

Paul Young – ‘The Shack’

One of the most popular books at the present time is ‘*The Shack*’ by Paul Young. Unfortunately, so many readers of this book have not bothered to test what is taught in this book against the Bible, which is the inerrant word of God. In fact the lies propagated in Young’s book are so blatant that one wonders how so many people have been taken in by it. The Apostle Paul warned: ‘*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons*’ (1 Timothy 4v1). Deceiving spirits are busy at work today teaching strange doctrines through men and women who themselves are deceived. In warning Timothy, Paul also said: ‘*But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in all things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work*’ (2 Timothy 3v13-17). If you want to escape deception and be equipped for serving God in your generation then Paul tells us that we need to read, study and obey the Scriptures. In this critique I will try and stick to just pointing out the most obvious and important errors of ‘*The Shack*’, not because I like to be controversial or opinionated but to show how to distinguish between truth and error by testing what we read or hear against the Bible. As Christians we are ‘*to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*’ (Jude v3).

On pages 82-84, God appears to Mack (the main character of *the Shack*) as three different persons, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit*. On the surface there appears to be nothing much wrong with that. Isn’t that what is taught in the Bible? Yes, and if that is all Young wrote I wouldn’t be writing this critique. Unfortunately, God the Father appears in *the Shack* in *human form* and as a large *African-American woman* (p.82). Both of these ideas are unbiblical. Firstly, Jesus Himself declared quite clearly: ‘*No one has seen the Father except the One who is from God; only He has seen the Father*’ (John 6v46). The Apostle John also stated: ‘*No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him*’ (John 1v18). Secondly, throughout scripture the pronoun used to denote God the Father, is always masculine i.e. ‘*He*’ and never ‘*She*’! This should be obvious since Father is also a masculine noun! How is it that Young enabled Mack to be the first person in history (albeit in a novel) to see God the Father (Papa) in human form and also as a woman? Well, in his version of the incarnation, Young states on page 99: ‘*When we three spoke ourselves into human existence as the Son of God, we became fully human... we now became flesh and blood.*’ According to Young all three Persons of the Godhead became human—not just the Son (Jesus). This is in direct contradiction to John 1v14: ‘*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*’. According to the Bible only the Word (Son of God) became flesh, not all three

Persons of the Godhead! This is confirmed in many passages of scripture such as *Galatians 4v4* and *Philippians 2v5-11*. Young's God is therefore not the true God, as described in the Bible, so it should not be surprising to discover that his description of the Holy Spirit is also incorrect. On page 84 the Holy Spirit appears in *human form* and also as *female*—this time as an *Asian woman* (Sarayu). How bizarre! In scripture the Holy Spirit has never appeared in human form because He is '*spirit*' and not '*flesh and blood*'. Also the pronoun used for the Holy Spirit in the Bible is again always '*He*' and not '*She*'. In conclusion, Young's definitions of the incarnation and the Trinity are unbiblical.

Not surprisingly, since in Young's theology all three members of the Trinity became '*fully human*' (page 99), it is not surprising to discover that Young's description of God the Father (Papa) includes '*scars on his wrists*'. Not only does this strange description appear once, but four times as follows: '*for the first time Mack noticed the scars in her wrists, like those he now assumed Jesus also had on his. She allowed him to tenderly touch the scars, outlines of a deep piercing...*'p95; '*he looked up and noticed again the scars on her wrists.*'p102; '*Haven't you seen the wounds on Papa too?*'p164; '*Papa looked down, scars visible and indelibly written into his wrists*' p223. The scars on the Father's wrists imply that He too was nailed to the cross. The Bible is very clear that this is not the case—please read John 3v14-16. Also this could not be the case, for on the cross Jesus cried out: '*My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?*'(Matthew 27v46). As a result of bearing our sins, He became cut off from His Father. The Father was not nailed to the cross but only Jesus plus two other criminals. Therefore, the Father does not have '*scars, outlines of a deep piercing on His wrists*'.

Because of an unbiblical concept of God and what happened at the cross, it is not surprising to find that Young's God does not punish or judge sin. In answer to Mack's statement: '*But if you are God, aren't you the one spilling out great bowls of wrath and throwing people into a burning lake of fire?*'p.119, Young has God the Father (Papa) replying: '*I don't need to punish people for sin. Sin its own punishment, devouring you from the inside.*'p.120. On page 223, Young has God the Father (Papa) saying: '*I don't do humiliation, or guilt, or condemnation*'. The Bible clearly tells us that sin must be punished (for God to be just), but that at the cross Jesus became our substitute so that we might be forgiven and reconciled to the Father. So according to scripture, Mack's statement was actually correct, but obviously needed to be understood in the light of the cross where Jesus experienced God's wrath in our place. Only those who reject Christ as Lord and Saviour will experience the lake of fire (Revelation 21v8). In addition, Jesus spoke clearly of two resurrections (John 5v29)—*the resurrection of life* (for those who believe) and *the resurrection of condemnation* (for those who reject Jesus).

For those who would like a much more comprehensive critique of '*The Shack*' please refer to Berit Kjos's '*The twisted "truths" of The Shack & A course in Miracles*' on google.