

# Another Source Of Abused Grace Teaching

The interpretation of Biblical prophecies about the last times is a highly debatable matter. I do not wish to be sidetracked into a debate on the nature of the Millennium prophesied in the Bible. But I do need to discuss the teachings of one deceased Baptist theologian whose personal attitudes to the Millennium resulted in him teaching abused grace. He was Dr Lewis Sperry Chafer, who founded the Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas in the United States. I mention Dr Chafer's name not to denigrate him, but to warn you of the dangers of some of his teachings which are very influential in many Evangelical groups.

Dr Chafer taught the Bible contains 3 systems of divine government: (1) the Law of Moses (2) the teachings of grace and (3) the supposedly legalistic teachings related to the future millennial kingdom reign of Christ on Earth. Chafer said, "*The teachings of the (millennial) kingdom are found in portions of the Psalms, the kingdom prophecies in the Old Testament and the kingdom teachings in the Synoptic Gospels.*"<sup>1</sup> The Synoptic Gospels are the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Chafer's errors are these: First, he taught *the Millennium* will be a time of supposedly God-approved *legalism*. Second, he saw *any emphasis* on *good works* and *holy living* as being *legalism*. He did not understand that under the New Covenant dispensation of grace, good works and holy living were *signs* or *results* in a believer of God's grace. Third, he saw *any emphasis* on *human responsibility* to God as *legalism*. Fourth, he *rigidly subdivided the New Testament* on the basis of these above three false assumptions. He interpreted the Scripture according to his own pre-conceived assumptions.

Chafer taught that Jesus' words in Matthew 5:3-7:27 do not apply to New Covenant believers living under God's grace but instead relate to humans living on Earth during Christ's millennial kingdom reign here.<sup>2</sup> For example, Chafer wrote: "*Every teaching of the kingdom which contemplates the **responsibility** of the individual is, in like manner, based on a covenant of human works, and is, therefore, purely legal in character. This may be observed in all the kingdom teachings of the Old Testament, and the kingdom teachings of the New Testament...The kingdom teachings, likewise, are to be distinguished from the teachings of grace by the order which each presents between the divine blessing and the **human obligation**. The word of the kingdom is **he that heareth my words and doeth them shall be blessed** (Matt 7:24). The word of grace is, **he that heareth my words and believeth them shall be blessed** (John 5:24).*"<sup>3</sup>

Dr Chafer did not understand that the New Covenant of grace and the teachings of the kingdom of God or kingdom of heaven are joined together in Jesus Christ. These teachings of the New Covenant and the kingdom are being partially though obviously not completely fulfilled now.

Matthew 5:16 says: "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**" Commenting on this verse, Chafer said, "*Still*

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Grace", page 119.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pages 123-142.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pages 141-142.

another contrast appears in this connection: *The Christian is appointed to manifest Christ (1 Peter 2:9); but the children of the kingdom are appointed to manifest good works*".<sup>4</sup>

But Christians are called to manifest both Christ and good works through Christ. Ephesians 2:10 refers to the latter: ***"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."*** 2 Corinthians 9:8, Colossians 1:10, 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, 1 Timothy 5:10, 2 Timothy 2:21, Titus 3:1, 3:8 and James 2:14-26 are similar verses.

Matthew 7:15-20 says: ***"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them."***

Chafer's comments on Matthew 7:15-20 were, *"The warning here is against false prophets who are to be discerned by the quality of their lives. The warning to the children of God under grace is against false teachers who are to be discerned by their doctrine concerning Christ (2 Peter 2:1; 2 John 7-11), never by their lives..."*<sup>5</sup> If we as Christians followed Chafer's advice here, this means we should foolishly listen to and follow gross hypocrites who preach good Biblical doctrine but live exceedingly wicked lives like the devil. How ridiculous!

A similar drastic error has been taught by some Bible teachers about repentance. They claim Jesus, Peter and Paul's mentions of the importance of repentance in Mark 1:15, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, 11:18, 20:21 and 26:20 are examples of a mixture of the Law of Moses and grace through Christ being preached before Paul revealed to the Church a purer salvation by God's grace alone through faith alone.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, page 133.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, page 137.