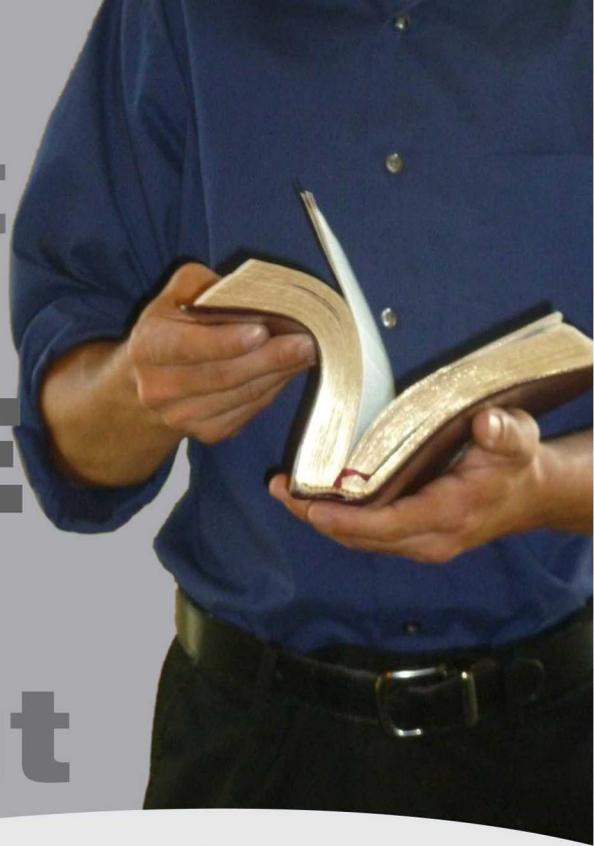


# What the BIBLE Says About



God the Father

**B** Authority **Holy** Heaven  
**A** Satan Drinking **Spirit** Hell  
**P** Love Alcohol **Inspiration**  
**T** Hate **Morality** The Second Coming  
**I** Modesty **Christ** **Salvation**  
**S**  
**M**

2012 Bellview Church of Christ Lectureship

Michael Hatcher, Editor

# What The Bible Says About:

Michael Hatcher, Editor

Thirty-Seventh Annual  
Bellview Lectures  
Pensacola, Florida

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# What The Bible Says About:

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

God the Father	
Wayne Blake .....	1
Christ	
Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr. ....	11
The Holy Spirit	
Charles Pogue .....	21
Truth	
David P. Brown .....	34
The Inspiration of the Bible	
Michael Hatcher .....	48
Authority	
Ken Chumbley.....	62
Salvation	
Dennis “Skip” Francis .....	75
Baptism	
Dub McClish.....	84
Bible Translations	
John West .....	102
Worship	
Ken Chumbley.....	112
Covenants	
John Rose .....	128
Christian Growth	
Wayne Blake .....	138
Emotions	
Charles Pogue .....	147
Love	
David P. Brown .....	157
Hate	
Tim Cozad .....	181
The Home	
Tim Cozad .....	192
Morality	
Gene Hill .....	202

Modesty	
John Rose .....	209
The Christian's Fruit	
Lynn Parker .....	219
Satan	
Gary W. Summers .....	228
The Works of the Flesh	
Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr. ....	243
The Tongue	
Dennis "Skip" Francis .....	251
Drinking Alcohol	
Don Tarbet .....	260
Conflict	
Gene Hill .....	273
False Teachers	
John West .....	280
Divorce and Remarriage	
Don Tarbet .....	289
The Second Coming	
Dub McClish .....	299
Hell	
Gary W. Summers .....	312
Heaven	
Lynn Parker .....	325

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: GOD THE FATHER

*Wayne Blake*

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## INTRODUCTION

Who is God? Does He love me? Does He care about me? What has He done for me? What does He expect of me? Sadly, many people have preconceived notions about the answers to these questions. Some view the Father as someone to call on only when in trouble or when we really want something badly. Some view God as a magical being that causes mysterious *miracles* to happen just when we need it. The media depicts those who believe in a Father as superstitious, nuts, or uneducated. We see others who are so angered at God that they will never come again to worship. Perhaps, they did not get what they asked for, or maybe they suffered a loss. Now they have given up on the whole idea of being faithful because they believe that God has let them down.

Our God is a loving God who cares about our physical needs as well as our spiritual needs. We must understand, however, that we cannot expect some magical, mysterious experience to occur in our lives just when we need it. We cannot just pull a lever and *Wham-O!* we get what we want. As we progress through our thoughts, we will look at who God is and how to come to Him. God is real, but we cannot use Him as our *go to guy* when we are in trouble and then go on about our business until we need Him again. God is powerful; He is no doubt our Father, and He does care about what goes on in

our lives. Do not be fooled; God is also a God of jealousy and one who will be revered. God the Father wants a relationship with us, but it is our duty to find out His terms for that relationship and our responsibility to maintain it over the entirety of our lives and not just in those times when we need something.

### DISCUSSION

Growing up, a song that was sung not only in worship but also on my lips when I would be driving along or sitting at home was this:

O Lord my God! When I in awesome wonder  
 Consider all The worlds Thy hands have made,  
 I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
 Thy pow'r throughout The universe displayed;

When through the woods and forest glades I wander  
 And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;  
 When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur  
 And hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

And when I think that God, His Son not sparing,  
 Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in;  
 That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
 He bled and died to take away my sin;

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation  
 And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!  
 Then I shall bow in humble adoration  
 And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee; How great Thou art,  
 how great Thou art! Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee;  
 How great Thou art, how great Thou art! (Boberg).

How anyone can sing this song and not get chills down their back, I do not know. The song beautifully, in human words, gives the description of God the Father. A Father who is creator, lover of humanity, giver of perfect gifts, a God of obedient children who can rejoice and sing, "How Great Thou Art!"

### God the Father Is Our Creator

Job had lost his family, his possessions, his place of prominence and, lastly, his health. In all this, he never sinned by charging God falsely (Job 1:22). After his friends came to see him and give their reasons for Job's woes, Job asked to only speak to God to ask Him the meaning of his downfall. In Job 38, God, from a whirlwind, came to Job and asked him a very extensive list of questions. Job heard the questions God asked regarding creation, the setting of planets, moons, stars, as well as the oceans. The powerful question God asked Job was: "Where were you when God set in order all there is to see in this world?" "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is no God*" (Psa. 14:1). There are many so-called *scientific* minds of our day who try to teach us a theory that we just happened by huge explosions and vast amounts of time. God is our creator; there is no other explanation. As our creator, He commanded us to remember Him in our youth so we will grow and appreciate all that He done for each of us (Ecc. 12:1ff).

In contrast to the polytheism of ancient and modern cultures, the Bible declares God to be one:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD (Deu. 6:4).

Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, And his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I *am* the first, and I *am* the last; And beside me *there is* no God (Isa. 44:6).

For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us *there is but* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *are* all things, and we by him (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

How could a religion have unity with multiple gods acting each according to their own ways and manners? If Paul's experience at Athens meant anything, it teaches us that belief in polytheism simply leads to confusion (Acts 17:16-31). God is one God; thus He can expect to be worshipped—Him alone (Exo. 20:1-7). We have but one God, and He is a particular God. We have one God, thus we have a single uniting source of truth.

We see a Father is over all and above all. In Isaiah 57:15 we learn that God inhabits eternity. He is a God who is above all things and in Psalm 50:10 it states, “For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *And* the cattle upon a thousand hills.” His glory is above the earth and heavens (148:13). Isaiah 55:9 states: “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are my ways higher than your ways, *And* my thoughts than your thoughts.”

We may think that, since God is above all that, we would never see Him in His creation. If we look, we can see Him in everything.

The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork (Psa. 19:1).

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen (11:36).

Man might think that since God is above it all that He is never with us. If we read, the Bible teaches us that He is with us always.

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people (2 Cor. 6:16).

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son *to be* the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God (1 John 4:12-15).

We have but one God, and He is the God who is present and with us always. Because God is one, we have a single source of constant companionship.

## **God the Father Is the Lover of Humanity**

John wrote, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). The degree to which God loved mankind was shown in the gift of His Son on Calvary to die for **our** sins, not His. How many of us would allow the death of any of our children so others—who will never respond or care in any sense—can live?

We see in the one Father a loving God. We might think from understanding the oneness of God that God simply wants to drive us into submission. We know from John that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16). God is love, thus God is our Father, and because He is our Father, He is love.

We see in the one Father a personal God or Father. When we think about the oneness of God, we might think that God is unapproachable, but God wants us to understand Him as a son understands his father. We read:

And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15).

We see in the one Father a loving Father, but one who disciplines. Our Father may discipline through teaching and instruction (Mat. 28:18-20). He may use other means for our learning, for example, the law of sowing and reaping (Gal. 5:7-8) and learning through experiences. We may also be disciplined through our brethren (6:1). Because God is our Father, we have a single, uniting source of care and authority.

## **God the Father Is a Giver of Perfect Gifts**

Some fathers fail to be providers. Some work, but use their money for selfish means such as drinking, gambling, and other vices. Some fail to work at all, and therefore provide nothing for their children. Some even rob their children by using them to gain through the

welfare system. Some are so busy with their earthly cares and concerns that their children are left with no real support or guidance.

A good father will provide for his children. Ephesians 6:4 states: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” We are told that a father who will not provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:8). In Proverbs, we find that a good father provides not only physically, but spiritually, as well.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, And attend to know understanding. For I give you good doctrine, Forsake ye not my law. For I was my father’s son, Tender and only *beloved* in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: Keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: Forget *it* not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: Love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom *is* the principal thing; *therefore* get wisdom: And with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: She shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: A crown of glory shall she deliver to thee. Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; And the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened; And when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. Take fast hold of instruction; let *her* not go: Keep her; for she *is* thy life (4:1-13).

The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: But a foolish son *is* the heaviness of his mother (10:1).

Over and over, we see instruction given from the father to the son. The good father understands that he must bring up his children in the Lord’s ways.

Our Father is a great provider also. He sees to the needs physically as well as spiritually. Matthew 6 shows us that He provides for the flowers, grass, and birds, and sums up by leaving the reader with the understanding that if He provides for them, He will provide for us, His creation. To receive full blessings from God, we must seek the kingdom and His righteousness first, and then all these things are added unto us (6:33). We are also reminded that every good and

perfect gift is from our Father of Lights (Jam. 1:17). God provided His Son for our salvation and He gives blessings to those who seek Him first. What more can a man need or desire?

### **God the Father Loves Those Who Obey**

We often hear people speaking of the “Fatherhood of God.” This mindset suggests that all people are the children of God. There is some truth to that in that we are all the offspring of God (Acts 17:28-29). Yet, in one sense, not everyone has God as their Father. Jesus identified some (John 8:42). He even said that their father was the devil (8:44). So the question each of us needs to ask ourselves is this: Who is our Father? Is our answer God or the devil? If God is our Father, we will love Jesus (8:42). The love of the Son is proof that we have God as our Father.

We learn to love God by first trusting in Jesus. Can love exist where there is no trust? If a husband and wife or even friends have no trust, can there be love? Jesus asks us to trust in Him (14:1). How can we say we love Him if we do not trust Him? For Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life, we must trust Him enough to place our lives in His hands and to be the provider of our daily needs—enough to put the kingdom first (Mat. 6:33).

We learn to love God by keeping His commandments. Jesus made it very clear that keeping His commandments is indicative of love:

If ye love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him (14:21).

Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (14:23).

He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me (14:24).

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love (15:10).

Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you (15:14).

Some may say, “You are a legalist,” or “You are a Pharisee,” along with a few other charges. I read the above verses and claim—“guilty,” if that is what Jesus commands me to be. If we love Jesus and our Father, we must obey His commandments. Jesus, our perfect example, understood the need for obedience to God for humanity’s sake (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus learned obedience through all that He suffered in the flesh, for our sakes, for our sins.

We look around our world and hear people who say that they love Jesus, believe in God, and other such phrases. Sadly, we cannot see that as being true because they will not obey the command of God to repent, to be baptized for the remission of sins, to abstain from the world and its sins (Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16; Mat. 28:18-20). Jesus said it best in His question: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). If God is our Father, we will obey Jesus gladly because we love Him. The love of God is not a true love if we will not obey Him.

If we love someone, we enjoy being with them, spending time with them, and talking about them to others. Sadly, we look around us and see so many that will not attend worship regularly; they act no differently than their coworkers in all things, and they do not pray regularly or study God’s Word. If we love our earthly relatives and friends, we want to spend time with them, go on vacations, speak to them regularly, and tell others about them often. Can any imagine loving Jesus and yet not wanting to spend any time with Him? Some show disregard for His Word revealed by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-14). They do not make an effort to read it and do not take the opportunities they have to study it. Why is there such disregard for the company of God and Christ? For those new in the faith, it is likely ignorance. For others, Satan and sin has hardened their hearts into complacency.

We often demonstrate love by showing pictures of our kids or grandkids, telling of their accomplishments, and of our pride in them. The early church demonstrated their love by their willingness to preach and teach others about God and Christ. They sought out those whom they came into contact with and taught them about

salvation. How can we be the children of God if we are ashamed to speak of His Son? Imagine treating our earthly families that way and the reaction we would get from them!

