

# APOCALYPTIC DUALISM

## AND IT'S IMPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN ETHICS

BY DUSTIN SMITH

*“the theologians of the present day skim lightly over the eschatological material in the Gospels because it does not chime in with their views” – Albert Schweitzer<sup>1</sup>*

He couldn't have said it any better. In his masterpiece *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Dr. Schweitzer argues over and over what many of us Bible believing disciples have to deal with in modern Christianity. The fact is: the vast majority of the largest religion in the world does not take the end-time saying on the mouth of Jesus the Messiah seriously at all. And yet, we proclaim Jesus as “lord” and “savior”. We worship him and give him praise. We wear WWJD bracelets and sport bumper stickers with his name. Yet if we so emphatically submit ourselves to this future king of God's Kingdom, we likewise need to adopt his teachings and worldviews as our own. His beliefs need to become our beliefs. His thoughts should be our thoughts. His lifestyle should in turn become our lifestyle. Once we understand where Jesus is coming from and understand the main thrust of his vision, then we can better obey his commands. Bringing believers to this place is the object of this presentation.

I will divide the paper into three progressive parts. First, I will clearly define the worldview that Jesus held and shared with his disciples. Secondly, I will show from the Scriptures that Jesus and his disciples taught this particular worldview over and over again. Finally, I will submit my evaluation of these teachings and propose ethical applications for anyone who claims to be a disciple of the Messiah. I hope that this presentation will open our ears, eyes, and hearts to looking at Jesus from another angle in order to better understand him, obey him, and ultimately bring more glory to his God and Father, Almighty God.

### **PART ONE–DEFINING APOCALYPTIC DUALISM**

Many modern scholars, after thorough examinations of the words and deeds of Jesus, today place the worldview and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth under the blanket term *Apocalypticism*<sup>2</sup>. Apocalypticism comes from the Greek word *αποκαλυψις*, which means “revealing, or unveiling.” Apocalypticism was a rather new way of thinking for the Jewish people, who could not understand why the world was in the state of affairs that it was in. Why was there suffering in the world? How could it be that those who obeyed God were still faced with persecution and tribulations? Jewish apocalypticists came to the understanding that “God was still in control of this world in some

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<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Albert. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. 22. This is an absolute must read for anyone who wishes to take scholarship on the Kingdom of God and the teachings of Jesus seriously. His critiques of modern theologians, although liberal, brings much joy to those of the Abrahamic persuasion.

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed explanation and overview, see the article “Apocalypses and Apocalypticism” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol.1 280-287.

ultimate sense. But for some unknown and mysterious reasons He had temporarily relinquished His controls to the forces of evil that opposed Him. This state of affairs, however, was not to last forever. Quite soon, God would reassert Himself and bring this world back to Himself, destroying the forces of evil and establishing His people as rulers over the earth. When this new Kingdom came, God would fulfill His promises to His people.”<sup>1</sup> God had revealed (thus the word *αποκαλυψις*) this information through the mouths of His holy prophets and His ultimate prophet, Jesus the Christ (cf. Deut. 18:15-18).

Those that held such a worldview also recognized that many aspects of the world were divided into one of two sides. Bart D. Ehrman describes these dualistic tendencies as the following:

“Jewish apocalypticists were dualists. They maintained that there were two fundamental components to all of reality: the forces of good and the forces of evil. The forces of good were headed by God Himself, the forces of evil by His superhuman enemy, sometimes called Satan, Beelzebub, or the Devil. On the side of God were the good angels; on the side of evil were the demons. On the side of God were righteousness and life; on the side of the Devil were sin and death. These forces were cosmic powers to which human beings were subject and with which they had to be aligned. No one was in neutral territory. People stood either with God or with Satan, in the light or in the darkness, in the truth or in the error.

This apocalyptic dualism had clear historical implications in that all history could be divided into two ages: the present age and the age to come. The present age was the age of sin and evil. The powers of darkness were in the ascendancy, and those who sided with God were made to suffer by those in control of this world. Sin, disease, famine, violence, and death were rampant. For some unknown reason, God had relinquished control of this age to the powers of evil-and things were getting worse.

