

WWJW: WHAT WOULD JESUS WRITE?

David Halbrook

When Jesus lived on earth, even without newspapers there were plenty of “reporters” so news got around (Matt. 28:15). If newspapers had existed, would Jesus have been asked, or permitted, to write? If so, what would He have written? We know by reading what His closest followers wrote for Jesus sent the Spirit who guided their writings (Jn. 16:7; 14:26).

He would have written parables, using physical facts to teach spiritual truths, like repentance, forgiveness, and salvation in His kingdom (Matt. 4:17). He would have written about Old Testament events and what may be learned from them (Matt. 19:4-9; 23:35). He also would have warned His readers about wolves in sheep’s clothing (false teachers), “blind leaders,” and their leaven (influence) (Matt. 7:15; 15:14; 16:6). In print, Jesus would have identified those who fit these descriptions (Matt. 5:20; 16:6). Today, the Pharisees and Sadducees are forever known by God’s public, preserved record of their teachings and actions, identified by Jesus and forever recorded in Scripture. If Jesus were here and writing today, then when men, especially religious groups and leaders, violate God’s word, do you think Jesus would react any differently? WWJW?

-- *Editor’s Note:* Do you know anyone who might be surprised to think about Jesus in this way? Make use of our weekly articles (*Arkansas Weekly*) or do whatever you are able in causing men to think on spiritual things as you go from place to place.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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“SINFULLY DELICIOUS” HAMBURGERS

David Halbrook

Friday night of the Independence (AR) County Fair, St. Mary’s Catholic Church (Batesville, AR) advertised its “Heavenly Hamburgers” as “Sinfully Delicious.” I realize this is an attempt at humor, but is *everything* joke-worthy? Can you imagine Jesus selling sheep in Jerusalem, with a banner over His stand saying “Buy your lamb from the Lamb of God!”? If bomb jokes are not appropriate at an airport, why is “sin” something for a Catholic Church to joke about? Whether the advertisement was in good taste or not, this fund-raiser highlights other ironies and transgressions.

The Holy Spirit’s Ancient Warning

In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, the Holy Spirit warned of *doctrines of demons* such as requiring people to *abstain from foods which God created to be received...* In Genesis 9:2 God gave mankind permission to eat every bird, beast, and fish. Friend, this is serious. Anyone who would spread a teaching forbidding this is teaching the *doctrines of demons*. If our government was to forbid eating meats, it would be a doctrine of demons. If I wrote an article forbidding the eating of meats, it would be a doctrine of demons. If your church did the same, it would be the same.

The Catholic Church’s Modern Practice

Growing up, did your school serve fish on Friday? Did you ever know why that was? Any Catholic historian will tell you that The Catholic Church declared hamburgers, and most other forms of meat, on Friday a sinful pleasure. According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Friday has been a day of abstinence “from the dawn of Christianity... Pope Nicholas I (858-867) declares that abstinence from flesh meat is enjoined on Fridays” (www.newadvent.org/cathen/01067a.htmV). This, like many other teachings and practices of The Catholic Church, is associated with the church of the New Testament without citing Scripture as proof, appealing primarily to the tradition of Catholicism.

A few decades ago, Catholic officials changed that rule, permitting any form of abstinence on Friday, not limited to abstaining from meat. Taking 1 Timothy 4 into consideration, think about the irony of a Catholic Church selling hamburgers on Friday. The authority that once declared that it was SINFUL to eat meat on Fridays, now permits the selling of “Sinfully Delicious” hamburgers on Friday!

A Model For Unity Provided by The Catholic Church?

By no longer forbidding meats which God did not forbid, Catholic officials took a small step in the right direction and had the opportunity to lead the way to unity in Christ. If this were the start of sweeping changes, based on the principle of only binding what God has bound, there would be a glimmer of hope for spiritual unity. When churches only speak as the oracles of God, the teachings of man will be lost and only the teachings of Christ will be our guide (1 Pet. 4:11). Is that possible? If it is not possible, then why did Jesus pray for this unity (Jn. 17:20-21)? If it is possible, then why aren't more people pursuing it?