We love God by our willingness to suffer. Parents give up much to be able to have and support children. People are willing to jeopardize their lives for loved ones. Even a dog will risk his life to save his master. Today, there are even masters willing to die to save their pets! Do we love the Lord any less? Especially when we receive salvation through His suffering (Heb. 5:8-9)? Paul admonished Timothy to share in the suffering with him for Christ (2 Tim. 1:7-12). Peter admonished the Christian to suffer willingly if need be (1 Pet. 2:19-21; 4:1).

We love God by longing to be like Him. Children demonstrate love through imitation; they adopt the mannerisms of the parents they love. Some are good, some are bad, but they imitate because of admiration and love. How can one say they love God or Jesus when they do not want to be like Him? We are to walk in Jesus' steps (1 John 2:6); we are to imitate Him in all aspects of our lives. Do we truly show our love to the Father and Jesus when we will not attempt to imitate them?

We love God by showing we desire to please Him. Consider people in love. What man will not go out of his way to please the woman he loves? Or vice versa? Those in love will change clothes, mannerisms, hobbies, and all sorts of things in their lives. Christians are to be similar; we are betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). We should live for Him because we love Him (5:14-15). Do we have a compelling desire to please Christ?

## CONCLUSION

Our Father wants a relationship with humanity. He is our creator who gave us all that we could ask for and need while on this earth. He gives us all that we need if we seek Him and His kingdom. Our Father wants to know those who obey Him and put Him first in their lives. The Bible teaches us about God the Father and we have much to learn, but we must be willing to meet God on His terms and search His ways for all our lives to be able to imitate Him and His

Son as we wait upon our reward that comes to only those who love Him.

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: CHRIST

*Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr.*

Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr. was born in Monahans, Texas, but grew up in Jal, New Mexico. In 1976, he graduated from Abilene Christian University with a B.S. in Biology and in 1977 with a B.S.Ed. In 1980, Roelf received an M.A. in history from UTPB-Odessa, Texas. Roelf has worked as a Christian school teacher, petroleum lab technician, and for seven years with the New Mexico Environmental Improvement Division. In 1992, he graduated from the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Bedford, Texas. Roelf has served churches in Texas, New Mexico, and is currently working with the Hill Town Church of Christ near Santa Fe, Tennessee. He has held Gospel meetings in Arkansas, New Mexico, Kansas, and Texas and has spoken on various lectureships.

Roelf is married to Janice (Kolb), and they have four children and nine grandchildren.

## INTRODUCTION

The apostle John wrote these words about the Christ:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

The Bible was written for that very purpose—to “bring us unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24) and to build us up in that “most holy faith” (Jude 20). From Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 the Bible’s thrust is to create faith in Jesus Christ. Some have said that every chapter of the Bible in some way mentions Him. Within it we find the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16).

It is not possible to mention all that the Bible says about Him in just a few pages. However, perhaps your curiosity and love to learn more, to marvel at, and adore the Son of man will be tweaked. “And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39).

## HE IS GOD IN THE FLESH

*Jesus Christ being God in the flesh* is not a quaint theological quandry. It is a true teaching of the Scriptures. The angel of the Lord told Joseph that his espoused (the virgin, Mary) would bear a son, “and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Mat. 1:23). Perhaps sixty years later, the apostle Paul wrote of Him, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). Some twenty years after Paul wrote that, the aged apostle John wrote, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1), and “the Word was made 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” (1:14).

Only the Holy Bible informs us that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. Later, after the writing of the New Testament, men influenced by pagan philosophies conjured up *isms* that taught that Jesus was a lesser member of the Godhead or did not come in the flesh. These heresies still persist today in one form or another. However, the Bible teaches that He was the God-man: wholly God, wholly human. Jesus acknowledged the Truth that He was not inferior to the Father (cf. 8:58; 10:30; 14:8-9).

The Bible reveals that Jesus manifests all the attributes of the Father:

He is omnipresent (present everywhere)—1 Kin. 8:27; Mat. 28:20.

He is omnipotent (all powerful)—Isa. 26:4; Mat. 8:27; John 17:1-2.

He is omniscient (all knowing)—Isa. 11:2; John 2:24-25; 18:4.

The Creator—Gen. 1:1; John 1:2; Heb. 1:2; Col. 1:16.

The Sustainer of the Universe—Heb. 1:3.

On this earth Jesus accepted worship, acknowledging that He was Divine (cf. John 5:23). The Bible gives examples of servants of Christ who did not accept the worship of men: Peter (Acts 10:25-26) and an angel (Rev. 19:10). Today the Pontiff Maximus or Pope

in Rome, Italy, claiming to represent Christ, blasphemously accepts worship (cf. 2 The. 2:3-4).

**HE IS “THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD”  
(MAT. 16:16)**

This bold declarative statement of Truth rattled the gates of the unseen world of the dead or Hades (Mat. 16:18), amazed angels (1 Pet. 1:12), and caused the devil and his demons to stumble (Luke 10:18). This Truth is **only** revealed in the pages of the Holy Bible.

This “anointed one” or Messiah was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, as prophesied (cf. Mic. 5:2; Mat. 2:1-6), of a virgin as prophesied (cf. Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:26-35), who was a direct descendent of David (3:31), as was Joseph, Jesus’ step-father (Mat. 1:6). The ancient Jews knew that the Christ would be a descendent of David (2 Sam. 7:12). They could not deny that Jesus was a physical descendent of King David, though they denied that He was the Christ. The apostle Peter knew these proofs as well as the other attributes of Jesus (His miracles, inspired teachings, foreknowledge, etc.) all of which “flesh and blood” had not revealed to him but the hand of the Father (Mat. 16:17). Every day in Jesus’ presence was confirmation to Peter and the rest of the disciples who Jesus was—“the Christ.” It must have been an incredible thing to witness every one of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Covenant fulfilled by Jesus (cf. Luke 24:44). It was obvious to all who cared that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

In the last week of His life He entered into Jerusalem for the last time on the colt of an ass. The multitudes greeted Him by putting palm fronds and their garments in His path and saying, “Blessed *be* the King that cometh in the name of the Lord” (19:38). It was obvious to the people who He was—the Christ. However, the Pharisees, whose eyes were veiled by sin, saw this entrance and demanded that the Lord rebuke the people. Jesus answered them, “I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out” (19:40).

Of course the ultimate proof that Jesus was the Christ was His resurrection from the dead on the third day as He prophesied

(cf. Mark 10:32-34). The Bible records how the apostles were witnesses to the risen Christ (along with several others—1 Cor. 15:5-8). This evidence was so overwhelming that the apostle Thomas proclaimed what no observant Jew would ever say of any mortal man, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). It was not the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on their minds which provided Peter and the twelve the courage and conviction to say to that temple assembly on Pentecost Sunday, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). It was the confirmed Word of God—the inescapable conclusion.

Likewise, men and women today can come to that same conclusion. They can hear the Word of God, believe the evidence, and **know** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Too many minds today are also veiled by prejudice and hardened by sin to do this. This attitude of rebellion does not come from God or His Word. It is “according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2) and “the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6). The only thing that can remove this defiant spirit is submission to the Word and will of God.

### **HE IS MY SAVIOR, AND HE CAN BE YOURS TOO!**

*Savior* means “deliverer, preserver” (Vine 548). The angel of the Lord told faithful Joseph, the chosen step-father of the Christ, that his espoused would give birth to the Son of God. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat. 1:21). *Jesus* was common among the ancient Jews and is a transliteration of the Hebrew *Joshua* meaning “Jehovah is salvation,” i.e., “is the Savior” (Vine 333). A student of the Bible immediately remembers how Moses led ancient Israel out of the flesh pots of Egypt and how Joshua led their descendents out of the Wilderness of Sin into the Promised Land. Like Moses and Joshua, Jesus Christ would deliver His people from their sins and lead them into the eternal kingdom. Only the Bible shows us this precious connection.

Not long after Jesus began His ministry in Galilee of the Gentiles, He spoke in the synagogue of Nazareth. He spoke before an audience that had known Him since He was a small boy. He chose to read Isaiah 61:1-2, a passage that highlights how the Messiah would be a Savior to His people.

The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach **deliverance to the captives**, and recovering of sight to the blind, **to set at liberty** them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Their response to His disclosure of His mission and His other words was to almost kill Him (4:28-29). Ancient Israel desperately needed a Savior to free them from the bondage of the man-made religion Judaism had become (Mat. 15:9).

The Bible reveals that Christ can be our Savior from this sin-sick world. The Savior revealed to Saul of Tarsus and to us, as His servants, our part in that sacred mission:

To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

Can anyone with spiritual eyes deny that our world is in an ever-expanding darkness in which Satan's influence grows stronger by the day? Our world needs to be saved from the darkness of a growing immorality/depravity, man-made religion, wasted lives, and the hopelessness of sin. Only the Bible reveals that the Savior's blood can bring the forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life (Heb. 9:11-14, 22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; 1 John 2:1-2). The sinner can only come in contact with, be washed with, the blood of Christ by obedience to His Gospel (Rom. 1:16; 5:9)—the Savior's Plan of Salvation. After believing in Him (John 8:24), repenting of their sins (Luke 13:3), confessing Him as the Son of God (Mat. 16:16), then being buried with Him into His death in the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4), then, and only then, does one come into contact with the blood of the Savior.

On April 17, 1966, Jesus Christ became my Savior. That Sunday I loosened the grip of my 12-year-old hands from the church pew and responded to the Gospel invitation. That day Jesus became my personal Savior, the moment I called upon His name (cf. Rom. 10:13) by obeying His command to be baptized in water for the remission of my sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). After hearing many sermons throughout my young life, I made the decision that only I could make. No longer was I a slave to sin (Rom. 6:6) but now was a reborn soul (John 3:3, 5) by coming in contact with His cleansing blood (1 Pet. 3:21). To this day I recall the joy and relief I felt in obeying the Son of God, “who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4).

### HE LIVED THE PERFECT LIFE

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls (Mat. 11:29).

There is a desperate need for an example, a perfect example, for us to emulate today. History teaches us that those once considered *heroes* were far from perfect. Great men have been found to have great flaws: failed marriages and infidelity, involvement in alcohol and drugs, the abuse of power, etc. The Christian should remove their attention from the movie star, the athlete, the celebrity, the political leader, or even their favorite preacher and look to Jesus for their example or pattern to live their life. “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

Since the 1960s, our culture (once called the “counterculture” but now the dominant culture) has glorified disobedience or rebellion, whether it is against one’s parents, the government, or the church. Any authority **must** be rebelled against, except the presumed authority of **self** (cf. Jud. 21:25; Pro. 14:12). Yet, the Son of God is the antithesis of this attitude of rebellion. He never rebelled against His Father. Rather, “learned he obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). He already knew what obedience was before He came; now He experienced it in the flesh.

In all areas of life Jesus led by His perfect example of self-sacrifice. Instead of constantly seeking to fulfill the needs of the flesh as many do today, Jesus' purpose was to fulfill His Father's plan. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" (John 6:38). The fulfillment of that plan was for Jesus to willingly offer His body as **the** sacrifice for sin (cf. 3:16; 1 John 3:16). Jesus was the manifestation of that spirit of self-sacrifice. A dying world cried out for such a sacrifice. The Father needed that sacrifice to open up the way of redemption for His fallen children. The Son filled that horrible need. "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

What about our sacrifice? Most of us would take another's place in front of the firing squad or shield their loved one from a bomb's blast, but how many of us will **daily** give their mind and body to the Lord (Rom. 12:1-2). Most people see Christianity as a *thing* they do when convenient or when they are in trouble, but the risen Christ, the perfect example that the Bible reveals to the world, demands **all** of us. "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23). The rewards are *out of this world* or eternal. "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (9:24—the "it" here being understood to be eternal life).

### **HE IS COMING AGAIN!**

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they *also* which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen (Rev. 1:7).

Another doctrine about Christ which the Bible teaches is the certainty of His Second Coming followed by the Judgment. He promised that He would return while He was on this earth (John 14:1-3). This world is winding down. Men will never create a paradise on earth. This world is headed to judgment where sinners will face "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10) and experience Christ's baptism "with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:11-12) or eternal punishment.

Many today will not preach or teach on the Second Coming. They do not want to deal with the reality of Christ the Judge (Mat. 25:31-46). They consider such preaching “too negative” and all “hell, fire, and brimstone.” Others secretly ascribe to the idea of the eternity of matter. They cannot conceive of the destruction of this world. This is one of Satan’s subtlest arguments—“this world is all there is.” “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation” (2 Pet. 3:4). I believe that deep down they do not want to face the issue of eternal punishment. However, Christ taught this very doctrine in graphic terms.

And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:47-48).

Even now some brethren are backing away from this doctrine like a bunch of scalded dogs! Just as there will certainly be an **eternal** reward, there will most certainly be an **eternal** punishment (Mat. 25:46).

Jesus Christ’s doctrine of the Second Coming is one of the hinges of New Testament Christianity. If we do not believe it, we can believe nothing else of Christianity. Its unexpectedness makes us prepare and remain faithful.

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch (Mark 13:35-37).

