



A Systematic Expository Study of the Word of God

Special Study:

THE NECESSITY OF DISCERNMENT AND WISDOM IN MINISTRY Matthew 7:6

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine ...” Many Christians find this verse difficult to understand. And still, many more find it difficult to apply. Are the words, **“that which is holy”**, **“pearls”**, **“dogs”**, **“swine”** literal or symbolic? They are symbolic. Obviously, **“that which is holy”** is sacred and **“pearls”** are precious, peculiar treasures. There are sacred, precious, peculiar treasures that will not be recognized, appreciated or even needed by dogs and pigs that they will **“trample under their feet.”** Throwing such treasures to them will also arouse their wild nature so they will **“turn again and rend you”**. Apart from **“that which is holy”** or a sacred thing which dogs do not recognize, appreciate or need, are there things we can give to dogs? **“Any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.”** **“The dogs... eat of the children’s crumbs.”** **“Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself”** (Exodus 22:31; Mark 7:28; Judges 7:5). The dogs need and appreciate food and water and these common necessities we can give to the dogs. **“A jewel of gold in a swine’s snout”** (Proverbs 11:22) will be ridiculous and unsightly but **“the husks that the swine did eat”** (Luke 15:15,16) are necessary for their sustenance. We must not give that which is holy or sacred to dogs, neither should we cast our pearls or precious treasures to swine but we cannot deny them bread and water. The love of God compels us to present the bread of life and the water of life to everyone while the deep mysteries of the Kingdom are kept only for the children of the King.

DESCRIPTION OF MEN AS DOGS AND SWINE

Matthew 7:6; Philippians 3:2; 2 Kings 8:11-13; Psalm 22:16-18; Isaiah 56:10-12; Psalm 59:2-7; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Matthew 15:21-28; 10:5,6,11-20; Revelation 22:15-17.

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine”. It is very important and significant to identify who the dogs and swine represent. But before we do this, we must remember that we are to **“preach the gospel to every creature”**; Jesus tasted **“death for every man”**; **“Christ died for the ungodly”**; **“The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”**; **“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians”**; **“the gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”**. **“If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.”** We must not withhold food and water from anyone, neither should we deny anyone the privilege of hearing the gospel. Christ, the Bread of Life and the Water of Life is for everyone (John 6:48-51; 4:10,14; Revelation 22:17). Special, sacred, deep mysteries of the Kingdom, the great doctrines of God’s Word are not for strangers outside the Kingdom, but all must hear the gospel of salvation.

To the Israelites, dogs and swine are unclean animals. The dog was the scavenger of the village and was generally fierce and dangerous. The swine was also regarded as dirty and unclean in every way. So, dogs signify men who are still in their sins, who delight in their foolishness and wickedness, unashamedly practising what decent people detest (Proverbs 26:11). The swine also denote men of iniquity and impurity who have no mind or sense of dignity. Their understanding is so darkened that they **“glory in their shame”**, they **“wallow in the mire.”** Dogs and swine, these men of corrupt mind and deadened conscience, have no appreciation for holy things and pearls – **“they trample them under their feet”**. Their nature is vile and violent, like wild dogs and vile swine, they would rather rend, tear or persecute ministers of **“the mystery of Christ”** and proclaimers of **“the unsearchable riches of Christ”** (Ephesians 3:4-13).

DISCERNMENT IN MINISTRY TOWARDS DANGEROUS SINNERS

Matthew 7:6; Exodus 29:32,33; Leviticus 22:10; 1 Samuel 21:3-6; Matthew 2:7-13; Mark 6:17-28; Acts 13:45-47; 18:5-11; Jude 22,23; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

Matthew chapter seven, verse six is beautifully set and arranged: **“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they (the swine) trample them under their feet, and turn again (that is, the dogs) and rend you”**. The Lord is instructing us to be wise and discerning in ministering to different kinds of people. We are not to offer the great doctrines of God’s Word to violent,

unconverted men who would curse and blaspheme, nor to peculiarly debased and profligate people who would not perceive their value.

No son of Aaron would think of giving the holy things of the sanctuary or the shewbread from the holy place to an unclean or common person. No servant of Christ, our great High Priest, should give the holy thing or the peculiar treasures of the Kingdom to **“dogs and swine”**, to unclean, unconverted people. Let us also remember that **“the holy thing”**, the emblem of Christ’s body and blood must not be given to unconverted men and women (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). **“He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.”**

Wisdom and discernment on the part of preachers, ministers and Christ’s witnesses and ambassadors demand that we limit ourselves to the basic fundamentals of the gospel when preaching to sinners. Even new converts are to be fed with the milk of the Word (John 16:12,13; 1 Corinthians 3:1,2; Hebrews 5:13; 1 Peter 2:2). **“Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”** (Hebrews 5:14).

DECLARATION OF THE MASTER TO HIS DISCIPLES AND SERVANTS

Matthew 7:6; Genesis 37:5-20; Judges 16:6,15-21; Proverbs 31:3; 5:9-13; Acts 8:18-24; Psalm 50:16-22; Ezra 4:1-6; Nehemiah 13:28-30; Matthew 17:1-9.

“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.” This is Christ’s command to all His disciples and servants in all generations of believers. The command has a very wide application. He does not restrict our ministering to the world but He calls us to spiritual discernment and discretion as we preach the gospel to every creature. Our Lord is concerned about preserving **“that which is holy”** and the **“pearls”** of the gospel. He also gives us this command for the preservation of His ministers and His Church, lest they **“turn again and rend”** us. Herod rejected the message of John the Baptist, imprisoned him, thereby hindering his ministry to those who desired the Truth, and eventually killed him.

We are not to give **“that which is holy”** to **“dogs and swine”**, that is, to the unclean, the unrighteous. What does the Scripture regard as **“that which is holy”**? (1) Great, deep truths of God’s Law (Hosea 8:12; Romans 7:12). (2) Sacred privilege of priesthood, reserved only for the called, cleansed and consecrated (Nehemiah 7:64). (3) Special service of the Levites that no stranger is permitted to intrude into (Numbers 4:4,19). (4) The gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 8:18-24; 1 Timothy 5:22). (5) The ministry to which only the sanctified are commissioned (Acts 1:17,21-26; 2 Timothy 2:21). (6) Work and service in the church (Acts 6:2-4). (7) Water baptism and the Lord’s Supper (Acts 8:36-39; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). A commentary on the Gospels says, “In particular, the early Church was very careful about whom it admitted to the Lord’s Table, and this text became associated with the Lord’s Table. The Lord’s Supper began with the announcement: “Holy things for holy people.”

Dogs and swine, men and women whose nature and lives have not been changed and transformed do not know the spiritual value of holy things and pearls of the Kingdom. The frightening consequence of giving holy things and pearls to dogs and swine is that truth is trampled upon, the sanctuary is polluted and the believers and ministers are rent and destroyed (Lamentations 1:10; Ezekiel 44:7-9; Isaiah 59:14,15; Jeremiah 7:28).

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