It is obvious that many people are not pursuing this unity. One pastor, speaking of subjects such as divorce, eternal security (“once saved, always saved”), second baptism of the HS, and worship said “These debates may be important in my congregation, but they are not important to work together and preach the gospel to the city... We accept the differences as a richness. It would be very boring if all the churches were the same. Imagine if God made just one flower; that would be boring.” (Weber, Jeremy. “Something Better Than Revival.” *Christianity Today*. June 2010, p38-40.) Really?!! On the subject of God's flowers, if God made one flower it would be amazing, beautiful, and none other would be necessary. On the subject of God's churches, Paul taught the same message “everywhere and in every church” of Christ and was not bored with the prospects of Timothy coming to do the same (1 Cor. 4:17; Rom. 16:16). Jesus and the Holy Spirit did not view diversity in the church at Pergamos or Sardis as a richness but rebuked this as rebellion (Rev. 2:15-16; 3:3-4). But today, the fact that many view the diversity of teachings and practices as a richness and the appeal for uniformity of teaching and practice as boring removes from many people the motivation required for the work of unity (Eph. 4:1-6).

Sadly, the Catholic Church stopped far short of providing a platform for unity by going far beyond the teachings of Christ. While they backed away from commanding Catholics to abstain from meats on Friday, they required some specific form of abstinence, whether from meats or some other liberty, every Friday. And their ban on meats on “Good Friday” continues. By these commandments, they continue to violate the teaching of 1 Timothy 4. Paul was not only concerned with those who would

command to abstain from meats. Clearly, anyone who commands men to abstain from anything which God did not forbid is equally as guilty as the one forbidding meats.

Conclusion

While attempting to use the “Sinfully Delicious” advertisement as an opportunity to open the eyes of the Batesville community to this blatant disregard for the nature of sin and the authority of Christ in a local newspaper, I was twice turned away. One claim was that calling attention to the Catholic sign, Catholic history, and Scriptures was “clearly bashing other denominations.” Another paper said that they were concerned about their liability in publishing a paid advertisement that “directly slandered any group or individual.” I asked which part of the article constituted slander and am still awaiting a reply. I am thankful for the support and stand of the church of Christ in Quail Valley who encourage me in efforts like this and continue to work with me in this work. May God be glorified in us and you.

Thus we realize that Jesus Himself would not be permitted to write in most modern public publications, nor to speak to most modern religious groups but would have been turned away and attacked for His lack of (humanly-defined) tolerance, grace, and love. Today, those who follow Him must imitate Him, boldly speaking words of truth and reason in love shining the light of truth on the darkness of this world... even when it is found at county fairs and hamburger stands.

Editor's Note: The short article in the bulletin last week, having the same title as this article, was not in *Arkansas Weekly* last week because the editor refused to publish it. I contacted *The Batesville Guard*, and they would not consider publishing it either.

This is an example of “this world” to which we cannot be conformed (Rom. 12:2). It is commonly believed that identifying the sin of others is slander and bashing. Was Jesus guilty of slander or bashing when He told the Samaritan woman that her worship was in ignorance (Jn. 4:22)? Was the Holy Spirit or John guilty of such for recording that conversation? Was the Holy Spirit promoting hate-speech when He guided Matthew to write down what Jesus said, even privately to His disciples, about the Sadducees and Pharisees and then to spread those writings around the world (Matt. 15:1-14; 16:6)? If Jesus had “written an article” about the sinful use of the Temple for business practices, would any newspaper have published it (Jn. 2:16)?

The mindset of our age is to “do your own thing and leave others alone.” The Golden Rule and the terror of the Lord compel us otherwise (Mt. 7:12; 2 Cor. 5:11).

(“Sinfully Delicious” Hamburgers” is posted at our website, on the front page. Each week, our entire bulletin is also posted on our website—WWW.QVCOC.COM)