What will that glorious and terrible day be like? The Bible reveals all. First, there will be no advance warning of His coming. The system of infidelity known as Premillennialism or the second chance religion teaches there will be all sorts of signs and tribulations before His coming. These false teachers have made a cottage industry with their predictions and wild speculations. Nevertheless, the Bible reveals that Christ will return unexpectedly “as a thief in the night” (2 Pet. 3:10). There will be no rise of an anti-Christ dictator and no

battle of Armageddon ushering in the Prince of Peace's supposed bloody millennial, materialistic reign. Rather, that day will be unexpected; a day of normalcy (Mat. 24:37-42). The break in that normalcy will be "with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 The. 4:16). Then the greatest miracle since Creation—the general resurrection of the dead (Dan. 12:2-3; John 5:28-29; 1 The. 4:16). The faithful will receive their spiritual, immortal bodies and ascend to receive their eternal reward (1 Cor. 15:44, 51-56; 1 The. 4:17).

Immediately following the Lord's return will be that "great day" (Jude 6), "the day of the Lord" (2 Pet. 3:10; 1 The. 5:2), the "appointed" day (Heb. 9:27), the "last day" (John 12:48), and the "day of wrath" (Rom. 2:5). The Judgment Day will be the day that Felix the mighty Imperial Proconsul trembled at the thought of (cf. Acts 24:25). It is the dreadful day which all unbelievers, skeptics, professional doubters and sinners draw back from in horror. They laughed a nervous laugh at the idea of it while they lived, but no more! All that have ever lived (2 Tim. 4:1) in their resurrected, imperishable bodies will stand before the judgment seat of that righteous Judge, Jesus Christ, whom God has appointed (Acts 17:30-31; John 5:22; 2 Tim. 4:1).

The Holy Bible along with the records of their lives (i.e., "books"—Rev. 20:12) will be opened. There the advocates of "faith-alone" and "grace-only" salvation will have a great shock. They will be judged for all eternity "according to their works" (20:12). Then that great King of Kings will proclaim the sentence. Those saved from their sins by the blood of Christ and who have remained faithful to Him will hear these thrilling words: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mat. 25:34). They will receive their "crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). On the other hand, the unfaithful, the unbelieving, the sinner will hear these fateful, eternal words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat. 25:41). For them it will be a terrible moment, a time of trem-

bling and gnashing of teeth, for they will be separated from God and His love for all eternity; an eternity in Hell.

### **CONCLUSION**

My friend do you know the Book that will judge you someday? Have you studied its precepts and obeyed the “Prince of life” (Acts 3:15) who is the center of this wonderful Book? If not, you are not prepared for eternity. You do not know the Christ, the Son of the living God. The choice is yours!

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE HOLY SPIRIT

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## INTRODUCTION

Given the limitation of both time and space, there is no way to exhaust the discussion on this subject, even on the limited number of points we will raise. Each one is encouraged to continue the study of this very important topic on his own. However, briefly addressed will be the following seven points regarding what the Bible says about the Holy Spirit.

- The person of the Holy Spirit
- The Holy Spirit in creation
- The Holy Spirit in inspiration, revelation, and confirmation of the truth
- The influence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the sinner
- The baptism of the Holy Spirit
- The indwelling of the Holy Spirit
- The influence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.

## THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Some people have the idea that the Holy Spirit is an “it” rather than a “He.” Others think the Holy Spirit is some mysterious force floating out in the air, released in response to human need, and that in some indiscernible way He influences thoughts and actions of the Christian. Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “He” (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8; 16:15). Notice John 16:13 in particular.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, *these* shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come.

Jesus used the personal pronouns “He” and “Himself” seven times in that one verse to refer to the Holy Spirit. There can be no mistaking it, the Holy Spirit is not an “it” or a “force,” but a person—a person whom Paul writes can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). Brother H. Leo Boles wrote, “A person has life, thought, volition, action, individuality, character, and influence. The Holy Spirit has all of these” (29).

The Holy Spirit is not just any person, but a member of the Godhead. The attempted subterfuge of Ananias and Sapphira resulted in this fact being pointed out by Peter.

But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? While it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou has not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3-4).

Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit in doing so he lied to God; therefore the Holy Spirit is God. There could be no more reasonable explanation than the divinity of the Holy Spirit, when Jesus gave the great commission and told His apostles to baptize those who believed their preaching in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Even though we often refer to the Holy Spirit as the third member, or person, of the Godhead, that does not in any way imply that the Holy Spirit is less Divine than Jesus Christ, because we refer to the Son as the second person of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is a person, a Divine person!

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CREATION

All three members of the Godhead were involved in the creation of this material world, which is evident from Genesis 1:26, where we read that God said, “Let **us** make man in **our** image.” The Spirit is explicitly mentioned in creation. “And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (1:2). Brother Boles commented:

Creation could not, according to the divine plan, be completed without the work of the Holy Spirit. To “organize” is to arrange or constitute in interdependent parts; it means to systematize disordered parts. God called into existence, through Christ, the Word, the material, and the Holy Spirit guided the arrangement of the elements into a complete system that we now call the “universe,” which means all created things as constituting one system (38).

In describing some of the actions and power of God, Job 26:13 says, “By his Spirit the heavens are garnished; His hand hath pierced the swift serpent.” *Garnished* means brightened or adorned. Brother Boles suggests that this garnishment may refer to placing each of the planetary bodies in space in its proper place and sustaining them (40). Whatever the exact meaning may be, it is made very plain in the Old Testament that the Holy Spirit was involved in the creation of the universe.

One other Old Testament passage is worth our attention in this context. “Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, And the wilderness be a fruitful field, And the fruitful field be counted for a forest” (Isa. 32:15). While the verse obviously has reference to God blessing His people, it also suggests the concept of the law given by God through His Spirit that every plant has its seed within itself, and reproduces after its own kind. Surely no one can doubt the role of the Holy Spirit in the creation!

## THE HOLY SPIRIT IN INSPIRATION AND IN THE REVELATION AND CONFIRMATION OF THE TRUTH

In the Old Testament it is very clear that God spoke to His people through His prophets, and to His prophets by the Holy Spirit. In

Numbers 11, Jehovah came down in the cloud and took the Spirit that was upon Moses and put Him upon the seventy elders, and they prophesied, but then they ceased. However, two men, Eldad and Medad, continued to prophesy. A young man ran and told Moses about the two men, and Joshua bade Moses to forbid them, but hear the response of Moses: “And Moses said unto him, Art thou jealous for my sake? would that all Jehovah’s people were prophets, that Jehovah would put his Spirit upon them!” (11:29).

Two points are to be made. Not all of God’s people were prophets, and those who were spoke by God’s Holy Spirit. Peter wrote concerning the Old Testament prophets: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Peter also wrote that the Spirit of Christ was in those prophets testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the salvation that was to later be revealed (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Some people may have the idea there was not much activity of the Spirit in the Old Testament, but such is not the case. Several times we read of the Spirit of Jehovah coming upon various judges, such as Gideon (Jud. 6:34). Ezekiel wrote, “And the Spirit of Jehovah fell upon me, and he said unto me, Speak, Thus saith Jehovah: Thus have ye said, O house of Israel; for I know the things that come into your mind” (Eze. 11:5). In the last verse of the chapter, Ezekiel then wrote, “Then I spake unto them of the captivity all the things that Jehovah had showed me” (11:25). The writer of Hebrews acknowledged that God spake in old times unto the people by the prophets (Heb. 1:1), and as the above verses show, God spoke to the prophets by His Spirit.

Jesus promised the twelve that when they were brought before governors and kings that it would be given them in the very hour what to speak, and that it would be the Spirit that would speak in them (Mat. 10:17-20). In Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, they spake with other tongues, and it was the Spirit that gave them utterance (2:4). Jesus promised the apostles

that when the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, came, He would guide them in all truth (John 16:13), and He would bring to their remembrance all that He had said unto them (14:26).

The revelation of the truth to the apostles and other inspired writers, such as Luke and Mark, extended to their writings. Paul said that the things he wrote were the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). Peter referred to the writings of Paul as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16), and Paul refers to Luke 10:7 as Scripture. It is no accident that the Scriptures were inspired (breathed out) of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The Scripture is inspired by God through the medium of the Holy Spirit! The reading and study of the Scriptures given by the Holy Spirit is the way men receive and understand the will of God today. Paul made the point to the Ephesians that such is the case in the New Testament. He pointed out to them that God revealed the mystery to His apostles and prophets: “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4—KJV). The Truth is revealed through the Spirit, and Paul explicitly stated that in 1 Corinthians 2:10.

### **THE INFLUENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CONVERSION OF THE SINNER**

Calvinism teaches the Holy Spirit acts directly and immediately upon the heart of the sinner in conversion. The woefully false doctrine of total hereditary depravity demands that conclusion, because if one **was** totally depraved (that is, could not do one good thing toward his salvation), a direct operation of the Spirit would be necessary. However, the underlying doctrine is false; thus the direct operation doctrine is also false. One cannot stand without the other. If the New Testament teaches that one sinner was saved without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit to change his heart and leading him to obey the Gospel and change his life, the system is false.

Consider Acts 2. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in previously unlearned languages, and when Peter told the crowd that they had crucified the one God had made both Lord and Christ, the text tells us that they cried out asking, what to do. It was not when they had some direct influence of the Spirit! Peter continued with

many other words to exhort and testify unto them. If a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is what it takes in conversion, why would Peter do such a thing? Continuing in the study of the chapter, verse 41 says it was those who gladly received the Word who were baptized, the number being about 3,000. It was not a direct operation of the Spirit upon the heart of those sinners that converted them, it was the Gospel preached by Peter and the other eleven apostles.

In Acts 10 we have the record of the conversion of Cornelius and his household. As Peter is retelling the events of that occasion in Acts 11, he says that the Spirit bade him to go with the men from Cornelius, and when he arrived at Cornelius' house, Cornelius told him that an angel instructed him to send for Peter who would speak words whereby he and his house would be saved (11:14). It was not a direct influence upon Cornelius and his house that converted them, but the words Peter spoke.

If the Holy Spirit acts directly upon the heart of a sinner to convert him, why did the angel of the Lord instruct Philip to go to the south toward Gaza? Why did the Spirit instruct Philip to join himself to the chariot, rather than directly acting upon the heart of the eunuch? Why was it necessary for Philip to begin at the same Scripture where the nobleman was reading and preach Jesus to him? The preaching of the Gospel by Philip converted the man and he was baptized, then went his way rejoicing (8:26-39).

Calvinists attempt to use the conversion of Lydia in Acts 16 to prove their case, but that one fails, too. To begin with, not one word is breathed about the Holy Spirit in the passage, but look at the order of events in Acts 16:14.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul (KJV).

Lydia heard Paul, the Lord opened her heart, then she attended to the things she heard. How did the Lord open her heart? By the things she heard of Paul: The Lord used the medium of words to open Lydia's heart. To suggest that the Word of God will not open

the sinner's heart without a direct operation of the Holy Spirit is to deny that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16), and thus to call God a liar. God has from the very beginning of time, and all the way through the history of man, including down to this present time, used the medium of His truth to convert the soul. Psalm 19:7 states that it is so: "The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple" (KJV). It is still as true in the Christian dispensation as it was in the days of David the king. "And Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). Does the Holy Spirit influence the heart of man in conversion? Absolutely! How? By the Word of God which is the Spirit's own sword (Eph. 6: 17).

### THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is strangely typical of man that the less God reveals about a thing, the more humans seem to think they have to know about it. When there is not sufficient revelation to satisfy their fancies, what do they do? They either engage in unwarranted wild speculation from what is revealed, or if that does not satisfy them, they just make it up out of the blue. God has given us (though one could not tell by the rampant theories of man that it is so) all we need to know about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Joel 2:28-32 is the passage with which we begin. The Old Testament prophet wrote:

And it shall come to pass afterward, *That* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids In those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, Blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, As the LORD hath said, And in the remnant whom the LORD shall call (KJV).

We do not have to guess when this prophecy was fulfilled. It was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the Spirit enabled the apostles to preach in the various languages of the people who were assembled; Peter said so (Acts 2:14-16). Now let us back up to the words Jesus had spoken to the apostles before He ascended back to the Father. “And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). What was the promise to which Jesus was referring? The promise God had given through Joel. When Jesus issued the Great Commission to the apostles, certain signs would follow, including the speaking in tongues (or other languages) (Mark 16:17). Hebrews 2:4 says those signs were done by gifts of the Holy Spirit. Now notice Acts 1:4-8:

And, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, *said he*, ye heard from me: For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. They therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within His own authority. But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit resulted in the miraculous. On Pentecost, the apostles received the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues. In Acts 11, again, where Peter is reiterating the events at the house of Cornelius, he said:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost (11:15-16—KJV).

Why? Because upon the Gentiles was poured out the Holy Spirit, and they spake with other tongues (10:44-46). Holy Spirit baptism is always associated with the miraculous. Frankly, Peter publically proclaimed what Holy Spirit baptism is! We cannot help but won-

der how long it will be before those among us who are insisting that Holy Spirit baptism is for us today will also claim the ability to speak in tongues. Holy Spirit baptism had its purpose. At Pentecost it was to confirm the message and to convince those who heard that the apostles were not drunk. Joel's prophecy was being fulfilled. In Acts 10 and 11 its purpose was to demonstrate to the Jews who were gathered at Cornelius' house that the Gentiles were acceptable to God. There was no difference between Jew and Gentile, and salvation through Christ was just as available to the Gentiles as it was to the Jews. Holy Spirit baptism had the purpose of revealing and then confirming the Word through miraculous signs; afterward it ceased.

