

# Northeast Church of Christ

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## From the Pen of Paul: *Improper Attempts at Covering Sins*

LAST WEEK WE LEARNED FROM Scripture that there is a proper way to cover our sins. In this article we want to consider some wrong ways to cover sins.

Time does not cover sins. Some appear to believe that after a certain amount of time, God forgets about their sin. Sometimes folks just forsake the Lord and do not worship Him for a long while; then they just seem to “slip” back in and take up where they left off. The example of Moses in the Old Testament is enough for us to learn that God does not forget and that time will not cover sin.

In Numbers 20:8-12 we read of Moses' sin at Kadesh. Because of the people's murmuring due to lack of water, God instructed Moses to “Take the rod, and gather the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock” (v. 8). However, “Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with the rod he smote the rock twice” (vv. 10-11a). God then told Moses and Aaron, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given thee” (v. 12).

I don't know exactly how much time elapsed; there is no more mention of this sin or of its consequences for a long while. I don't know if Moses thought that God had

forgotten or not; but I do know that time did not erase Moses' sin nor did it change what God had said in regard to it. When Moses had led the children of Israel to the time for them to go in and possess the land, God reminded him of his sin at Kadesh; He permitted him to go up into Mount Nebo and see the promised land (Deut. 32:48-52). We are later informed of his death in these words: “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord” (Deut. 34:5). Time did not cover his sin, and it will not cover ours!

Distance does not cover sins. Paul was a Christian “on location”; he was faithful to the Lord no matter where he was or how he was treated. Today it seems that some believe that if they are away from home, on vacation where they are not known, they can forget God, live like Satan, and then come home and leave their sins behind. Modesty and decency are often forgotten while away from home where no one knows them. But the reading of Psalm 139 should be enough to convince us that this is not possible. David asked, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into the heavens, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me” (Psalm 139:7-11). No, distance does not cover sin; no matter where

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***“Does God still speak directly from heaven to men today? I know He speaks to us through the Bible but does He speak in any other way?”***

I think one of the greatest misunderstandings we have in the religious world is that of God speaking to man. Many seem to think that God still speaks directly from heaven to various people. Some are teachers and preachers and others are just Christians according to these folks.

After God had created the heavens and the earth, He created man (Gen. 1:26-27). God did not hide from man nor did He fail to speak to him. There are three Bible periods of history, they are: Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian. The Patriarchal period started with Adam and lasted until the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. During the Patriarchal period of Bible history, which lasted for about 2500 years, God spoke directly to the heads of families. God talked to Adam in the garden (Gen. 3). God talked directly to Noah (Gen. 6:13). The Lord spoke directly to Abraham (Gen. 12:1). Thus God spoke directly to the heads of families during the first 2500 years.

The Jewish age of Bible history started with Moses on Mount Sinai. There he received the ten commandments from God (Ex. 20:1-10). It lasted for 1500 years. The ten commandments were planks in the platform of God's law to the Jewish nation. Everything spoken in the Old Testament is related to one or more of the ten commandments: when the prophets of the Old Testament spoke their message from God, that message was always in harmony with the ten commandments. So God spoke in written form as well as through the spoken word of the prophets to the people during the Jewish age.

The Christian age of Bible history started when Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14; Matt. 26:26-28; Hebrews 9-10). It will last until Jesus

comes and the end of time. God spoke at that time to the people through the inspired preachers and teachers (II Tim. 3:16-17; I Cor. 2:9-13; II Pet. 1:3). Of course, some of them wrote God's Word as well as spoke it. When the New Testament was finished, God's message to man was complete. He had nothing else to say to man. That message is found in the Bible and the Bible alone.

We are not to listen to any other message other than that found in the Bible (Gal. 1:6-9). We are not to add to nor take from the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19). People like Oral Roberts, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and other “Johnny-come-lately” prophets have never heard one word from God except through the Bible. I don't care what they may have affirmed about God speaking to them; I know God has not done so! Jude wrote that the faith had once and for all been delivered to the saints (Jude 3). We are not to transgress the doctrine of Christ (II John 9-11). If we do so, we have not God! The doctrine of Christ is complete and is found only in the New Testament (Heb. 1:1-2; Matt. 17:5; John 1:17).

God has given His complete will and testament to all of us. It is found in the Bible. Anyone who speaks outside the Bible is a false prophet. He is not of God but is of the devil. God is no respecter of persons. The only way God speaks to me or any other person on earth is by and through the Bible. A man may say that God has spoken to him outside the Bible, but saying is one thing and it actually happening is another. One may think God has spoken to him in oral fashion, but thinking is one thing and something happening is another.

—Malcolm L. Hill

we go, or how far from the local congregation, God will still be there and there really is “an all-seeing eye watching you” as we sometimes sing.

Darkness does not cover sin. Read again Psalm 139:11 above. Job also informs us, “His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves” (Job 34:21-22). Jesus discussed how men attempt to cover their sin by darkness in John 3:19-20: “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness

rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.” But man cannot hide under cover of darkness. Again we are reminded of this by the writer of Hebrews, when he says, “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” If you are attempting to cover your sin by darkness, you are fighting a losing battle!

(Continued next week.)

—Paul M. Wilmoth