At the end of this age, however, God would reassert Himself, intervening in history and destroying the forces of evil. After a cataclysmic break in which all that was opposed to God would be annihilated, God would bring in a new age. In this new age, there would be no more suffering or pain; there would be no more hatred, despair, war, disease, or death. God would be the ruler of all, in a kingdom that would never end.”<sup>2</sup>

For those who are rather familiar with the teachings of Jesus, you may already see this worldview fall right into the pages of the New Testament. Jesus over and over preached that an apocalyptic kingdom was coming and that people needed to repent. Those that heeded the call to turn their lives to God and submitted to the lordship of Jesus would avoid the coming judgment and would then be eligible for eternal life in the age to come. The biblical gospel includes all of this and the fact that forgiveness of sins (from Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice on the cross) would be made available to

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<sup>1</sup> Ehrman, Bart D. *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium*. 120-121, emphasis added by the capitalization of divine pronouns. This work is another must read. I would dare to say that it is one of the best books on the Kingdom of God that I have read. One must overlook the liberal tendencies and focus primarily on chapters 7-11.

<sup>2</sup> Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 246. Similar emphasis was added as before, including the underlining.

those who put their faith in these promises. Therefore, anyone who had accepted Jesus' apocalyptic gospel correspondingly accepted Jesus' dualistic worldview. They in turn left behind their worldly lives. They cast off their old sins. They turned away from the pleasures of this world. They thought differently, they acted differently, they talked differently, and they believed differently. They joined the "community...embodying an apocalyptic perspective as it ideology."<sup>1</sup> The gospel of the kingdom of God demanded such a radical change in the lives of those who accepted it. This is easy to say, but one must ask about the evidence. To the Scriptures we turn to next.

## **PART TWO—SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR APOCALYPTIC DUALISM**

Once I was introduced to the concept of Apocalyptic Dualism, I could immediately recognize that the Bible held many references to support this worldview. What was surprising to me was that in the next few months of reading the New Testament, I was finding over and over, text after text, statement after statement to confirm what I had embraced. I would like to now put forth two things. First of all, I want to share what I think is the evidence for there being a dualistic ideology of two opposing camps of peoples in the world: the forces of good and the forces of evil. Second, I want to show that the frame of history is also divided in a dualistic pattern, this present age and the glorious age to come. I will be using a lot of Scripture references, and although this is not an exhaustive list, my purpose is to show beyond a shadow of a doubt that New Testament Christians were apocalyptic dualists. This worldview became embodied in their lives from accepting the gospel of the kingdom.

Notice from these passages how each person is placed on one of two mutually exclusive sides:

“So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit” **Matt. 7:17**

"Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." **Matt. 10:32-33**

“as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one” **Matt. 13:38**

“So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous” **Matt. 13:49**

“And He was saying to them, “To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven”” **Mark 4:11-12**

“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and for the gospel's will save it” **Mark 8:35**

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<sup>1</sup> *Anchor Bible Dictionary.vol.1* 280

““Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able to”” **Luke 13:23-24**

“For the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.” **Luke 16:8**

“Those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment” **John 5:29**

“Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me....You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father.”” **John 8:42, 44**

“walk while you have the light so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become sons of light” **John 13:35-36**

“he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, apart from Me you can do nothing” **John 15:5**

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I choose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you” **John 15:19**

“To those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality: eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation” **Romans 2:7-8**

“For when you were slaves to sin, you were free in regard to righteousness...But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God” **Romans 6:20, 22**

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God” **1 Cor. 2:12**

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, for what fellowship had light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” **2 Cor. 6:14-16**

“For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another” **Gal. 5:17**

“for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience...but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” **Eph. 5:6, 8**

“For you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night or of darkness” **1 Thes. 5:5**

“God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” **James 4:6**

“Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous; just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil” **1 John 3:7-8**

“Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist” **1 John 4:2-3**

As we can see, time and time again the New Testament places each person on one of two sides. They are either on the side of good, or on the side of evil. Although we may be tempted to think that two sides sound mean or harsh, Jesus actually warns us of this kind of lukewarm thinking. “So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth” (Rev. 3:16). There is no middle ground with God. No gray area. No straddling the fence. It is either black or white. This is a reality we need to face up to and not try to minimize with sugar-coated compromises! From these passages we can clearly see that the perspective of the New Testament Scriptures is that of a dualistic apocalypticism.