Here is how we know absolutely that Holy Spirit baptism is not for men today. Holy Spirit baptism was divinely, not humanly, administered. When Jesus gave the apostles the Great Commission, He told them to baptize (Mark 16:16; Mat. 28:19). In Ephesians 4:5 Paul wrote there is one baptism. Keep in mind that Paul, or someone in Paul's company, baptized at least about twelve of the Ephesians (Acts 19:5). After the twelve were baptized, Paul laid his hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit (19:6). Thus, the baptism in Acts 19:5 was water baptism. So the sum is: Holy Spirit baptism was divinely administered, the apostles were to baptize those who believed, and that must of necessity been water baptism. There is only one baptism according to the Ephesians' passage. Keeping in mind that Cornelius' house were converted in Acts 10, nine chapters before those in Ephesus; so Holy Spirit baptism must have ceased at least no later than between Acts 10 and Acts 19. Thus, the one baptism in Ephesians 4:5 is water baptism, and that demands the conclusion that Holy Spirit baptism is not for men today.

### **THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT**

For the sake of space, we shall only mention here that there are only three possibilities: (1) The Holy Spirit does not indwell the Christian at all, (2) the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian personally, (3) or the Spirit indwells representatively through the medium of the Word of God. The first of these is totally untenable, because

it denies explicit statements of Scripture (Rom. 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:14; et al.) The second view does no damage to the truth so long as those who hold it understand that the Holy Spirit operates in the life of a Christian only through the medium of the Word of God. The third one (the view this author holds) does not deny the indwelling, but simply asks the question, “How does the Spirit indwell?” There is no reason for those who believe in the personal indwelling and those who hold that the Spirit indwells through the medium of the Word to have any conflict in fellowship. It is only when men claim that the Holy Spirit acts in some direct way that is separate from, or in addition to, the Word of God that brethren have departed from the truth of God.

### **THE LEADING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

It needs to be understood that when we refer to the leading of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian, we are talking about how the Spirit guides, directs, comforts, supports, and influences the Christian. Brother Boles commented, “In all of his work and operations in conversion and sanctification the Holy Spirit uses the instrumentality of truth” (235).

Brother Franklin Camp wrote in his book, *The Work Of The Holy Spirit In Redemption*:

Since the emphasis of the Restoration Movement was to turn men from emotional experiences back to the Bible, one would never have thought that the day would come when the false teaching of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit would become a matter of controversy in the church. But it is here, and unless we stop it, we are headed the same way the Protestant world has gone. It is later than many think. The Bible study that has characterized us in the past will cease unless the claim of the direct leading of the Holy Spirit is repudiated—lock, stock, and barrel (1-2).

In the Old Testament, God led men by His Word. In the Patriarchal age, He spoke to the heads of families. Under the Law of Moses, God spoke through His prophets, beginning with Moses. When Jesus lived on the earth, He spoke directly to the people.

When He left the earth, He sent the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth. The revelation of the truth of the new covenant was confirmed by miracles, wonders, and signs (Mark 16:20; Acts 6:8; Heb. 2:4). The things the New Testament declares done by the Holy Spirit, it also declares of the Word of God. On page 192 of his his book, brother Boles has the following information on this point:

<b>Holy Spirit</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Word of God</b>
Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4	In Creation	Heb. 1:3; 2 Pet. 3:5
2 Cor. 3:6	Gives Life	James 1:18
John 3:8	Born Of	1 Pet. 1:23-25
Tit. 3:5	Salvation	Jam. 1:21
1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Thess. 2:13	Sanctification	John 17:17
Rom. 8:11	Dwells In	Col. 3:16
1 John 5:7	Is Truth	John 17:17
Rom. 15:13	Power of	Heb. 1:3

Let us add one more item to the above chart. In Romans 15:4, Paul wrote, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (KJV). Paul had reference to the Old Testament Scriptures. Now notice in the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is a source of comfort.

Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied (Acts 9:31—KJV).

The New Testament supplies the Christian with comfort. When Paul corrected a misunderstanding some of the Thessalonians had concerning the dead in Christ, afraid that they would miss the resurrection, he assured them that the dead in Christ would rise first. Then he wrote them, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 The. 4:18).

If one stays with the evidence and testimony of the New Testament, he can only conclude that that which the Holy Spirit does in sanctification and leading the Christian, He does through the Word of God.

So far as this writer knows, the falsehood propagated by some in the church that the Holy Spirit personally and directly empowers the Christian began with the claim based on 1 Corinthians 6:14-20, that the Holy Spirit gives direct aid to the Christian to resist the sin of fornication, because the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. What an absurd singling out of the Holy Spirit inasmuch as the word rendered *temple* in 1 Corinthians 6:19 means “to dwell” (Thayer 422), and both God the Father and the Son also dwell in the faithful child of God. Our bodies, then, are the temple of both the Father and Son, as well as that of the Holy Spirit. Does that give us **direct** aid to overcome the sin of fornication? Obviously not, for fornication is becoming rampant even in the Lord’s church. The position, then, is as absurd in the face of reality as it is in the Scripture. Yet, those who still live, and who took this position years ago on the Corinthians’ passage, are the very ones who are so far afield on the subject of the Holy Spirit’s work today that the connection cannot reasonably be overlooked or denied.

### CONCLUSION

God is one God manifest in three distinct persons or personalities, of which the Holy Spirit is one. The Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to pen the words of the New Testament, and the words themselves. It is by the Holy Spirit through the medium of the Word of God, that we learn what we must do to be saved and the faithfulness required to stay that way. We need once again to engage in a thorough study of the Holy Spirit. There are facts about, and points to be made, regarding the Holy Spirit that, because of a lack of room we have not been able to cover in this lesson. Thus, we encourage all of those who seek to please the Lord, to give themselves to the study of the very important and necessary subject of the Holy Spirit.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: TRUTH

*David P. Brown*

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David presently works with the Spring Church of Christ, Spring, TX, where he serves as the evangelist. He is also the Director and on the faculty of the Internet Bible school, Truth Bible Institute.

## INTRODUCTION

Having read the title of this chapter someone might ask, "The truth about what?" Such a question presupposes that at least something called *truth* exists and at least some truth can be known about some person(s), place(s), thing(s), or idea(s). Therefore, in this study we are considering the question, "What is the truth about truth?"

In finding the answers to the preceding question we will be working within two branches of philosophy: (1) alethiology and (2) epistemology. Literally defined, *alethiology* means "the study of truth," or more precisely, "the study of the nature of truth" (Alethiology). Closely related to alethiology, is epistemology. In generic and simple terms *epistemology* is "the study of human knowledge" (Epistemology). It necessarily involves the **nature, sources, theories, and justification** of human knowledge.

Some philosophers do not separate the philosophical branches of alethiology and epistemology from one another. Whether they should or should not be separated, it is clear that one of them cannot be studied, discussed, and debated and exclude the other. In the second sentence of this chapter, I made clear the close relationship

of truth to knowledge and vice versa in the following words: “at least some truth can be known.” If truth exists but man cannot know it, for all practical purposes, it might as well not exist. Thus, it is impossible to engage in a study of the truth about truth, or the truth about something else without employing those human attributes and faculties (natural and learned) that permit humans to come to know anything—including truth. These facts imply that truth itself, and the truth about other matters, can be known through the proper exercise of our intellectual/rational faculties pertaining to the same.

The sentiments of the previous paragraph are self-evident to the English language reader. This is the case because of the words (which are the signs of ideas and vehicles of thought), along with the other mechanics of the English language (the correct use of spelling, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, etc.), without which this study or any other study with anyone who understands, speaks, and writes English could not be conducted. The foregoing is true regarding any other language. Thus, if one cannot know truth and know that one knows it, and if one cannot communicate discovered truth, then what is the purpose of the existence of language? Without language, how can we communicate the truth known to anyone?

### **ROUND AND ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH UNTIL YOU ARE DIZZY**

Thus far we have learned that not only can one know something, but also know that we know it; through language we can communicate that knowledge to others. The fact that we can communicate knowledge/truth to others testifies to the fact that we not only can know certain matters, but also know that we know it. This also means that we not only know the specific subject matter, know that we know it, but also select that particular topic from all the other topics we know, and communicate it to others (Eph. 3:4; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 The. 5:21).

Furthermore, in knowing our own minds, we not only know what we know, knowing that we know it, but we also **know what we do not know**—we can know our own ignorance of certain top-

ics and know that we know that too. Indeed, without the ability to know something and know we know it, we might as well have never studied the subject. Thus, we see that our ability to come to know anything and know we know it also pertains to what we do not know (that about which we are ignorant). If we do not know our own ignorance of a specific topic, how do we know the need to do what is necessary to dispel our ignorance of a specific topic? Is it not the case that one studies to gain knowledge? However, if we cannot know anything, or know that we know, how do we know we need to study a certain subject? Indeed, what would cause anyone to desire to study something that no one has the ability to know in the first place?

From where within ourselves do we derive the desire to study, learn, and thereby come to know a certain topic and, having studied it, know that we know it—the truth about it? If we cannot know something, and know that we know it, why do we have schools, books, or any kind of information disseminating technology, or methods of teaching, and helps in learning? What does it mean to be a student or a teacher? Indeed, if we cannot know that we know, from where did my words come, why did I write them, and why are you reading them?

If we cannot know the truth and know that we know it, what sense can be made of Philip's question to the Eunuch, "Understandest thou what thou readest" (Acts 8:30). Also, the eunuch's reply to Philip, "How can I, except some man should guide me" (8:31)? Indeed, why would either man ask the other any questions? Moreover, what is the use of questioning anyone about anything? Such questioning would be absurd on the face of it. This false view that we cannot know the truth, or know that we know it, is nothing less than lunacy gone to seed, sprouted, grown up, and bearing a most bitter fruit—irrationality. The best thing we can do when others inform us that we cannot know something, and/or that it is impossible for us to know that we know, is to ask them if **they are absolute in their knowledge on that point**, then go ahead and know it anyway.

If someone knows that another does not know something, and/or cannot know that he knows that he knows, then the first person at least has made at least two knowledge claims: (1) that someone cannot know, and (2) if he knows something, he cannot know that he knows it. Thus, by the first person's own premise and logic the whole of that crazy doctrine collapses in on itself. No wonder that the apostle Paul said of certain persons, "But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant" (1 Cor. 14:38).

How wonderful it would be if those engaged in such absurdities as herein previously covered could be removed from their university classrooms, church pulpits, and the government! They need to be placed in secure padded rooms in some peaceful setting away from everyone else where they can be closely monitored on an hour by hour basis and do no one any harm. I really do not know why they should mind being incarcerated as noted, for according to their own false premises, ludicrous reasoning, and absurd conclusions, they would not know the difference in the university classroom and the padded room of another kind of institution. However, we would know it and rejoice in the knowledge that **they could not infect others with their fermented irrational virus.**

### TRUTH, KNOWLEDGE, AND THE BIBLE

In philosophy there are different, as the philosophers identify them, **theories of truth**. Besides not having the space, it is not in the scope of this chapter to study the sundry philosophical views about truth. Suffice it to say that we affirm that **truth is that which corresponds with reality**. There are those who believe that truth is that which corresponds with reality, but they do not believe in God and certainly not any special revelation from Him. Thus, they would reject the truth that comes by special revelation, such as the Bible. So, whether it is of the **natural creation** or the **special revelation from God in the Bible, truth is just what a thing is**, no more, no less, nor anything else. If anyone is to know the truth about anything, he must know a thing or idea for what it is. Thus, all Christians are realists whether it pertains to the natural creation and all that it implies or from the Bible's explicit and implicit teaching.

As noted, it is true that God has communicated some of His truth through His natural creation (Rom. 1:20). To recognize that natural creation implies the existence of God is tremendously important, especially when the atheist declares that he knows that God does not exist and represents himself to all as one who can prove it. This the atheist cannot do. However, the Christian can prove the existence of God and, therefore, know that God exists, all the atheists, agnostics, and the pagans of the world notwithstanding.

Christian realists postulate that God, through special revelation in His written Word (the Bible), has spoken to humanity (1 Cor. 6:2-16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2:15; 2 Pet. 1:2-4). Thus, the most important truth is that truth concerning the meaning, value, purpose of life in the flesh on earth, and (following his time on earth) his eternal destiny. It is through the Bible that the Christian view of man and things is formed. Thus, **Christians view things in the light of God's reality.**

### **GOD'S TREATMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH**

It is very interesting to note that the Bible treats knowledge and truth in the way it treats the existence of God. In the case of the existence of God, there is nothing in the Bible that explicitly (in only so many words) states that "God exists and in a certain book, chapter, and verse are found the arguments proving God's existence." The Bible simply begins with, "In the beginning God" (Gen. 1:1). Thus, by implication, God through Moses is saying that in the beginning there was a first adequate cause that was uncaused and, thus, eternal. This uncaused first cause inhabits eternity because of the eternality of the essence of its being. Also, this entity's nature derives from its eternal essence, manifesting itself in its attributes. Space does not allow for a listing of the attributes of God, much less a study of each one. However, these attributes declare that this uncaused first cause, this eternal entity, is an eternal Divine being. Thus, God gave man credit for having the intellectual and rational abilities to know that the "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:2-4). Furthermore, God gives man credit for recognizing those things that are self-evident. He, as

stated earlier, begins His communication with man by saying, “In the beginning God.” Therefore, God declared Himself to Moses by saying “I AM THAT I AM” (Exo. 3:14).

