

# church of Christ at Greenwood

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## The Language of Ashdod

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Once the children of Israel returned from Babylonian captivity and finally finished restoring the city and the temple, they fasted in sackcloth, put dust on their heads, confessed their sins, and separated themselves from the foreigners of the land (Nehemiah 9:1-2). Sadly, within a decade, the people had returned to their old ways of sin. They intermarried with women of *Ashdod*, *Ammon*, and *Moab* (13:23-27), they forsook the temple (13:10-11), and they profaned the Sabbath (13:15-18).

A unique, but not unexpected consequence of these foreign marriages was that half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not understand the native language of Judah (13:24). The Jews' neglect of God's law of separation from Gentiles (Deuteronomy 7:3-4) resulted in a large segment of society who could not hear nor understand God properly.

### The Language of Ashdod Today

There is an important lesson in this for you and me. New Testament Christians are supposed to militantly observe a separation from the world, its wisdom, and its allurements. The danger today is the same as it has always been. If we love the world and its "things" (1 John 2:15), we will not love God properly (Luke 16:13). Christians are supposed to live by the divine maxim which says: "*evil companionships corrupt good morals*" (1 Corinthians 15:33). Christians must not allow themselves to be "*unequally yoked together with unbelievers*" (2 Corinthians 6:14). This prohibition is just as relevant for Christians today as it was for the first century Christians.

Language is how God communicates to men (1 Corinthians 2:13). If you can't understand the language of the Bible, then you can't understand God and His instructions for you. Language is also how people think. I think and reason in English. I would be unable to understand a sermon in French without an interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:9, 11).

This danger is compounded exponentially when one embraces the "language" of the world. The world speaks foolishness as if it were wisdom. It calls evil good, and good evil (Isaiah 5:20). The Christian who embraces people who hold this philosophy, will come to regard the wisdom of God as foolishness (1 Corinthians 2:14, 16). No alarm will be loud enough to wake him from his reverie.

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That he looks more like the world by the day will not concern him in the least. Eventually, he will find false doctrine and worship appealing. When his brethren see him drifting and try to reach him, the gospel they use will be an alien language to him, because now he thinks in the language of the world.

Peter warned about this final gross state of an apostate. He is like a dog returning to his vomit, and a pig to his mud (2 Peter 2:22). This can happen to any Christian who forgets how to listen to God (Romans 1:28-32). When the language of the gospel sounds alien to a Christian, the world has already devoured him.

## **Making Application**

Let's let the "*language of Ashdod*" stand for the world's anti-God rhetoric which so many find so appealing today. Consider the many ways this newfangled "*language of Ashdod*" silences the language of God in the minds of an erring Christian.

**The language of false teachers holds more appeal to him than God's word does.** Faithful Christians study the Bible so that they understand and explain the hope that is within them (1 Peter 3:15). They consider it their duty to speak only those words which come from God Himself (1 Peter 4:11). They test all things for their truthfulness and they reject what is false (1 Thessalonians 5:21). They even vet the words of the apostles (Galatians 1:6-9).

Sadly, for too many Christians today the careful study of scripture has given way to speculation. False teachers slickly tie together false doctrines, couching them in Biblical "sounding" sentences, so that careless brethren can no longer detect the scam.

**Flimsy arguments favoring sin suddenly seem to make perfect sense to him.** Students of the truth can "smell" false doctrine when it comes sauntering up the street. A careful Bible student is on alert when he hears something he can't justify from the scriptures. He goes straight to the Bible to find out the truth on the matter. However, those who have practiced "*open-mindedness*" and embraced "*inclusiveness*" long enough no longer care what the truth is. Bible study is too hard for them (Ecclesiastes 12:12), so rightly dividing the word of truth is not in their wheelhouse (2 Timothy 2:15). Through the years they hide more error in their hearts than truth (Psalms 119:11). We hear these people say of false teachers, "*Maybe he is right!*"

**The truth of the Bible is a confusing mystery to be questioned endlessly.** Those who love the wisdom of the world think the Bible is foggy and uncertain. People speaking the "*language of Ashdod*" grow suspicious of long held truths, and they speak contemptuously of what they call "*traditional church of Christ views.*" They tend to think truth is decided by circumstances and popular opinion. They have forgotten that God's word is the truth (John 17:17). The truth is a confusing foreign language to far too many Christians today.

**Simple Bible doctrines become confusing puzzles to those influenced by the world's wisdom.** Take for example, the topic of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. There is no subject taught in scripture more clear and understandable than. Yet, with the seducing speech of the world, many Christians have lost their ability to understand: *“what God has joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6). School children can accurately explained God's marriage law when they hear it. Their young, unpolluted minds understand that one who puts away his mate for a cause other than fornication and marries again commits adultery (vs. 9). Yet, an older Christian who has been seduced by worldly wisdom scratches his head and says, “But what about the case where...?” The *“language of Ashdod”* has blinded him to simplicity. He now thinks with his emotions and opinions rather than with the truth. Jeremiah said this is a dangerous way to think: *“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9).

**Simple, human language becomes twisted and uncertain.** Now, we come to the twenty-first century and suddenly pronouns have no meaning. Those who wish to pervert the natural use of the woman into what is against nature, and those men who burn in their lust for one another (Romans 1:27-27), have unilaterally demanded a change to human rules of language. Males and females no longer want to be males and females, and in their sin-induced fantasies, they insist on being called *“we/they/them”* (or some other meaningless combination of pronouns) rather than *“he”* or *“she.”* Not only do they choose this for themselves, but everyone they meet must adopt a new language when speaking to them. Folks, a boy is an individual *“he,”* whether that gives him the creeps, or not. I will not contribute to his emotional instability by speaking the *“language of Ashdod”* with him.

God gave us the Bible for a reason. He wants us to read it and understand it (Ephesians 5:17; 3:3-4). It is His perfect Law (James 1:25). No part of it needs correction. It is easy to understand for the heart that wants to understand it. But, infatuation with the world will cause you to think like the world and speak like the world. Soon, your ability to understand God's word will end. Don't let this tragedy happen to you.