

RELIGIOUS RELATIVISM OR ‘JESUS DIDN’T REALLY MEAN THAT...’

Opening Questions:

- Is it possible that the authors of the four gospel books accurately recorded the words, deeds, and life of Joshua of Nazareth?
- Is it possible that human beings have not changed very much over the past several millennia, meaning our nature and our problems regarding human relationships have not changed?
- If someone said two thousand years ago, “lying for selfish purposes is wrong,” why would that ethical principle be invalid today?
- If relatively simple human relationship concepts are translated accurately from one language to another, why would anything about those concepts change over time?
- Is it possible that a perfect ethic for humans was communicated a long time ago and written down and that same ethic is entirely relevant for human beings today and in the future?

This content could be placed in the preceding chapter on Complexity since it is effective due to the elaborate arguments of those who practice it. Religious relativism is the primary tool that the religious leaders use to nullify the truths of the Light of the world. Like its sister, pure ethical relativism, religious relativism seeks to destroy the possibility that ideas, concepts, truths communicated in times past can be binding or relevant today. *Its purpose is to demolish the fact that almost all of Joshua of Nazareth’s sayings regarding human relationships or what is valuable in human life apply in all times and all cultures.*

This form of religious relativism is communicated probably millions of times in various ways each time the religious leaders get on their stages and read the words of Joshua of Nazareth in the four gospels. Its primary purpose is to use complexity to convey that only the religious leaders through their religious education can understand “what Jesus was really saying.” Essentially, they say, “you cannot understand that teaching or principle properly unless you have our education and can thus understand the culture in which it was said or in which it happened.”

Like most clever deceptions, this philosophy has merit but only when applied to non-relational or non-ethical concepts that Joshua taught. For example, if a text says, “And twelve stone jars were used at the wedding feast”;

that statement about twelve stone jars might well benefit from some understanding of the wedding ceremonies at that time. However, I would argue that getting a fuller understanding of the purpose of the twelve jars is a silly waste of time!

However, when Joshua of Nazareth gave principles that apply to human relationships or what is truly valuable in human life, those principles are not subject to cultural relativism, since human beings have not changed, nor has God changed His mind! So, for example, please consider this saying:

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 daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his 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)

The religious leaders – not willing to comply with this teaching themselves and knowing that they would be very unpopular for conveying the simple truth of this saying - resort to cultural relativism to nullify the Light's teaching. They will say something like, "oh, you have to understand the culture in Judea at that time to understand why that saying does not apply to us today..."

The other way the religious leaders nullify sayings of the Light is to use good old complexity, typically in some form of this statement: "You need to understand the original language of Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic to truly understand what Jesus is really saying here."

So, for example, in the above case, they might pick a few words like "sword", "set", "against", "enemies" or "household" and then "dive into the true meaning of the Greek, Aramaic or Hebrew" in order to nullify the plain meaning of the saying. When finished, they have redefined essential terms to fit what they want to believe. *They hide in the letter to avoid the spirit, just like their lawyer brethren.*

It is rather amazing how the average religious leader – who has merely an introductory knowledge of those languages if even that - *all of a sudden becomes a Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic language expert surpassing the TEAMS of experienced language scholars who translated into English the Bible version they are reading!* However, this use of complexity is extremely effective, so they use it regularly. The average person sitting in the pew is only too glad that Jesus didn't really mean, "love your enemies"; or "love your enemies means those enemies"; or "loving each other means we actually share our lives together"; or "you cannot serve God and money"; so no questions are asked. Everyone is happy, and the people have their religious leader telling them they are OK with God and that they can remain in their selfish death-style. And the religious leader has his money-paying vocation or "career" and people admiring him/her.

As I acceded, having some understanding of a past culture might be helpful in understanding issues that are not relevant to us today like how ancient

governments worked or why wedding ceremonies were held a certain way. However, Joshua provides teachings that deal with human relationships or what is valuable – for example the essential principle that Joshua gave of "love your enemy" or "honor your father and mother" – then *cultural understanding or original language clarification is not needed to understand what he taught. Human relationship and value principles are timeless as given by Joshua of Nazareth. God was not confused about what is valuable in human life or how people ought to behave towards one another—God has not changed nor have we human beings.* People are the same in every time and every culture. God, through Joshua, has given approved and disapproved human behavior and those principles do not change with time or culture.

