

Us

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"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." [I John 2:18,19]

The question to ask here is not who the antichrists are but to ask who is referred to as "us".

The Scripture clearly teaches that rebellion is wrong. It is in God's eyes as equal to the sin of witchcraft. To serve God as one sees fit according to his own conscience is no excuse whatsoever for rebellion. Once a decision is made to do something contrary (rebellious), then the natural human trait of rationalization kicks in. We see this demonstrated in the case of king Saul not following out the instructions of God given to him by the prophet and priest Samuel.

"12 And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and, behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and didst evil in the sight of the LORD? And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to

sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king." [I Sam. 15:12-23]

From a strictly legal point of view, Saul certainly was in "substantial compliance" with the instructions given him. A careful reading of the above passage indicates that Saul did acknowledge that he did, in fact, disobey. He went ahead, however, and argued he did do what was instructed and even did more by following his own conscience to bring back "the best of the spoil" to sacrifice to God.

If we want to read into the account given to look at Saul's motives, we can probably come up with some good ones. The first assumption we can make is that the thought came to him, "Did God really say to kill everything?" That is the same question asked by the serpent in Genesis 3:1 namely, "hath God said?" When the devil tempted Jesus he started with the questioning "if". How the questioning thought came is of no matter whether from an internal thought or by the way of some person speaking. The fact was that Saul did not do what he had understood to do.

Now from a personal point of view, I would not agree with Samuel. I would say that he was being too narrow, too authoritarian. Especially in this age of enlightenment, one must follow one's own conscience.

However, I have taken a life philosophy to accept the Bible to be God's word in its entirety using the motto: "When the Bible says it, that settles it".

Unfortunately, when we take Samuel as speaking for God, we must measure all rebellion against that principle. We must also measure the Reformation movements of the 1500's against Samuel's rebellion principle.

From the above quote from I John, "They went out from us", we see that there was a specific event of "going out". When we look at the Reformation we see a few "going out" events, but the most prominent one is that of Martin Luther. Luther at the time was a monk in the only church in existence at the time (excluding the church in the East).

There was no independent way for Luther to have become a Christian at all had it not been for that church. That church

was in the process of fulfilling Christ's "Great Commission" to:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." [Matt. 28:18-20]

It was in this context that Luther decided that the church that brought him to Jesus was somehow no longer valid. This seems to me to be a parallel to Aaron usurping the authority of Moses:

"And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman." [Num. 12:1]

The first step was not the usurping of the authority but that of pointing out a clear "defect" in the life of Moses. No question about it, Moses was wrong. The children of Israel were only to take wives of their own tribes. This Ethiopian woman was clearly not an Israelite. Aaron was right in his analysis and thus more "spiritual" than Moses.

Let's make the parallel to Luther. Luther found things wrong with the church. Luther wanted the church to deal with the issues that he came up with. Luther's "Ethiopian woman" was the various topics he posted to the door of the church some 500 years ago.

Did Moses deal with the "Ethiopian woman" issue? Let's see what came next:

"And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard it. (Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out" [Num. 12:2-4]

Here God hears Aaron speak of the issue and calls for a mini church council. But what is the topic of conversation, the "Ethiopian woman" issue?

"And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my

words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" [Num. 12:5-8]

God was not the least bit interested in speaking to the "Ethiopian woman" issue. His concern was the speaking against His servant Moses.

In the 1500's, the Pope was head of the church that brought Christianity to Luther. Clearly then the Pope was God's servant as the Christian faith of Luther is un-refutable evidence that the church was doing God's work.

Luther's "Ethiopian woman" issues were not dealt with by the Pope nor the church when Luther raised them. In fact, I am now still hard pressed to figure out just what were those original issues of Luther. So many issues have been raised by so many individuals during these past 500 years that are frankly all "red herrings" that obscure the issue God dealt with in Numbers chapter 12.

Try to piece this together. Number 12 then Samuel then I John 3 and then Luther. The name of the game is "rebellion" to existing authority. It is denial of God raising up an putting down of authorities. Jesus said to Pilate:

"Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." [John 19:11]

Just as Jesus submitted to existing authority, we are also admonished by Scripture to do the same:

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:" [I Peter 2:13-15]

How did Luther then justify himself in not submitting to the authority of the Pope?

Is it so hard to believe that the same church that existed

these past 500 years as the Roman Catholic Church had previously existed as a single church for the prior 1500 years? "Us" is that church!