None of the foregoing could be deduced from the false view that matter (lifeless rocks and dirt) has eternal existence. It is impossible for nothing to create something. Furthermore, there is no evidence that life comes from non-life. Until adequate evidence proving that something can come from nothing and/or life can come from non-life is produced, we will continue to relegate such nonsense to its appropriate realm—fiction, Charles Darwin being one of the best fiction writers the world has ever known. We will also continue to label those who write it to be no different than those who write their fantastic stories of fiction for such publishers as Marvel Comics. However, there is a big and significant difference in those who write for Marvel Comics and those such as Darwin. The Marvel Comics writers know they are writing fiction and do not attempt to pass it off as the latest word in wholesome and much needed science and/or philosophy. Indeed, it is far more reasonable to believe God exists and what all His existence implies than to believe He does not and what His non-existence implies.

### **GOD’S ESSENCE, HIS DIVINE NATURE, AND ATTRIBUTES**

In dealing with truth and knowledge God approaches mankind in the same manner and on the same basis that He approaches him regarding His existence. A human’s capacity and ability to know comes from one’s human nature, which nature derives from the essence of man’s human being. Therefore, God does not say explicitly (in so many words) that truth, knowledge, and their relationship to one another in the lives of humans will be addressed, defined, and explained directly and explicitly in a certain place in the Bible. In God’s communication with man He explicitly and implicitly reveals that He knows man can come to certain knowledge about himself and God. In so doing, one comes to know the truth by which it is necessary for one to live to please God (Ecc. 12:13-14). Additionally, God knows that man can know and know that he knows. This point is made crystal clear in the following few Old Testament ac-

counts of God's communication with man and man's communication with other men about truth. Multiplicities of like passages as those that follow are found throughout the Bible.

And he said, Blessed *be* the LORD God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: *I being* in the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren (Gen. 24:27).

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands (Gen. 32:10).

Send one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison, that your words may be proved, whether *there be any* truth in you: or else by the life of Pharaoh surely ye *are* spies (Gen. 42:16).

Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them, *to be* rulers of thousands, *and* rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens (Exo. 18:21).

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth (Exo. 34:6).

Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, *if it be* truth, *and* the thing certain, *that* such abomination is wrought among you (Deu. 13:14).

*He is* the Rock, his work *is* perfect: For all his ways *are* judgment: A God of truth and without iniquity, Just and right *is* he (Deu. 32:4).

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD (Jos. 24:14).

Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you (1 Sam. 12:24).

That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel (1 Kin. 2:4).

God fully expects mankind to exercise their natural powers to come to a saving knowledge of the truth. Furthermore, knowing God's truth for mankind, He expects all persons to live by that truth, a part of which involves them teaching it to others and defending it as they warn of the eternal consequences awaiting all who do not come to the knowledge of the truth and live accordingly (2 The. 1:6-10; 2:10-12). Therefore, "said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Jesus expected those to whom He spoke to come to know or understand with certainty that about which He spoke. For those who believe the Bible to be the infallible, inerrant, all-sufficient, complete, and final revelation of God to man, revealed to humanity by the Holy Spirit through plenary verbal inspiration of its human writers, the words of Jesus in the preceding passage settle the matter of man knowing the truth and knowing that he knows it. Thus, we declare without any fear of successful contradiction that **all truth in nature and in God's special revelation (the Bible) is objective, absolute, and humanly attainable.** Moreover, any view of truth that is **subjective and results in relativism or agnosticism is false.**

### **TO KNOW ONE THING DOES NOT MEAN TO KNOW ALL THINGS**

To absolutely know **something** is not the same as claiming to know **everything**. It is foolish to charge that those who make knowledge claims are claiming to know all things. To make such a charge is nothing less than imbecilic. To make it, one must claim to absolutely know at least one thing—that he who made a knowledge claim is claiming to know all things. Although the charge is false, as has been shown, a man making such a ridiculous charge must also stand condemned by his own logic. Did the one making the accusation not make a knowledge claim too?

### TRUE OR NOT TRUE

God expects people to study the truth (2 Tim. 2:15), learn the truth (3:7), live the truth (Phi. 1:27; 2:12-16; Mat. 5:16), obey the truth (1 Pet. 1:22-25), preach the truth (Mark 16:15-16; Gal. 1:6-9), and defend the truth (2:4-11; Jude 3). Thus, there is no middle ground between that which is true and that which is false. Jesus, said, “He that is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23). One cannot be for Christ and against Him at the same time, in the same place, and to the same degree. A thing is true or it is not true. Of course, I am not speaking about truth existing between two errors. I am saying that there is not some gray entity that is neither true nor false. One might as well affirm that one can be biologically dead and at the same time, place, and extinct be biologically alive—some sort of “zombie truth.”

### GOD DOES NOT GIVE MAN THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG

No one ought to desire to be wrong about anything. A faithful child of God will repent of every sin of which he is guilty when he becomes aware of them. Moreover, he will do his best to regularly examine himself in the light of the Bible to see if any sin is in his life, trusting in the grace and mercy of God through the blood of Christ to cleanse him of all sins of ignorance and weakness (Rom. 4:6-8; 1 John 1:7-10). However, there are those who think that God will accept a church member who is only guilty of one, two, or a few errors (errors pertaining to what one must believe and do to be saved from one’s sins and remain faithful to God—matters of obligation). In other words such misguided brethren are affirming that **one has the right to be wrong about truth**. If God gives one the right to be wrong about one truth pertaining to man’s salvation, then why not the right to be wrong about two, three, five, fifty, or the right to be wrong about everything? Who is it that is going to determine how many wrongs one has a right to commit, and while guilty of the same, remain faithful and well-pleasing to God? Shall we look to the higher education institutions operated by the brethren to determine the number of wrongs about which one has a right before one is out of fellowship with God? Shall we look to the preacher training

schools to set the number of wrongs one has a right to commit before he is out of fellowship with God? Shall we look to the religious papers to set the amount of times one has a right to be wrong before he commits one too many wrongs and is thereby lost because he committed one wrong to many of which he will not repent?

To put it mildly, it is interesting to note the thinking (such as it is) of certain “loving, gracious, kind, and pious” (at least that is the way they see themselves) brethren who permit a brother guilty of one, two, or a few unrepented of sins to remain in fellowship with them. No matter how many unrepented of sins of which they permit a brother to be guilty and they remain in fellowship with him, they cannot escape placing a limitation on the number and/or kind of sins they will tolerate in church members (or certain church members) before they too must say, “That is one unrepented of sin or kind of sin too many for you to remain in fellowship with us.”

God has designated the number of “unrepented of sins” that a brother may commit before He ceases fellowship with him. These *pious* brethren have done the same thing; only they have arbitrarily determined the number of unrepented of sins one may be guilty before fellowship must be withheld from the guilty brother. They arrive at their arbitrary **magic number** of the sin that is the one unrepented of sin too many on the basis of their respect of persons and/or how important a person (or brotherhood work) is to them and/or their friends. More times than not, money has a big part to play in their decision-making process. With God it only takes one unrepented of sin in a church member’s life to cause a faithful church to initiate corrective disciplinary procedures, which procedures are designed to bring the erring child of God to repentance. If such is not the case, withdrawal will keep the church pure. If an erring brother persists in his sins, rejecting all overtures of the faithful brethren to bring him to repentance, the church must withdraw fellowship from that obstinate and rebellious church member.

If an institution is doing a great work and millions of dollars have been contributed to it over many years (such as Apologetic Press in Montgomery, Alabama), do the members of it not only

have the right to be wrong, but also the right for others to defend them in their errors for which they refuse to repent? Who determines how many wrongs they can commit before they should be confronted for their errors? How many wrongs did Adam and Eve have the right to commit before they fell out of fellowship with God (Gen. 3:6)? How many wrongs did Nadab and Abihu have the right to commit before God put them to death (Lev. 10:1-2; Num. 3:4)? How many wrongs did Uzzah have the right to engage in before he died for committing them (2 Sam. 6:3-7)? How many wrongs did Ananias and Sapphira have the right to commit before God killed them (Acts 5:1-10)? How many wrongs did Paul think Peter had a right to commit before he confronted Peter to the face about them, calling him and those guilty of the same wrongs hypocrites (Gal. 2:11-14)? Indeed how many wrongs that loose men from what God has bound on them in His Word does one have the right to commit before that one ought to be labeled a liberal? Also, how many wrongs that bind on men what the Bible does not bind on them does one have the right to commit before one is correctly labeled an “anti”? To ask these questions is to answer them. Nevertheless, many of my brethren (even and especially preachers, preacher training school teachers, administrators, and their friends and defenders) have decided that at least some brethren (such as Dave Miller, present director of Apologetics Press) have the right to be wrong about at least some things, but those of us who teach as I have in this chapter and oppose the false doctrine (that one has a right to be wrong), do not have the right to uphold the truth regarding any wrong and to expose their wrongs for what they are—**sins against God of which they have not repented.**

### THE TRUTH MUST BE DEFENDED

Although for many years the following quotation was attributed to the reformer Martin Luther, and continues to be attributed to him on the Internet and other places, in recent years its true source was located. It is a quotation from a 19<sup>th</sup> century book of fiction. Be that as it may, the sentiment expressed is exceedingly true and important to those who would fight the fight that the apostle Paul and

all faithful children of God fought down through the years (Acts 15:1-2; Gal. 2:4-6; 2 Tim. 4:7; Jude 3). The quotation reads:

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point (Caldwell 356).

We **must** know the truth about God, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible (ascertaining Bible authority—Col. 3:17; how to study the Bible—2 Tim. 2:15), the Gospel, the plan of salvation, the church (its organization, work, worship, its fellowship—who is in fellowship with God, when that fellowship begins, when one is out of fellowship with God, and when fellowship is restored to the erring child of God), preventive and corrective church discipline, all that the Bible teaches pertaining to Christian living, marriage, the godly home, divorce, remarriage, Heaven, Hell—all obligatory matters pertaining thereto.

Where is the person who will boldly take the polemic platform to affirm in a four-night debate that God gives us the right to be wrong on even one truth pertaining to man's salvation? We will not hold our breath till any of these learned, loving, and *pious* preachers, university professors, preacher training school teachers and administrators, lectureship directors and speakers, paper editors, or anyone else in and out of the church decides to affirm what they practice with regularity—that one has the **right to be wrong on any truth**, especially any truth **pertaining to man's salvation** (John 8:32; 17:17). To properly **defend truth**, one does not wait until **every component part of the totality of it is under attack**. One must defend the truth at **whatever point it is being attacked**.

### CONCLUSION

If to think rationally means one must think logically and predictably with the facts in reaching one's conclusion in a case, then to think irrationally means the opposite. To think irrationally is

where one takes the hard facts in a case and reaches a conclusion contrary to said facts—conclusions not warranted by the evidence. Moreover, people who reach conclusions contrary to the facts in a case while all the time refusing all efforts to get them to understand what they have done are irrational people. In one's observations of many people in and out of the church, it becomes clear that they are thinking and acting irrationally. Nevertheless, the Bible teaches us to be rational in our thinking (1 The. 5:21). Moreover, God will hold all people accountable for their conduct (Jude 14-16). To arrive at the truth one must think rationally.

Because truth is objective and absolute, we can know it and know that we know it. On the other hand there is irrationalism. Of it William S. Sahakian said:

Irrationalism is a self-defeating philosophy subject to a *reductio ad absurdum* argument: the irrationalist attempt to displace reason as the criterion of truth obligates him to employ an *irrational* criterion to attack and defeat reason as a proper test of truth and at the same time utilize this irrational rule to evaluate all other truth. If a person argues that reason cannot uncover truth, but that an irrational rule can, he finds himself in the logically uncomfortable position of either using reason to prove the validity of his irrational rule or principle (which is tantamount to accepting reason as the criterion of truth) or he must attack reasons claimed as a valid test of truth by employing irrational methods, that is absurdity (314).

**The only reason that any religious doctrine should be accepted is that it teaches the truth.** We can know the truth, know that we know it, and know we must defend it. That being the case with truth, let us then rise up and with all that we are and have, do God's work to the best of our ability, trusting Him according to His Word to bless us in our faithful performance of the same.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

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Michael directed the North Texas Lectureship and currently is director of the Bellview Lectures. He has written articles for several brotherhood publications and a weekly newspaper (from 1987-1994). He was the associate editor of the *Shield Of Faith* and now is editor of *Defender*, the *Beacon*, and the Bellview Lectures book. He is co-author of a book, *Hatcher/Schweitzer Exchange*, an exchange of letters with a Lutheran minister on the subject of Total Hereditary Depravity and other subjects. He also had a debate on the subject of instrumental music in worship with Baptist, Bob L. Ross.

## INTRODUCTION

A man arises and comes to the microphone to ask an all-important question: “Do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?” The three men on the panel arise and go to the microphone and each one gives an affirmative answer to the question. Each one says, “Yes, I believe the Bible is inspired.” Contented, the man who asked the question sits down.

A second man arises and goes to the microphone. He states, “I would like you to elaborate on the previous question.” At this time you can hear some mumbling taking place, but the man continues. “Would you mind answering the question if you believe the Bible is inspired of God?” At this some in the audience speak out, saying, “They have already answered it.” Someone else says, “Why are you trying to cause trouble?” However, the man went ahead and added, “Would each of you please answer.” The first man on the panel went to the microphone to respond. He said, “I do believe the Bible is inspired. However, I do not believe in God. He does not exist; thus

it is not inspired by some god.” There were some gasps and murmuring in the crowd. Then one person yells out, “What do you mean, then?” So this first man continues, “I believe any work that is of lasting value to man is inspired. For example, surely Shakespeare was inspired when he wrote his works, or who would deny that Michelangelo was inspired when he painted the Sistine Chapel or his other great works? I mean that man must develop a certain spirit or drive to do great things.” The other two men get up and affirm their belief that the Bible is inspired of God.