Next I will show that the Scriptures divide history into a dualistic view of linear time. As we have seen previously, we are living in the present age and there is also another age that is to come. The present age is sometimes called “the present evil age” but mostly referred to “this age.” Upon the cataclysmic arrival of God’s judgment and His eschatological kingdom, this age will come to an end and the “age to come” will commence. The age to come is most commonly referred to as “eternal life” or life in the age to come.<sup>1</sup> Here are a few passages to support these claims:

“...shall not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come” **Matt. 12:32**

“So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age” **Matt. 13:40**

“...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” **Matt 28:20**

“Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life...How hard will it for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God?” **Mark 10:17, 23**

“But that he will receive a hundred times as much as now in the present age....and in the age to come, eternal life” **Mark 10:30**

“And do not be conformed to this world (Greek: τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ “this age”)” **Rom. 12:2**

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<sup>1</sup> ζῶην αἰώνιον, the Greek for “eternal life”, is first used in the LXX of Daniel 12:2, which refers to the eschatological resurrection life. Jesus takes claim to this terminology and uses it to refer to “the age to come” or life in the future kingdom of God.

“The wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood” **1 Cor. 2:8**<sup>1</sup>

“who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from the this present evil age” **Gal. 1:4**

“so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus” **Eph. 2:7**

“instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” **Titus 2:12**

There is a reason that this age is called the “present evil age.” In this age, the forces of evil are in control, and they make life difficult for those who side with God. The head of this age is the Devil, whom God has relinquished temporary control of the cosmos. Consider the following passages:

“Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world... “All of these things I will give to you”” **Matt. 4:8-9**

“in whose case the god of this world (Greek: του αιωνος τουτου “this age”) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ” **2 Cor. 4:4**

“We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” **1 John 5:19**

“the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the world” **Rev. 12:9**

Yet, the Devil’s time is coming to an end. When Jesus returns, the kingdoms that belong to Satan will be handed back over to God and His Messiah.

“In the days of those kings the God of heaven will setup a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms” **Dan. 2:44**

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever... You have taken your great power and begun to reign” **Rev. 11:15, 17**

In conclusion, the New Testament shows abundant evidence that the early Christians believed, thought, and spoke in dualistic terms. They understood that they lived in the present evil age and longed for the return of the Messiah to usher in the age to come. It was this worldview that they accepted upon embracing the hope of the coming kingdom of God. Yet, it was not only a new outlook on life in general; it

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<sup>1</sup> See the comment in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 3:892 “The real depth of the antithesis between God and the κοσμος is shown by the fact that the αρχοντων του αιωνος τουτου crucified the lord of glory”

actually had some very dynamic implications upon their daily ethics. For those who have never looked upon the writings of the New Testament through the eyes of an apocalyptic dualist, these may be either very encouraging or very shocking. Hopefully we can lay feelings aside and let the Scriptures and the commands of our lord Jesus Christ dictate out beliefs, hopes, and lifestyles.

### **PART THREE—OUR ETHICAL RESPONSE TO APOCALYPTIC DUALISM**

I hope that the foundation is laid from all of the previous passages to show that the Christian worldview of the early believers was a dualistic one. In summary, this present evil age is under control of Satan and the forces of evil. Those who side with Satan will find joy and success in this age. Those who side with God and the forces of good will find it difficult to “take a stand for their team.” Yet, all of the tables will turn when the kingdom of God comes and literally changes everything. Those that sided with Satan will no longer prosper but will face judgment and will receive annihilation. Those who have suffered<sup>1</sup> by siding with God and His standards in the present evil age will at that time be exalted to positions of authority and rulership in the glorious kingdom upon this earth. At this time, God’s agent, the Messiah, will be the father of the age to come.<sup>2</sup> With this cosmic reversal in mind, we can now understand the statements from Jesus like the following:

“He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” **Matt. 10:39**

“If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and a servant of all” **Mark 9:35**

“For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” **Luke 14:11**

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them... But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.” **Luke 22:25-26**

The overall ethical point to be made here is that those who side with God in this present evil age are not going to succeed and prosper. While Satan is in control, those that side with him are going to be exalted in this age. Pride, money, sex, substance abuse, desire, and fame will drive people to live life on their own terms as opposed to living by God’s standards. Their eventual goal in this age is “to climb to the top.” Since we who side with God are looking to be exalted to kingly rulership in the age to come, we should be in humility serving each other. Our lives should not be lifted up with goals of prosperity; for only those who side with the forces of evil will prosper in this age. Jesus’ statements are not just something Christians heckle in the back of a long line at the bank—they have real eschatological implications. Our job is to live humble lives that long to serve and love each other. The Apostle Peter commands to “clothe yourselves with humility towards one another, for God is

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<sup>1</sup> See the following references in Scripture: Matt. 5:10-12, 23:29-31, 2 Tim. 3:12, James 5:10

<sup>2</sup> see Isa. 9:6 LXX

opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5). This shows the importance of interpreting Jesus words in light of his apocalyptic worldview concerning the kingdom of God.

