. ("To compromise is like drinking salt water; the more you drink the thirstier you get." Unknown source)

Don't do what Paul would never do. ("Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." 1Cor.11:1) Don't call any man pastor or teacher or leader. ("One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren." Mat.23:8) Don't even consider church membership. ("Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." Gal.5:1) Never ask man's permission. ("Each of us shall give account of himself to God." Rm.14:12)

Don't become institutionalized. ("If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." Jn.8:36) Do not charge for your christian service or material. ("Freely give." Mat.10:8) Don't chase after someone's dream or vision or religious ambition. ("Follow Me." Jn.1:43) Don't tithe. ("Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity ." 2Cor.9:7) Don't invest in brick and mortar. ("What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Lk.16:15)

And now consider what Jesus would HAVE YOU DO. Again, please permit me some suggestions....

Ask Jesus to show you if He is still "first love." ("If you love Me keep My commandments." Jn.15:4) Recommit your life to Christ often. ("That I may know Him." Phil.3:10) Choose approval of God over approval of man. ("If I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." Gal.1:10) Establish a one-to-One prayer time. ("Men ought always to pray." Lk.18:1) Do communion, bread and wine (or juice) daily, sometimes with others and sometimes by yourself. ("Do this in remembrance of Me." 1Cor.11:24) Pray, earnestly, for truth. ("Ask, and keep on asking." Lk11:9, Amp) Pray, earnestly, for understanding. ("Get understanding." Prov.4:5)

Memorize John 15:4 and 5. ("Your word I have hidden in my heart." Ps.119:11) Daily consider John 15:4 and 5 and the many supportive verses. ("He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water." Ps.1:3) Follow Christ, not christians. ("Come, follow Me." Mat.19:21) Regard all christians equally. ("All of you are equal as brothers and sisters." Mat.23:8, NLT) Be submissive ("Be submissive to one another." 1Pet.5:5) only when submission does not involve compromise. Beware of religionists, infamous or famous. ("In vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." Mat.15:9)

Preach. ("Preach the word!" 2Tim.4:16) Be guided only by the Holy Spirit. ("He will guide you into all truth." Jn.16:13) Embrace Christ's Great Commission. ("Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mat.4:19) Give more. ("He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully." 2Cor.9:6) Read my "Financing The Great Commission" available at www.larryjones.ca. ("He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Mat.11:15) Brace yourself for certain retaliation. ("All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." 2Tim.3:12)

And now another matter....

This article is directed to Jesus Image adherents who are coerced (I don't think the word 'coerced' is an exaggeration) to finance an extravagant church building. I am of the strong opinion that this is wrong, wrong, wrong (and thus the motivation for this article to you). The misappropriated money and wasted man-hours throughout the body of Christ should make every caring christian weep. I want you to know that because so many brothers and sisters worldwide are being similarly coerced (fleeced?), I will be forwarding this message to many countries in several languages. Yes, I will reach many thousands, but I cannot reach the bulk of Jesus Image people. So I have a suggestion (not a request, a suggestion)....

If you are of the opinion that this word is Biblically sound, and if you are of the opinion that this perspective should be considered, ask Lord Jesus if He would have you forward this message - click, share, like, comment, whatever - to fellow Jesus Image people. Yes, it will take much courage. Yes, there may be consequences. But I encourage you to do what you believe Jesus would have you do. (I would never want or ask you to do something the Holy Spirit isn't directing you to do.) Now just one more concern....

Prayer Request: I live in a 79 year-old earth suit. Like Paul, I never ask for money, but like Paul, I do ask for prayers. I have many God-given assignments to fulfill and I request your prayers for strength of body and mind. Okay?

If we never meet down here I am sure we will have a chat or two up there. 1 Corinthians 2:9: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." Praise to You, Lord Jesus!!

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