After a few other questions, another man got up and after arriving at the microphone began asking his question. He said, “I wanted to return to the subject of the inspiration of the Bible, and would like to direct my question to the two men who affirmed that the Bible is inspired of God.” Even before he could get the statement out, there were some obvious groans from the audience. One person rather loudly affirmed: “This has already been discussed.” Another asked him, “Why are you harassing these men?” while others murmured other types of complaints. Unfazed, the man asked: “Do you believe the Bible is plenary, verbally, inspired by God? That is, do you believe that the Bible is fully, totally, word by word given by God, and, thus, inerrant and infallible?”

The first man goes to the microphone and gives an affirmative answer. The second man, however, gives an answer in the negative. He then explains, “I believe God inspired the thoughts found in the Bible, but not the very words of the Bible. It is the overall message of God to man that is inspired, but the writers were writing by their own experiences and knowledge, thus we will find mistakes and contradictions within the Bible, but I do believe the Bible contains the Word of God.”

### **WHAT IS INSPIRATION?**

While this, obviously, is a fictional story, it accurately portrays the three basic views of inspiration. (A more detailed study of the various views of inspiration would be profitable and present additional views, it simply is not within the limitations of this chapter.)

It also is a good portrayal of some Christians when direct, pointed questions are asked.

Concerning inspiration, Paul writes, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). *Inspiration of God* is the translation of the one Greek word *theopneustos*, which is a combination of two words meaning God and breathed. Paul is affirming that the Scriptures come from the very breath of God or are God-breathed, and, thus, they are not of human origin. However, when we state this, we do not mean machination. We know that the writers of the Bible did not become machines or robots in writing. Their personalities, vocabularies, styles, backgrounds, etc., are retained in their writings. As Thomas points out: “God used the natural characteristics of the writers, and through them conveyed his truth” (89).

Inspiration is, thus, the infallible, inerrant, recording of God’s Will to man resulting in the Scriptures. Warfield points out regarding inspiration that it “concerns the influence of the Spirit of God upon the Biblical writers to produce a divinely authoritative Scripture” (2:839). McDonald likewise says:

Inspiration has been defined as that direct influence of God on the writers of the Bible by which, while they did not cease to be themselves, they were so moved, guarded, and guided by the Holy Spirit that their resulting productions constitute the written Word of God (308).

This “influence” is what Peter would describe as being moved by the Spirit.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Since the Spirit of God is carrying the writers along, their writings are infallible or inerrant. In defining inspiration, Easton says “that extraordinary or supernatural divine influence vouchsafed to those who wrote the Holy Scriptures, rendering their writings infal-

lible.” It is free from all mistakes or errors; it is never changing or altering, and is indestructible.

### **BIBLE’S CLAIM TO INSPIRATION**

The Bible does claim to be the Word of God and not the word of man. Thomas points out:

The Old Testament prophets claimed to be the recipients of divine revelation. “The word of the Lord came”; “the Lord spake”; “the word of God”; “God said”; “the Lord commanded.” Phrases like these are found nearly seven hundred times in the Pentateuch alone, and they are scattered throughout the Scriptures no less than three thousand times altogether (86).

Because of the limited nature of this chapter, we cannot go through all the passages dealing with the inspiration of the Bible. Thus, it will be my intent to consider just a few of the numerous passages so we can learn how the Bible views inspiration.

In Exodus 19:6-8, God tells Moses, “the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” Notice first that God said, “the words” and not the word. The singular *word* might allow the thought of Moses simply giving the idea or thought of what God said. The plural *words* is more specific. Moses “laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him” with the people responding that they would do “all that the LORD hath spoken.” They recognized that it was God who was speaking and Moses was only the mouthpiece.

Later Moses is instructed: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel” (Exo. 34:27). He was to write “these words.” There is a tenor of teaching (the covenant God made with Israel) that Israel had to keep. How were they to keep that tenor of teaching? They would keep it by keeping “these words.”

David said, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word *was* in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). Who was speaking? David said it was the Spirit speaking by him. The Spirit was using David’s tongue, or it was the Spirit speaking through David and not David himself. In connection with David there are two other passages to take into

consideration regarding inspiration: Acts 2 and Hebrews 3:7, 4:7. Peter quotes David's words as recorded in Acts 2:25-28 (a quote from Psa. 16). Peter then says that David was a prophet, meaning he is one who speaks forth for God.

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption (Acts 2:30-31).

If David had not been a spokesman for God (the Spirit speaking by his tongue), then he would not have been able to speak of things *before* (prior to their taking place).

The Hebrews' writer encourages the Jews not to harden their hearts by appealing to a statement recorded in Psalm 95. He states: "Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice" (Heb. 3:7). Notice that the Hebrews' writer states the Holy Ghost (Spirit) says this. Later he appeals to this same passage saying, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (4:7). He now states that David said it but in the previous verse, he said the Holy Spirit said it. Thus, we learn what David said in 2 Samuel 23:2 that the Spirit spake by him, and it was the Spirit's Word in his tongue.

Jeremiah writes, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31). Here is another strong statement regarding inspiration that, even though Jeremiah might have been penning the words, it was Jehovah making the statement. God, through Jeremiah, discusses this new covenant and states:

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (31:34).

When Jeremiah writes, “they shall all know me,” was he saying that everyone would know him (Jeremiah) or that everyone would know God? Obviously, they would know God because God is the one doing the speaking and only using Jeremiah as the penman for what He said. The New Testament is an amplification of this prophecy. The Hebrews’ writer quotes this passage in 8:8-12 and attributes it to the Lord. He makes a play on one word, *new*, in verse 13. He says that God said a new covenant; thus the first is old. *Old* is the Greek word *palaioo* and means old in point of use, obsolete, worn out, or antiquated. He does not use the Greek word *archaios*, meaning old in point of time. Likewise, *new* is from the Greek *kainos*, meaning new in point of quality or an original production; he does not use the Greek *neos*, meaning new in point of time or a reproduction. The entire Hebrews’ letter is based on these two words. The author of Hebrews considered Jeremiah to be word by word inspired of God.

In coming to the New Testament, during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Mat. 5:17-18).

Jesus did come to abolish the Old Testament law (in spite of how some mistranslate *destroy* as *abolish*) by keeping it perfectly. When He fulfilled it, it passed away or was abolished. However, in this we learn Jesus’ view regarding the Old Testament. The jot is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, yod (י), and tittle is a small stroke or point by which some Hebrew letters are distinguished from others. Thus, Jesus’ view of the Old Testament is that even the smallest letters and points of the Old Testament come from God.

In Jesus’ debate with the Sadducees as recorded in Matthew 22:23-33, Jesus responds to them saying:

But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abra-

ham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (22:31-32).

Moses had written this in Exodus 3:15, yet Jesus says that God said it. However, Jesus' entire argument of the resurrection and life beyond the grave is based not simply on one word but the tense of that word, whether it is past tense or present tense. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died and were in the grave, yet God says, "I am their God," and not, "I was their God." Jesus' entire argument is worthless if the Old Testament is not only word-by-word inspired but the very tense of every word inspired by God.

The Jews were about to stone Jesus for blasphemy. Notice His response: "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:34-35). We immediately observe that the Scripture (Writings) are the Word of God. Jesus says that the Scripture cannot be broken. This implies several principles regarding inspiration: the Scriptures are immutable (not subject to change), they are infallible (no mistakes), and they are inerrant (incapable of being wrong). There is a progression of thoughts presented by Jesus: (1) that written in the Law (10:34), (2) is the Word of God, (3) is also the Scripture, and (4) cannot be broken (10:35).

Jesus makes an important statement regarding His Word when He says:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (12:48-50).

After stating that His words will judge us on the last day, He gives us the cause, ground, or reason this is to be the case. It is because His words do not come from Himself but from the Father. *Of myself* comes from the Greek word *ek*, literally meaning "out from

within” and here indicates the source or the origin. While He was the One speaking the words, their origin comes from the Father and not Him (Jesus). Notice also the words *say* and *speak*. In English they are the same thing, however they come from two different Greek words. *Say* is from the Greek *eipon* (which is a form of *lego*) and refers to the substance of what is said. However, *speak* is from the Greek *laleo* referring to the sounds or the pronunciation of the words, the form of what is uttered. Thus, Jesus is saying that the Father told Him what to say, the substance or the material that is presented; and He told Him what to speak, how to utter it or the pronunciation of the words.

To sum up Jesus’ view of inspiration, it embraces the substance (the doctrine or teaching—this is where the Neo-Orthodox and liberal stops), the words (including the tense of the words, individual letters, and accent marks), and the utterance itself (the pronunciation or the forming of the words).

In the discussion of division within the church at Corinth, Paul discusses inspiration to bring about unity. (Division today is as a result of a lack of respect for the Bible—inspiration.) Regarding his own preaching, he says, “And my speech and my preaching *was* not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Cor. 2:4). The Gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). How does the Gospel come to us? It comes by the inspiration of God. This corresponds to what Paul writes next, “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (2:5). That power of God is the Gospel, the Word of God. Verses six and seven emphasize that we preach God’s wisdom and not man’s wisdom. It is a wisdom that in time past had been hidden but now has been revealed (which is what *mystery* means) in the Gospel. What God has prepared for man (2:9) is the Gospel that was revealed by inspiration: “But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (2:10). We are again told: “even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (2:11). The apostles had received the Spirit so they could preach the Truth of God’s Word (2:12). Paul

also states that they spoke words: “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (2:13). These words (plural and not singular which might give the idea of thought inspiration) came from the Spirit and gave a spiritual message. Thus, Paul teaches the apostles were inspired by the Spirit to speak words teaching a spiritual message. In doing so, they had the mind of Christ: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (2:16).

Another important passage regarding the inspiration of the Bible is Galatians 3. Paul writes:

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.... But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe (3:8, 22).

Notice that it is called *Scripture*. Moses was the original human author and Paul the human penman here, but it was God who made the statement. What did God say? “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (3:16). God did not say *seeds* but He said *seed*. He specifically used the singular and not the plural. Thus, what God said did not have reference to the lineage of Abraham, but to one individual, Jesus of Nazareth. Paul’s whole argument on the cessation of the Old Testament Law (the Galatian letter is a discussion of this) for the New Law of Jesus is rendered useless if the Scriptures are not word-by-word and number (singular or plural) inspired of God.

Consider one other passage written by the Apostle Peter.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

*Knowing this first* is a statement indicating something of prime importance is being said. It is one of those principles where every-

thing else is based on what is being said. *Prophecy* is “discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purposes of God... Used in the N. T.—of the utterances of the O. T. prophets” (Thayer 552). *Scripture* here includes the writings of the Old Testament, but it also includes the writings of the New Testament. *Private interpretation* literally is peculiarly one’s own interpretation or explanation. What is written is not subject to what the writer says about it. The writer is simply the penman, but the author is God. The reason is given in verse 21 by appealing to the Old Testament writers. When they taught or wrote, they did not do it out of their own knowledge and wisdom but as they were guided (the Greek has *born* or *carried along*) by the Holy Spirit.

### EVIDENCE OF THE BIBLE’S INSPIRATION

Simply because the Bible **claims** to be the Word of God does not mean that it actually **is** the Word of God. It claims to be inspired of God, but other books also make claims to be from God. The Mormons claim *The Book of Mormon* is from God. The *Koran* claims to be God’s (Allah’s) word. Just because something makes a claim does not mean that the claim is automatically true. It is upon this principle that we are instructed: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). There are numerous avenues by which we establish the Bible’s claim to be true. Obviously, the nature of this chapter forbids us going into any detail regarding this aspect of our study, however I would like to mention a few of those ways.

### Testimony of Jesus

Jesus taught both the Old and New Testament as word-by-word inspired of God. If we establish that Jesus is more than mere man, then what He said regarding inspiration is true. We can prove historically that Jesus lived. Regarding His life, we know where He was born, where He went, that His life affected His fellow man in a way no other life had, that He went about doing good, and that His works were often called miraculous as there was no accounting for

it by natural laws. We also know historically of His death and His resurrection from the dead (see my chapter in the *Contending For The Faith* Lectureship book). There is simply no way to account for the empty tomb other than the resurrection of Jesus, thus proving He is God's Son, thus establishing what He said is true.

### Unity of the Books

There is no way to account for the Bible except it being by inspiration of God. The Bible had about 32 men as the human writers (some books we do not know the author so an exact figure is impossible). Eight men penned the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, James, Peter, and Jude. These penmen came from various backgrounds: some from humble stations in life to the most noble, some rich while others poor, some educated while others were not, some socially accepted and others not, some cultured while others were not. They came from all walks of life and pursued various vocations: kings, statesmen, soldiers, priest, fishermen, shepherds, a physician, and a tax collector, et al. They came from different countries and were subject to different governments along with speaking different languages. These men wrote under varying circumstances: in prison, on thrones, in exile and captivity, being honored and being dishonored. The writings embrace about 6,000 years of man's existence (history) on this earth and were written over a period of at least 1,600 years (I believe it to be about 2,400 years as I believe Job to be the author of the book bearing his name).