Upon a careful examination of the gospels, we can see that Jesus had some strange relationships with his earthly family. Due to the unbelief and lack of acceptance of his kingdom gospel, Jesus actually did not hold his family as a high priority in his life. In fact, many times in the synoptic gospels we read that Jesus “redefines the family” as those who actually do the will of his Father in heaven. Note the following:

“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth, I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother...and a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me, and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” **Matt. 10:34-37**

“And stretching out His hand towards His disciples, he said “Behold My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother.”” **Matt. 12:49-50**

“My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it” **Luke 8:21**

“one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which you nursed.” But He said “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it”” **Luke 11:27-28**

“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple” **Luke 14:26**

Strikingly, Jesus wanted his disciples to *hate* their own family members. If we understand “hate” here to mean something like “despise in comparison,” then these sayings make more sense. “Parents, siblings, spouses, and even one’s own children were to be of no importance in comparison with the coming Kingdom...Jesus clearly saw the family rifts that would be created when someone became committed to his message of the coming Kingdom”.<sup>1</sup> Upon accepting Jesus’ words concerning family values in light of his apocalyptic worldview, we can therefore better put his commands into application. For those who have suffered in a number of ways for accepting the beliefs, gospel, and teachings of Jesus, these statements already make a lot of sense. Many of us already find that fellow Christian brothers and sisters are closer in relationship than members of our own earthly family who haven’t accepting the gospel of the kingdom. Christians should not ignore or spiritualize these seemingly harsh words of Jesus, but strive to understand them in light of his apocalyptic teachings.

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<sup>1</sup> Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 269

From the famous Lord's Prayer, as we can all recite, we see that when the eschatological kingdom comes, it will be at that time when *God's will* shall be done on earth as it currently is in heaven. That would seem to imply, in conjunction with the dualistic worldview that Jesus held, that Satan's will is being done today. I have already laid the foundation to support that claim in part two of the presentation. Therefore, if the world is currently under control of the forces of evil, why accept the standards, values, and ways of this world? Please take seriously into consideration the following verses:

“do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” **Romans 12:2**

“the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” **Gal. 6:14**

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility towards God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself and enemy of God.” **James 4:4**

“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” **1 John 2:15**

These passages should be memory verses for anyone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. We are clearly commanded to forsake our relationships and ties to this evil world. Why? Remember the dualism. Those who side with this world are *actually* siding with Satan and the forces of evil. James 4:4 just said that those people are “enemies of God.” Again, these passages should not be swept aside or spiritualized to avoid uncomfortable feelings. The Scriptures need to be taken as seriously. Note what the modern scholars are saying when examining the New Testament carefully:

“The world stands in sharp contrast with Jesus' disciples. They formerly belonged to the world, but have been chosen out of the world to belong to Christ”<sup>1</sup>

“the εκκλησια does not belong to the world”<sup>2</sup>

“[Paul] thought naturally of “this age” as something inferior”<sup>3</sup>

“The thought of the struggle against the Evil One leads to *an impassioned denunciation of the world ... and its attractions*”<sup>4</sup>

“such worldly behavior borders seriously on apostasy”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ladd, George. *A Theology of the New Testament*. 226

<sup>2</sup> *kosmos*. in TDNT 3:893

<sup>3</sup> Dunn, James D. G. *The Theology of Paul*. 41

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Raymond E.. *Introduction to the New Testament*. 385

<sup>5</sup> Martin, Ralph P. *James – Word Biblical Commentary*. 148

“The world is the epitome of unredeemed creation. It has become the enemy of God. It is the great obstacle to the Christian life.”<sup>1</sup>

It should be excessively clear at this point that our ties with the world need to be severed and our focus needs to be on obtaining entrance into the kingdom of God when it comes. Abstaining from the world leads to many other ethical implications that should be taken seriously. One of the primary obstacles to heeding these demands, especially over here in the States, is the patriotism that is so widely embraced by the people of this country. Christians seem to get confused and continue to grasp their so-called citizenship with their countries in which they live in. Quite contrary, the Scriptures teach that our citizenship is in heaven, from which the kingdom will be coming (Phil. 3:20). We do not belong to this country or to this world. Jesus clearly told those who follow him that “you are not of the world” in John 15:19. On the contrary, the Scriptures teach that we are aliens, pilgrims and strangers, awaiting our inheritance: the kingdom of God.

