

# Behold, The Lamb and the Lion

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" (Jn. 1:36)

"Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah . . ." (Rev. 5:5).

Preachers and other teachers constantly urge us to be more Christ-like. "The spirit of Christ," "the mind of Christ," "Christ-like," and "Christ-like spirit" are terms used to express the same idea.

We can find no fault with these expressions, but rather applaud them, when taken at face value. A Christian should be able to sing "more like Jesus would I be" and mean it.

However, when one hears these terms, he would do well to stay turned for the details. The speaker's Jesus may not be the biblical Jesus. His Jesus may be of the modern imagination a passive, ever-smiling, back-patting, soft-spoken, all-embracing Jesus who would never be critical of people much less become upset enough with them to raise his voice to them.

This is the Jesus that we are urged to become like by a few brethren who are specializing in freeing the church of the pharisaic spirit and restoring "the spirit of Christ." This is a noble work, if this is what they are really doing. Again, one needs to stay turned for the details. If one listens carefully he may sense that these students of the pharisaic spirit have caught the disease through the back door. They thank God that they are not as other brethren are: proud, boastful, negative and condemning but are humble, sweet, positive and up-lifting as they represent their brand of the "spirit of Christ" in the world.

Their distorted portrayal of Jesus, not only weakens the gospel and the church, it undermines the efforts and undercuts the moral support of good brethren who are trying their best to obey the divine charge to "preach the word! ... convince (reprove KJV), rebuke and exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Tim. 4:2). They despise those who "rebuke with all authority" (Tit. 2:15), especially those who "rebuke them sharply" (Tit. 1:13). They often suggest to audiences that such preaching may well be the main obstacle hindering our taking the world for Christ. Oh, yes, they can occasionally be stirred to break out of their version of the spirit of Jesus long enough to rebuke sharply those who rebuke sharply.

Jesus was both "the Lamb of God" and "the Lion . . . of Judah." One can hardly reflect the spirit of the real Jesus without beholding him in both capacities. Emphasizing either at the expense of the other gives one a warped picture of the real image of Jesus.

Jesus could look at some people and be moved with compassion (Mk. 6:34) and look upon others with anger (Mk. 3:5).

He would weep at the prospects of the destruction of his beloved Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41; cf. Matt. 23:37) after calling its religious leaders "Serpents, brood of vipers!" and rhetorically asking them, "How can you escape the condemnation of hell?"

He could be both tender and tough. He could lay his hands on little children and pray for them and then, just two chapters later, use the same hands to overturn the tables of the moneychangers and drive them from the temple (Matt. 21:12-13; cf. Jn. 2:15).

He could answer the cries of the blind men for mercy by compassionately touching their eyes (Matt. 20:29-34) and a little later, say to the Pharisees "Woe to you, blind guides, ... Fools and blind" (Matt. 23:16,17).

He could even sometimes cry out as he taught some who opposed him (Jn. 7:28). Now, such crying out is a definite "no, no" to many who have restructured the "Christ-like spirit" for us.

Stephen is correctly held up as one who possessed the "spirit of Christ" as his dying words were, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60) just as Jesus' had been, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Such a forgiving spirit is indeed indicative of the true spirit of Jesus and is direly needed in the church today. What spirit was Stephen imitating when he, just moments before, concluded his speech to the Jews with, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-55)? Did not these words also reflect Stephen's Christ-likeness? All of this was uttered by one "full of the Holy Spirit" (v. 55).

What a pity it would be if we could only see the toughness of Jesus without his tenderness, his boldness without his benevolence, or his strictness without his sensitivity. We would have a warped picture of what we ought to be like. Conversely, it would be tragic to see only his tenderness without his toughness, his benevolence without his boldness, or his sensitivity without his strictness.

Let us both behold the Lamb of God and the Lion of Judah as we sing "more like Jesus would I be."

Guardian of Truth - May 5, 1994