You could not find a more diverse group of writers if you were trying. Yet, when you put all of these writings together, they are not a disjointed, separate entity; instead they make a harmonious whole. There is a unity of thought and presentation where each book of both the Old and the New Testaments complement all the other books. They are so intertwined that one cannot have a true understanding of the Old without an understanding of the New and vice versa. The doctrinal thesis or presentation set forth in the Old reaches its apex, climax, summation, or fulfillment in the New. The types and antitypes show a unity of presentation. The three dispensations of time show a unity of the Bible. The only way to

account for this type of unity is that it was written by inspiration of God.

### **Scientific Accuracy and Foreknowledge**

Certainly the Bible is not a book of science. However, there are scientific facts recorded in the Bible. When the Bible touches facts that are scientific in nature, it is always correct. There is never any discrepancy between the Bible and science (there are discrepancies between the Bible and false science or the hypotheses of man). The Bible predates many of the scientific discoveries made by man. The question that begs to be answered is: How did the Bible writers know these facts centuries prior to man's discovery and with most contradicting the prevailing thoughts of the time? The only answer that can be given is that they were writing by inspiration of God. The Bible touches on areas of astronomy (earth is spherical, it revolves daily, it is not supported, the universe is expanding, stars are innumerable), geology (all seas lie in one bed), oceanography (there are paths in the sea, hydrologic cycle), physics (first and second law of thermodynamics), and biology (life is in the blood, seed of woman). There is no way for the Bible writers to know scientific facts such as these (and many more too numerous to mention) without being guided by God in their writing.

### **Others**

Space limits forbid us going into detail with other evidences of the inspiration of the Bible. There are geological references that are always correct along with the topological references. Archaeology has confirmed that what the Bible says is always accurate. Prophecies are often given in the Bible regarding both nations and individuals. These prophecies are given sometimes centuries prior to their taking place. Yet, all the prophecies of the Bible are always accurate. The influence of the Bible shows the Divine nature of the Bible, as does its victory over all attacks from both friend and foe.

The Bible certainly makes the claim to be the Word of God. Yet the Bible gives ample evidence to establish beyond a shadow of a

doubt that it **is** God's Word and that its writers were "moved by the Holy Ghost."

## CONCLUSION

H. L. Hastings wrote:

When the Lord undertakes to tell His story of a sinful man, He does not select a poor, miserable beggar, and show him up; He does not even give the name of the thief on the cross, nor the wretched outcast who bathed the Savior's feet with her tears; but He takes King David from the throne, and sets him down in sackcloth and ashes and wrings from his heart the cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out my transgressions." And when he is pardoned, forgiven, cleansed and made whiter than snow, the pen of inspiration writes down the whole dark damning record of his crimes; and the king on his throne has not the power, nor the wealth, nor the influence enough to blot out the page; and it goes into history for the infidels to scoff at for three thousand years, "Who wrote that?"

The infidels, neo-orthodox, and liberals will still scoff, "Who wrote that?" but the Bible claims to be word-by-word and letter-by-letter inspired of God. There is also ample evidence given to us to know that the claim is true. We must learn to respect God's Word, study it, and apply it to our lives because one day we will be judged by it.

There is an anonymous description I will end with:

Many years ago I entered the wonderful temple of God's revelation; I entered the portico of Genesis and walked through the Old Testament art galleries where the pictures of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Joshua, Samuel, and David, and Daniel hung on the wall; I entered the music room of the psalms where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature and brought forth the dirge-like wail of the weeping prophet Jeremiah, to the grand impassioned strains of Isaiah, until it seemed that every reed and harp in God's organ of nature responded to the tuneful touch of David, the sweet singer of Israel; I entered the chapel of Ecclesiastes where the voice of the preacher was heard, and passed into the conservatory of Sharon where the lily of the valley's sweet scented spices filled and perfumed my life; I entered the business room of

Proverbs, and passed into the observatory room of the prophets where I saw many telescopes of various sizes some pointing to far off events but all concentrated upon the bright and morning star which was soon to rise over the moonlit hills of Judah for our salvation; I entered the audience room of the King of kings and caught a vision from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I entered the Acts of the Apostles where the Holy Spirit was doing His office work in forming the church. I passed into the correspondence room where sat Paul, Peter, James, Jude, and John penning their epistles. I stepped into the throne room of Revelation where all towered into glittering peaks. I got a vision of the King seated upon His throne in all His glory and I cried, "All hail the power of Jesus' name, Let angel's prostrate fall, bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all."

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: AUTHORITY

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## INTRODUCTION

We live in a day and age when many have little or no respect for authority. This is seen in the home, the school, and the community. In many homes children have no respect for their parents or their authority in the home. In school many students are disrespectful of their teachers, and the administration not accepting their authority. Many adults in the community have no respect for authority; they show no respect for those in positions of authority and for those who are commissioned to ensure that law is upheld—the police. Even in sports we see a lack of respect for referees or umpires. However, where there is no respect for authority and the standards of authority anarchy will ensue. In this past year, in different parts of the world, we have seen the breakdown of authority and the anarchy or near anarchy that prevails.

Lack of respect for authority in the world is bad enough, but when seen in Christianity, it is even worse as Christianity is **the** religion of authority. Spiritual anarchy is seen in the religious world where there are multitudes of different denominations that claim allegiance to

Christ yet are divided over all manner of doctrines contrary to what our Lord prayed: “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John. 17:21).

The lack of respect for authority in the world has its impact on the Lord’s church. Over the last few decades a lack of respect for the authority of the Scriptures has been in the rise of family life centers and gymnasiums, the establishing of mini-missionary societies to do the work of the church, the refusal to accept the teaching of Christ regarding divorce and remarriage (Mat. 5:32; 19), and the use of instrumental music in worship. Additionally, since 2005, a large number have rejected the Lord’s authority respecting fellowship with false teachers. There are those who for years have taught the truth on the matter of fellowship but are now rejecting their own teaching (and that of the Lord) to fellowship known and unrepentant false teachers. Thus, it behooves us to study the matter of authority that we might know how to establish whether or not something is authorized by the teaching of God’s Word.

### **CHRISTIANITY IS THE RELIGION OF AUTHORITY**

The fact that true Christianity is **the** religion of authority must be understood. Everything men do in matters of religion gains its authority either from man or from God. There are some basic but crucial propositions that we must understand. All men act from some viewpoint. In all we do there is some basic overview of life that is behind the decisions that individuals make even though those decisions might not be in harmony with that overview.

Regarding a seeking for or the claiming of knowledge of truth, all viewpoints are either objective or subjective. An objective view holds that truth is absolute and is not dependent on the subjective condition of the knower. The truth has objective stability and independence outside of the knower of that truth. For an individual human being to come to the knowledge of any certain truth does not change the truth in any way. On the other hand, a subjective view claims that the truth of a given proposition depends on the mental state of the knowing subject. In other words, truth is relative and one man’s understanding

is just as acceptable as another's. For example, some would teach that the Bible can teach doctrine A to one man and doctrine B to another, a totally different and contradictorily doctrine to doctrine A and **both** be true. Thus, doctrine A would be true for one man and doctrine B for the other. Such ideas are **false**. Whatever conclusions man may come to about what the Bible teaches on a given subject does **not** change what the Bible teaches. It teaches the same thing today as it did when it was written.

Either there is some objective standard of authority (to which all have obligation), or there is no objective standard. Men must have some objective standard to which they can refer to obtain **correct** answers to religious questions; otherwise they are thrown back on sheer subjectivism. This would mean that any answer given by anyone to any religious question would be an acceptable answer! There must be some objective standard to which men can refer to obtain the correct answers to the most important questions they can ask—those having to do with their spiritual well-being.

Again, men can know that objective standard (both that it exists and what it is), or they cannot know that objective standard. Even if there is such an objective standard (as we have considered), if men could not, even if they desired to do so, ascertain that there was such a standard, it would do them no good. Further, if men knew there was such a standard but could not know what it was or its details, it would do them no good. However, there is an objective standard and it can be known by all. The truth (God's Word) is both absolute and attainable: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Either the Bible is that objective standard of authority, or it is not. The truth of this statement should be obvious to all. The Bible is the Word of God and is that objective standard of authority, and it is the source of correct answers to religious questions to which all men are obligated to submit. The Bible does not make mistakes; it can be completely trusted. It is powerful to lead men to salvation, and men **must** have authority from it for what they believe and practice in religion. For one to be acceptable to God, to become a child of God in this life,

and to be saved and be with God in heaven when this life is over, one must both believe and obey the teachings of the Bible! While piety is necessary to salvation, no amount of piety or “religious experience” can be a substitute for living in harmony with and submission to Bible teaching.

And Samuel said, Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *And* to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from *being* king (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

We see the need for an objective standard in ordinary affairs. If there is no objective standard there would be chaos in the everyday affairs of human life. Think about such things as: weights and measures, speed limits, paying taxes, and athletic contests. It would indeed be chaotic without objective standards in these areas. Without standardized weights and measures we would never be sure how much gas we had pumped into our automobiles. Without the rule book, the standard of authority, how would football or baseball be played? In the same way an objective standard is absolutely crucial to properly answering questions that pertain to our salvation from sin. We do not need merely answers to religious questions; we need the **right** answers! Jesus did not come into the world simply to make us religious—we were religious long before—but He came that men might be religiously **right** (Mat. 7:21-23). Being right religiously involves a recognition of and submission to the proper standard—God’s will as revealed in His Word.

### FALSE STANDARDS

At this point it is appropriate to note some things that are considered, by some, to be true standards which are not and are indeed **false**:

Some go by their **feelings**. They feel that they are saved: “Because I feel it right in here” (while pointing to their fleshly heart). The Proverbs writer states: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (16:25). Clearly, it is possible to feel entirely satisfied about one’s spiritual condition and yet be lost:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Mat. 7:21-23).

Thus, it is the case that feelings are **not** the true standard by which to judge one's spiritual situation, even though, if a person is right with God, he will have good feelings about it (Acts 8:26-40).

Some want to let their **conscience be their guide**. *Conscience* is that God-given faculty within each individual which urges him to act in harmony with what he believes to be right. There is no occasion in which it is right for one ever to violate his own conscience (Rom. 14:23). This means that whatever a person cannot do with the conviction that it is acceptable to God is sinful for him to do—this is even the case if the action is right in and of itself. Conscience does **not** tell anyone what truth is. One must learn that from God's revelation to man, the Bible. The Word of God makes it clear that a man can live "in all good conscience" and yet be "the chief of sinners" while so doing (Acts 23:1).

Others, when asked why they are convinced they are Christians, will give such answers as, "Several years ago I awakened in the middle of the night and saw an angel standing in the doorway of my bedroom, and the angel spoke to me and said, 'You are a child of God.'" **Dreams or visions are not** reliable standards:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

Still others think that **common sense** is all one needs. They believe that they can just “figure out by rational thought” what to do without any revelation from God. However, such is **not** possible:

O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *It is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps.... Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; And lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, And he shall direct thy paths (Jer. 10:23; Pro. 3:5-6).

Many hold that **tradition** is an acceptable authority in religion, sometimes alongside the Bible. However, we note what Jesus said: “But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9).

Some religious groups claim that **creeds** or **books of discipline**, setting out the official positions of that group on various religious questions, are regarded as authoritative, as revelation from God. Note again Galatians 1:6-9.

Further some groups claim **other books** which they have are inspired and thus from a source of authority. See such passages as 2 Peter 1:3, Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32, Proverbs 30:6, and Revelation 22:18.

The Bible **is the objective standard of authority**. Note there is a clear chain of authority. Authority inherently resides in God the Father—because He is the Creator of the world and of man (Gen. 1:1ff; John 1:1-3). It is God, who by virtue of the fact that He is Creator, stipulates conditions with which sinners must comply to be saved and to remain saved (Deu. 11:26-28). All authority in heaven and on earth has been given unto the Son, Jesus Christ (Mat. 28:19-20). It is He, Jesus Christ, whom men are to hear (Deu. 18:15; Mat. 17:5; Acts 3:22-23). In turn, Christ has delegated authority to His apostles, and they were guided by the Holy Spirit. This was in accord with His promise to His apostles (John 14:26; 16:13; Mat. 18:18; Acts 1:5-8). These apostles, along with the prophets (men endowed by the Holy Spirit with the miraculous gift of prophecy) have revealed the Will of God to man (Eph. 3:5; 2 Pet. 1:19-21). So, through the apostles and prophets, the Scriptures are authoritative because they are God’s Word. Even the very words of the Scriptures in the original language are inspired (Gal. 3:16). Inspiration was accomplished by means of

the gift of prophecy (1 Cor. 12:13-14; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Eph. 3:5). This gift was accomplished by the laying on of the apostles' hands. There are none living today that have the gift of prophecy and thus none can write Scripture.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The realm of faith lies within that of Divine revelation. All anyone has a right to believe (and it does not matter what the source is), is that which God has revealed and stated so plainly in His Word that any individual can know what He would want him to know (2 Cor. 4:13). The Scriptures are the truth and all the truth (John 16:13). They are the Word of truth (2 Cor. 6:7), the truth of Christ (11:10), and the way of truth (2 Pet. 2:21). Sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth are the effects of Gospel preaching (2 The. 2:13). "For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Eph. 5:9). Jesus said, "thy word is truth" (John 17:17). The Psalmist said, "The sum of thy word is truth" (Psa. 119:160—ASV). All of God's testimony **must** be heard and heeded.

