

Steve Chalke—‘*The lost message of Jesus*’ – a false gospel

On page 182 of his book Chalke writes:

[John’s gospel famously declares, ‘God loved the people of this world so much that he gave his only Son’ (John 3:16). How then, have we come to believe that at the cross this God of love suddenly decides to vent his anger and wrath on his own Son?] Please notice that Chalke quotes only the *first part* of John 3:16. One of Satan’s main strategies he uses to deceive people is by misquoting scripture or by taking a scripture out of its context as he did with Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4v1-10). If Chalke had bothered to quote the whole of John 3v16, he would not have come to his erroneous conclusion that ‘*at the cross God suddenly decided to vent His anger and wrath on His own Son*’. John 3:16 in its entirety reads: ‘*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*’. The fact is, contrary to what Chalke believes, Jesus did experience God’s anger and wrath, but for our sins, ‘*so that we would not perish*’. This is because the inevitable result of our sin is judgement and eternal torment in the Lake of Fire (Romans 6v23; Revelation 14v10-11; 22v15; 21v8). Chalke is also wrong in that it was not a ‘sudden’ decision by God to punish His Son. It had in fact been planned by God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) even before the creation of the universe. As 1 Peter 1v18-20 says: ‘*He (Jesus) indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world*’. Revelation 13v8 also mentions: ‘*The Lamb (Jesus) slain from the foundation of the world*’. You see, God knew that all of us would rebel against Him long before it ever happened and so even before the universe and everything in it was created He had planned that His Son, Jesus, would pay the price for our sin on the cross of Calvary. As a result we can now be forgiven and reconciled to Him if we trust in Jesus as both Lord and Saviour. The Apostles, Peter, Paul and John also clearly teach that Jesus bore God’s punishment for our sins. In addition, they declare that this is the greatest proof of God’s love for us as He would have been perfectly just in sending us all straight to hell.

The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3v18 states:

‘For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just(Jesus) for the unjust (us), that He might bring us to God’.

In Romans 5v8 the Apostle Paul states:

‘But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us’.

In 1 John 4v10 the Apostle John states:

‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins’. The word ‘propitiation’ means ‘the turning away of God’s wrath against sin’. In other words, God’s wrath that was directed towards our sin fell upon His own Son.

How sad that on page 182 Chalke coins the phrase ‘cosmic child abuse’ to describe this act of God punishing His Son for an offence He has not committed. But this is the exact reason why Jesus came: ‘*to save His people from their sins*’ (Matthew 1v21). John 3v14-16 tells us clearly that His being lifted up on a cross is not only the greatest proof of God’s love but also the only means of saving us from perishing (the

inevitable result of our sins). Another point that Chalke fails to realise is that, Jesus willingly laid His life down for us, as He says in John 10v17: *'Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again.'* Jesus's death on the cross was not an accident of history or *'cosmic child abuse'*. It was fulfilment of God's plan of salvation. In fact to deny Jesus' *'substitutionary atonement'* on the cross is *'another gospel'*. The Apostle Peter once again clearly states the gospel message in 1 Peter 2v24: *'He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness'*. In 1 Corinthians 15v3 Paul affirms that the gospel message consists of *'Christ died for our sins... was buried and rose again on the third day'*.

On page 184 Chalke states that *he used to preach* the truth that Jesus took on himself all of the world's sin and was forsaken by God, but now no longer does, and on page 185 he says that the cross is simply a statement that 'God is here'. Also on page 185, Chalke also states that he no longer thinks that the cross should be portrayed as a bridge over the chasm that separates heaven and earth, despite the clear teaching of 1 Peter 3v18 and Luke 16v26. He also denies the cross as a means of escape from the wrath to come. Chalke would do well to ponder Paul's warning in Galatians 1v8-9 about preaching another gospel: *'But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed'*. Chalke's denial of the true gospel message that Christ turned away God's wrath (propitiated) against sin by bearing our punishment on the cross is also clearly revealed on page 173 where he shows his contempt for preaching a message that states that *'we are sinners'* and that *'Jesus came to die for us'*. Unfortunately, this is the message declared throughout the Bible. The Apostle Paul states: *'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief'* (1 Timothy 1v15). Then on pages 55-56 he shows his dislike of Jonathan Edwards' sermon 'Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God'. Edward's message was used to bring revival (*'the Great Awakening'*) to the USA in 1741. In contrast, Chalke's 'message' will result in *'the Great Slumbering'* of christians and non-christians alike if accepted. In true Chalke style, just as he does with John 3:16, he only quotes part of Edward's message and misses out the important part where Edwards says that *'Christ has thrown the door of mercy wide open and stands calling and crying to poor sinners'*. Unlike Chalke, the Apostle Paul would have supported Edward's message as clearly stated in Ephesians chapter 2 where Paul describes our desperate situation without Christ as: *'dead in trespasses and sins'* (v1), *'by nature children of wrath'* (v3), *'having no hope and without God in the world'* (v12), and *'far off'* (v13) just for 'starters'. That is why we desperately need a Saviour. God in His great love for us has provided one—Jesus, His Son. But rejection of this Saviour means condemnation and eternal torment. We all must make a decision to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord, or we will meet Him as Judge.

It is therefore not surprising to find that having rejected Jesus' substitutionary atonement for sin that Chalke spends so much time likening our Lord Jesus to Martin Luther King and Gandhi (particularly in chapters 7 and 10), so that Jesus' death on the cross is reinterpreted as no more than a non-violent protest against religious and

political oppressors. This is the so-called '*social gospel*'. Proverbs 3v3 states that we need both *mercy* and *truth*, not just one or the other.

Chalke's book has so many other unscriptural errors that this would end up being a treatise if I discussed them all. I will just mention one or two more so that readers will again hopefully learn to check all books that they read against what the Bible teaches. On page 63 Chalke states that the Bible '*never defines him (God) as anything other than love*'. Again this is untrue. 1 John 4v8 does state that 'God is love', but what about 'God is light and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1v5) and '*Our God is a consuming fire*' (Hebrews 12v29). Chalke thus emphasises God's *love* at the expense of His *holiness*. On page 67 Chalke also denies the concept of '*original sin*' and says that '*Jesus believed in original goodness*'. This is again not true. If that were the case we would not need a Saviour. Refuting Chalke's notion, Jesus calls his listeners 'evil' in Matthew 7v11 and condemned in John 3v18. John 3v36 says that God's wrath remains on those who do not believe in Jesus. Adam and Eve were the only ones ever to have '*original goodness*' but they and all of us lost that when they fell into sin in the Garden of Eden (Romans 5v12-21). Hence Paul's declaration that without Christ we are all '*dead in our trespasses and sins*' (Ephesians 2v2).

In conclusion, Chalke preaches '*another gospel*' to the one that Jesus and His apostles taught. The true gospel calls '*all men everywhere to repent because He (God) has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man (Jesus) whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead*' (Acts 17v30-31). Therefore, to avoid deception, test everything that you read in books or hear from preachers against what is taught in the Bible (Acts 17v11).

For further information on Steve Chalke's departure from biblical Christianity readers can google: steve chalke and evangelical alliance with Adrian Warnock and www.ekklesia.co.uk contributions particularly helpful.