The phrase most used by religious relativists to avoid the plain sayings of The Light is, "Oh, well, it is a matter of interpretation". What they really mean by that is when they hear or read Joshua saying something they don't like they will conclude he really doesn't mean what he says. The fact that most people who use that saying to nullify, cancel out or ignore a truth or teaching of Joshua have never read Joshua's words in the four gospel books makes no difference to them. They are just sure that what they believe on a particular matter is correct so if Joshua's recording saying contradicts what they want to believe, it must be a "matter of interpretation". And of course the plain meaning of Joshua's saying in context is not the correct interpretation.

For example, most folks are just sure that people ought to be able to express their sexuality in any way they want. They are just sure that 'jesus' believes the same thing, or that he would back up their beliefs regarding expressing sexuality. Please consider this saying of Joshua:

That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. (Mark 7:20-23)

The term "fornication" means sexual immorality, or more specifically, two people having sex who are not married. The term "adulteries" means a spouse being unfaithful sexually. The term "sensuality" means to promote one's self in ways sexual. So, the real, historical Joshua of Nazareth plainly teaches that we human beings have a problem with controlling our sexual urges and he gives clear teachings on what is acceptable and what is not. And yet, how many people will say, "oh, well that is a matter of interpretation" when hearing of Joshua's constraints on human sexuality?

In fact, in many critical areas of Joshua's teachings, people who don't want to listen to him nor do what he says, yet who still claim some Christian label-people who want to have their cake and eat it too-will brush off his teachings with "it's a matter of interpretation".

- You cannot serve God and money.
- A wealthy person cannot enter the Kingdom of God.
- Love means to actually care for one another as actual brothers and sisters.
- The good news is we can be free from our bondage, not that God killed His Son as a sacrifice.
- Love your enemies.

For those who don't care about what is true or right, all things "God" are "a matter of interpretation". At the root level, what they are saying is, "Jesus cannot really mean that we have to lose our life in this world in order to gain eternal life because I don't want to do that, so perhaps I can use clever intellectual tricks regarding interpretation to avoid that truth..."

The fact is that Joshua used simple and straightforward language to communicate his message. In fact he said:

I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to little children. (Matt. 11:25)

Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:3)

As you might be able to see at this point, understanding Joshua is not so much a matter of the intellect as it is a matter of the heart. So, if our heart is not good, then we will use our intellect to ignore The Light of the world in favor of "the correct interpretation".

The truth is there are not many sayings or teachings of Joshua which are genuinely confusing from an intellectual standpoint. Certainly, his primary or core teachings are very clear and for someone to claim they are not and are "a matter of interpretation", betrays a strong bias in their heart.

So, we have seen a few of the means that religious leaders use to get people dependent upon them and thus keep people away from Joshua. We have also seen a main excuse people use to not actually listen to the real, historical Joshua of Nazareth.

In the next three chapters, we will look at how foolish it is for religious people like Christians to spend so much time on trying to find God's will for their lives.

Chapter Summary:

- Religious relativism is the belief promoted by many Christian leaders that virtually all of the teachings of Joshua of Nazareth cannot be easily understood or "taken at face value" due to the different culture(s) in which Joshua lived at the time the gospels were written;

- Religious relativism says that most things that a person said who existed in the distant past cannot apply to people today since ethical truth is relative and depends upon the culture in which it is believed, practiced or understood;
- Religious relativism is a primary way the Christian clergy keeps people dependent upon them and their “christ.” Manipulating this dependency provides the Christian clergy with a "career" or "job" or means of income or material support in this life. The “laypeople” are taught that they need the religious leaders for the “correct interpretation” and most really run with that;
- Religious leader’s claiming to be “original language experts” is another method they use to keep the people dependent upon them;
- The simple truth is that all of the ethical teachings and value teachings of Joshua of Nazareth apply to humans of all times and cultures. Furthermore, that all of the teachings of Joshua of Nazareth regarding God (the One whom he calls “my Father in heaven”) are timeless and accomplish their purpose of revealing God the Creator and what He wants to all generations of humans on this earth.