“By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God...All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own” **Heb. 11:9-10, 13-14**

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.” **1 Peter 2:11**

The biblical evidence is at this point conclusive to make some seemingly radical points. In light of being told to “not be apart of this world” and “we are aliens and pilgrims in the present evil age,” what good reason do we have to do any of the following?

- ~participate in voting for leaders of Satan’s kingdoms?
- ~support the troops of one of Satan’s kingdoms?
- ~pledge allegiance to one of Satan’s kingdoms?
- ~salute one of the flags of Satan’s kingdoms?
- ~get all tied up and engrossed in politics?
- ~join any sort of military?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> TDNT 3:893

<sup>2</sup> The commands of Jesus on this matter cannot be ignored or argued against. “Blessed are the peacemakers (Matt. 5:9)”, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matt. 5:44)”, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by

Ponder these in light of all the evidence clearly shown. I think that the Scriptures to this point are conclusive enough to say that we should not get involved in the world or the things of the world.

As far as the ethics go, I could go on and on about how we need to continue to line up our standards with those of God's and not of the worlds. This section is not exhaustive, but consider the following for your own further study:

Why purchase, support, and place in front of our eyes the music, movies, and media that promote things of this world that God hates? (Eph. 5:1)

Why spend our lives storing up on valuables and worldly possessions when they are all going to burn at the coming judgment? (2 Peter 3:10)

Why not represent Christ as an ambassador instead of supporting the world's idols? (2 Cor. 5:20)

Why not live a sanctified and holy life because "everything that is wrong with the world will be made right with judgment and fire" at the coming of the kingdom if God? (2 Peter 3:11)

Why not in humility look out for the needs of others instead of pridefully only thinking of ourselves? (Matt 25:35-36)

Why spend our time entertaining ourselves with the things of this world when we should be busy witnessing the gospel of the kingdom and the things concerning Jesus Christ? (Matt. 24:14)

Why enslave ourselves with the deeds of the flesh like the rest of the world when we should be bearing the fruits of the spirit? (Gal. 5:19-23, note the dualism)

### **SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

I think that the ethical implications of apocalyptic dualism are too serious for us to leave unchecked. If Jesus believed and embraced these things, shouldn't we also? Shouldn't we be teaching these ethics and standards in our pulpits, Sunday school classes, and bible studies? Bart Ehrman correctly points out that "the church that emerged in Jesus' wake was apocalyptic."<sup>1</sup> Why aren't we? Why don't we talk about these issues? Aren't they a little more important than football, the weather, the newest TV sitcom fad? Where are our priorities? Shouldn't our thinking be in-line

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the sword (Matt. 26:52)." Paul is even clearer in saying that we should "never pay back evil for evil to anyone" and "never take your own revenge" in Romans 12:17, 19.

<sup>1</sup> Ehrman, Bart D. *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 255

and in-tune with that of the Messiah's? It should be. He prayed for the Christian body to be *one* in John 17. We also have the "mind of Christ" in 1 Cor. 2:16.

Maybe we have gotten a little too comfortable in our Christianity. Maybe we are a little sloppy when it comes to Jesus' commands. This cannot be so! The meaning of "repent" is to change your mind; reorient your priorities and life. We no longer need to base our beliefs, thinking, ethics, and values in comparison to the world, but rather to God and His Messiah. God's standards and the world's standards are polar opposites. Everyone can agree with that. Albert Schweitzer was absolutely right when he wrote that:

*"the universal, modern theology is determined to find its world-accepting ethic in the teaching of Jesus, Therein lies its weakness. The world affirms itself automatically"*<sup>1</sup>

We need to together as a body of believers submit to our lord and teacher. His ways need to become our ways. We need to take up our cross daily and follow him. I end with one of the most dynamic sayings from the lips of Jesus: "For whoever is ashamed of me and My words...the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him" (Mark 8:38).

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<sup>1</sup> Schweitzer, Albert. *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. 402, emphasis added