

- A couple months ago, my sister asked me what my recommendation for a new Bible would be. So I got online and started looking at some websites and sent her a bunch of different options. She really like a couple of them, but she had one problem with a particular Bible. She said that she didn't like it because the words of Jesus were not in red. I kinda chuckled at her and said she was silly and after a little laugh about her laziness, we kept discussing the other ones. It didn't catch my attention till later on that while her statement was innocent and comical, there are some people who really would have some issues with a Bible not having Jesus' words in red because they only care about the words that came straight out of the mouth of Jesus.
- Back in November, Facebook exploded with a video from a church in Franklin, Tennessee that wears the name "Church of Christ." This video quickly went viral among the brotherhood because this church was informing the world that they had just made the first hire of a woman as their preaching intern. The preacher of this congregation was interviewed in this video and had this to say concerning the words of Paul concerning women in the church from I Corinthians and Ephesians. He says, *"The Bible tells me about Jesus. And I don't read Jesus through Paul. I read Paul through Jesus. And I think the Churches of Christ are actually getting this. That we no longer read all of the Bible as equal, but rather we come to Jesus. The Law and the Prophets brought us to Him. The transfiguration listened to Him. Now everything Paul said, He was a fellow student with us. Let's read it through Jesus."* While the thought of Jesus being the ultimate authority is correct, what this man is essentially saying is that the words of the handpicked Apostles of Jesus Christ, the inspired writers of the New Testament don't matter. This is absolute foolishness, and it is sad that there are some who will blatantly ignore apostolic teaching in order to practice some things. Unfortunately, this type of thinking is becoming more and more common today among churches that would claim to strive to simply follow New Testament Christianity. We are seeing more individuals becoming Red Letter Christians. Again, I understand their sentiment. We should only seek out those things taught by Jesus, but I believe their application of their efforts has some major flaws. So this morning I'd like to address three things that Red Letter Christians do in their approach to the Bible and why they not a proper approach to Scripture.

### **Red Letter Christians...(people who advocate only following words quoted as being directly from the mouth of Jesus)**

#### **I. ...want to focus solely on the teachings of Jesus.**

- A. The Red Letter Christian would be completely sufficed to having nothing but the 4 Gospel accounts.
  1. They want to only hold to those things that are said directly out of the mouth of Jesus.
  2. They would have no problem with throwing out the Acts of the Apostles and the letters to churches and individuals.
  3. They would say that if Jesus did not say it directly then we cannot bind it as being something that we should do.
  4. Any evidence that we give from the Acts and letters of the Apostles would be considered invalid in their eyes.
- B. This is a poor approach to Scripture for many reasons.
  1. We don't have the right to simply pick and choose what parts of the New Testament we will follow.
  2. The earliest of Christians accepted the teachings of the Apostles.
  3. We don't have all the teachings of Jesus. **(John 21:24,25)**
  4. There are many things concerning the work and operation of the church that we wouldn't have a clue how to do if we didn't have the teachings of the Apostles from the first century.
  5. They forget that Jesus Himself gave the Apostles the authority to go and teach all the peoples the things that He had commanded them to do. **(Matt. 28:18-20)**

#### **II. ...discredit the teachings of the Apostles.**

- A. This preacher and others who fall into this category say many things to discredit and take away stock from the Apostle's teachings.
  1. *"This is just a cultural teaching that Paul is giving to the Corinthians and Ephesians."*
  2. *"They addressed issues that Jesus never addressed, so they must have just written down what they wanted to teach."*
  3. *"Paul was simply a student of Jesus like we are."*

- B. Again, these are claims that have no Scriptural basis.
1. The teaching of Paul in **I Timothy 2:11,12** are founded in facts that have not and will not change with time. **(I Tim. 2:13,14)**
  2. We don't know for certain if Jesus addressed some of the issues they did or not. Regardless, Peter states that the revelation they received was not left up to their interpretation. They simply wrote as the Spirit guided them. **(II Peter 1:20,21)**
  3. Paul was an inspired messenger of God and when he wrote to the Corinthians concerning the use of their spiritual gifts, he made this abundantly clear. **(I Cor. 14:37)**

### **III....reject the authority of the Apostles.**

- A. Red Letter Christians don't approach the whole New Testament as authorizing our beliefs and practice in religion.
1. They would say exactly what this preacher at this church said, "*we read Paul through Jesus, not Jesus through Paul.*"
  2. "*We don't read all Scripture as equal. The writings and teachings of the Apostles are not on par with the teachings of Jesus.*"
- B. Red Letter Christians fail to recognize that Jesus gave His Apostles authority to teach and lead the church.
1. Jesus said that He would give His Apostles the keys to the Kingdom and they would be the ones leading the church as it should go. **(Matt. 16:18,19)**
  2. Jesus told His Apostles that once He was gone from this earth that they would be the ones ruling and leading the church here on earth. **(Matt. 19:23-28)**
  3. Jesus laid down this authority to them directly before His ascension back to heaven. **(Matt. 28:18-20)**
  4. The proof that they had the authority from God to teach is shown by the miracles that they worked throughout the book of Acts. God approved of what they did by allowing them to perform miracles to confirm the message. **(Mark 16:20)**
  5. John makes it very clear that if anyone wants to know God then he/she better listen to the teachings of Jesus' Apostles. **(I John 4:4-6)** This is the same John who wrote the words of Jesus in **John 16:13** that the Spirit would come and lead the Apostles into all truth.

There are many challenging teachings in the Word of God. We might want to get around them by saying that they weren't straight from Jesus' mouth so we don't have to worry about them, but that is just straight foolishness. Jesus said, straight from His mouth that these men would lead the church. We must appeal to their teachings concerning the church and the Christian life if we want to be pleasing to God. Yes, let us focus on the words of Jesus. But, let's recognize that Jesus used the minds and pens of these men to teach all people the things that He had commanded them. May God help us to submit to their teachings and therefore come to know all things concerning life and godliness. **(II Peter 1:3)**