It is clear that the Bible claims to be the true objective standard. It claims to be the source of the right answers to religious questions. The conditions with which a sinner **must** comply to be saved are those set forth by the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17; John 12:48). No one can be saved who does not comply with the conditions set forth therein (2 The. 1:7-9; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:15-16). All who practice what is not authorized in the Bible sin in so doing (Lev. 10:1-2; 1 Chr. 15:1-15; 2 John 9-11).

Thus, to reject the Bible's authority is to reject Christianity. To reject Christianity is to reject Christ. To reject Christ is to reject the **only** way of salvation available to man. No man who denies the inspiration, all-sufficiency, inerrancy, and authority of the Bible can be rightfully regarded as a faithful servant of God.

### DETERMINING HOW

How can one determine whether or not a specific thing is within the scope of Divine authority? As we have seen, the Bible is **the objective standard of authority** for religious matters. Thus one must be able to determine whether a specific thing or action is within the scope of that Divine authority. How can this be accomplished?

It can be determined by establishing whether it comes from God or from man. Where did it originate? Did it come by revelation from God (2 Tim. 3:16) or from human reasoning (Jer. 10:23)? Is it truth (Mat. 16:13-17) or human philosophy (Col. 2:8-9)? Does it have the authority of God or does it come from the traditions of men or the rudiments of the world (Mat. 21:23-27; 15:1-9)? If it comes from God, it has its approval. If it comes from men, it is condemned (7:21-23). Let us notice some examples.

In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus asked His disciples who men said He was. They replied that some said He was John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah, or one of the prophets. Jesus then asked His disciples who they believed He was. Simon Peter responded: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16:16). Jesus commended him, saying that such had not come from flesh and blood (men) but had been revealed to him by the Father. The line of separation between what men say and what God says is the line of distinction between truth and error. Truth came from God and error from man. This is the dividing line between truth and error: Does it come from man or God?

Later, the chief priests and elders raised this question to Jesus: "By what authority doest thou these things?" (21:23). Jesus answered that if they were truly interested in authority and honest in their inquiry, He would answer them. To determine their honesty, He asked them one question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (21:25). By whose authority did John baptize? From whence did his baptism originate? These are the factors which should determine man's duty toward anything. That is the way to settle the question of authority. If it came from God, then it is the Word of God. If it is not found to be taught in Scripture, it came from man. When one cannot put his finger on the passage (or passages) that teach it or imply it, he should be able to readily conclude that it did not come from God. What the Spirit has not revealed cannot, therefore, be the will of God.

But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so

the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:10-11).

Again, this principle is seen in Matthew 15:1-20. The scribes and Pharisees had come to Jesus asking: “Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread?” (15:2). Jesus then pointed out that God’s Word taught “honor thy father and mother.” Men taught, through the traditions of the elders, “be it corban” (it is given rather as a gift to God). Thus through their traditions they were getting around the Scriptural obligation to honor parents. The traditions of men make void the commandments of God whether they bind where God has not bound or loose where God has not loosed.

That the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures are to be the objective standard of authority is clearly seen in Paul’s letter to the young evangelist, Timothy. Paul writes:

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, **which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith** which is 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works** (2 Tim. 3:14-17).

### HOW CAN WE ESTABLISH SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY?

There are three ways in which we can establish Scriptural authority. We will briefly note each of the three.

First, the Bible authorizes some belief and action by direct statement. *Direct statement* is to be preferred to “direct command” for the latter is only a small part of the former. Although commands (which are direct statements) do authorize action, there are also other types of direct statements authorizing Christian conduct. Some examples of direct statements are: declarative statements (Mark 16:16); commands or imperative statements (Acts 2:38); interrogative statements—i.e., questions (1 Cor. 1:13); hortatory (exhortive) statements (Heb. 6:1); optative (expressing a desire or wish) statements such as Paul’s exclamation, “God forbid” (literally, “may it not be so”) which authorizes

us to teach that we are not to continue in sin that grace may abound (cf. Rom. 6:1-2).

Second, not all accounts of action are approved in the sense of being or constituting either a positive or negative pattern which must be specifically followed today, but only those accounts of action which are presented as authorized, obligatory, and permanent or as authorized, optional, and permanent are then to be regarded as still binding in the same manner and to the same degree today. The New Testament records at least five kinds of action or examples:

1. Action which was sinful—Peter’s denial of Christ with an oath (Mat. 26:69-74).
2. Action which was optional and temporary—preaching to Jews only (Acts 2:9).
3. Action which was optional and permanent—travelling by boat to preach the gospel (13:4).
4. Action which was obligatory and temporary—confirmation of preached Word by signs (8:4ff).
5. Action which was obligatory and permanent—baptism is a burial (8:36).

Obviously the first of these types provides no authorization of human conduct. Of the remaining four only those containing elements of permanency have any relation to us today—those optional and permanent and those which are obligatory and permanent. We will deal more with the difference between optional and obligatory matters later.

Third, there is **implication**, commonly referred to as “necessary inference.” The use of *necessary* along with implication or inference is redundant since every implication is necessary. All implications are, by nature, necessary and what is not necessary to conclude from a particular statement is not an implication of it. To say that an action, fact, or teaching is implied is to say that it is required or demanded by the evidence available. When the Bible through some direct statement absolutely demands (i.e., implies) some non-explicit conclusion, the truth and validity of that conclusion is just as valid and forceful as any direct Biblical statement. Let us note a couple of examples. We know,

through implication, that at some time in his life, Lot went from Canaan into Egypt. Though this conclusion is not explicitly stated, we can so conclude from the fact that at a time after his being in Canaan he came out of Egypt (Gen. 13:1). These facts make the above-mentioned conclusion inescapable. Likewise we may know (and teach) that Saul's sins were not yet forgiven when Ananias directed him to be baptized (Acts 22:16). Thus our faith and/or action may be authorized through the implication of Scripture.

### **GENERIC AND SPECIFIC AUTHORITY AND EXPEDIENCY**

*Generic* basically means “of a genus” or “class.” To mention a class, therefore, such as *mammal*, necessarily implies and includes all of the specifics or sub-groups within the genus. An action such as “Worship God” is the genus, and all detailed acts of worship (sing, pray, teach, commemorate the Lord's death, giving) are specifics to this genus and thus would be implied and included in it. For the purposes of our study, generic indicates an authorization from God that is given as a general requirement without specification as to how it is to be carried out. For instance, in giving the Great Commission, Jesus commanded His disciples to “go into all the world.” *Go* is generic. Walking, riding, and flying would be specific ways to “go.” Since the Lord said “go,” we are authorized to use different methods of going. Had He said “walk,” we would be restricted to that method of going. We are also commanded to teach. Since *teach* is generic, we can use different methods to teach such as sermons, Bible classes, radio and television, the Internet, and tracts.

Sometimes the action that God authorizes is generic, as we have noted; however He also, on occasion, authorizes only a specific action. When God commanded Noah to build the ark, He did not say to simply use wood but told him the specific wood to use, “gopher wood.” By so doing, He specifically excluded the use of any other kind of wood because He did not authorize any other kind. However, certain authorized things can be both generic and specific, depending on the relationship. For example, we are commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper (generic), but then we are given specifics—the unleav-

ened bread and the fruit of the vine. These are specific, and we can use nothing else or add anything to these.

We also need to note the role of expediency. As we have seen, when God authorizes by means of a generic, we can use certain specifics to accomplish that. However, even when God has specified a certain thing, there may still be different acceptable ways to carry out what He has authorized. For example, although Noah was told to use “gopher wood,” God did not tell him what size planks to use, so he had options as to size. Thus we see that there may be optional ways to carry out the specific that God has commanded. This we call the realm of expediency.

In referring to the Great Commission, we noted that with the commands “go” and “teach,” different ways of going and different methods of teaching may be used. Since God has not been specific in these instances, He has left us options (expediencies) that we might use to fulfill what has been authorized. We are not limited to any particular way of going. (Just imagine how difficult it would be to preach the Gospel today if we had been commanded to walk!) We also have options open to us as to methods of teaching. God has specified only that which we are to teach, not the method we use to teach. He has specified the **what** to teach but has left the **how** for us to decide the best method under a particular circumstance.

What does *expedient* or *aid* mean? Obviously, it refers to something that expedites, accelerates the progress, or facilitates. An aid is something that helps or provides assistance to the desired end. It is something that is optional, but a thing that is optional might not be expedient (1 Cor. 6:12). Something that might be Scriptural, in the sense that it is authorized, might not be expedient, in that there would be no advantage in using it. In carrying out our obligations that are placed upon us there are *options* and there are *expedients*. For example, we have the obligation to assemble; there would be at least four options for a place to assemble—buy a building, rent a building, build a building, or meet in a private home. Depending on the circumstances, any of these might be the expedient thing to do. It is clear that the same thing could be (might be) optional and expedient at the same

time. Not all options are expedients, but all expedients are options. An expedient, aid, is not inherent in a command but is rather a matter of human judgment. God provides the command, man the expedient or aid.

An aid must not be morally wrong or change the command. As an aid to giving, we could not steal. As an aid to obeying the Great Commission, we cannot use the Missionary Society for this violates Scripture on the autonomy of the local congregation. We can use television for it is just a tool to help carry out the command. We cannot use an organ or piano as an aid to singing. It is not an aid; it is an addition. However, we can use the song book for it does not change or add to the essential nature of the command.

Some aids we use today were not known in New Testament times. However, this does not make them wrong and unable to be used unless they violate the principles previously mentioned. If aids are inherent in commands, as some would suggest, then they would be necessary. We could not sing without a song book, song leader, rudiments of music! We could not observe the Lord's Supper without the "tray" and the "cups"! The church could only meet in a church building! If the command to sing "implies" to play an instrument—all must **play** and **sing**! Advocates of instrumental music often infer that *psalmos*, the word to sing, includes playing and yet at the same time will call the instrument an "aid." If it were implied, then all would have to sing and play. Such proves too much! The Bible may not state some things in so many words, yet the law of expediency includes, provides, permits their use in doing God's will, nevertheless—except where they would be morally wrong or would violate a command. Let us not confuse expediency with implication!

### CONCLUSION

Remember, God's Word is inspired and authoritative. Let us always seek to "rightly divide the word of truth" that we may not be guilty of doing anything which is not authorized by God.

### WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: SALVATION

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## INTRODUCTION

Why is it important to talk about what the Bible says about salvation? There may be many answers to that question, but some rather obvious ones come to mind. Primarily, the Bible is God’s Word from front to back and only through knowledge of the Scriptures can we truly know what He wants man to know. “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). In addition, there is obvious confusion on the subject of salvation in the minds of men, largely due to the many different human ideas there are on this and other matters of the faith. Though no one will doubt the sincerity of those who believe these things, people have shown that they can be sincerely and completely wrong in many areas. “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Pro. 16:25). It should be said at the beginning that, since it is God who decides who is saved and who is not, it is God’s Word that shall and should determine the conditions of salvation, and any condition that is not expressed in God’s Word should be rejected. It is God’s Word that should set the standard by which all such plans should be judged. We need to keep in mind that the Bible is the sole judge of man at the Day of Judgment. Jesus made this very plain in the following:

And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:47-50).

With that understanding, let us take a look at what the Bible says about salvation.

### MAN NEEDS SAVING

There is a “universalist” idea today that suggests that God will simply save everyone, or a modified form that says God will save those that are not outright evil in the eyes of men (i.e., Adolph Hitler, Saddam Hussein, Osama Bin Laden, et al.). Sadly, this idea has no scriptural merit. **Man** needs to be saved; **every** man needs to be saved, even those we often think of as “good people.” Why does man need to be saved? Simply put, man has sinned. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). If there are “none righteous,” what does this say about those people mankind deems “good people”? Are *good* because they live moral lives and are kind to others also condemned? If so, why? The answer lies in the statement “**every** man needs to be saved.” Man needs to be saved precisely because he is **lost**. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (3:23). Notice the word “all” in this Scripture. Since **all** have sinned, and **all** have come short of the glory of God, then **all** need the salvation offered by God. “For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (6:23).

### GOD LOVES MAN

One of the most well-known Bible passages is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Though we often see this passage at sporting events and other

such venues, but there are few that truly understand what the passage itself means. God, in expressing His love for all of man, sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cruelest invention of man ever devised—the cross. The pain of the cross was unbearable, stressing every joint of the body, making it difficult even to breathe, and those executed on it were left to die of exposure. In sending His Son to die, God also taught men to believe in Jesus, but not merely in the **fact** of Jesus but also in the teachings of Jesus. On the very Mount of Transfiguration, God told Peter, James, and John, to listen to Jesus, not merely to follow Him: “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5). Believing in Jesus includes believing the things that Jesus taught. Only in doing that will one be able to learn what is necessary for his salvation.

Why did God decide to save man? This is not something that is easy to answer, but the more amazing thing is that God, given His omniscience, knew even before He created man that man was going to sin and that the sacrifice of His Son was going to be required.

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, *as* silver and gold, from your vain conversation *received* by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

Since Jesus Christ was foreordained “before the foundation of the world” and His blood was part of that plan, God had already known that man would require saving even before He began the creation process. Not only do we learn that God loves man, but that God is love personified. “And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). God demonstrated His love to us even while we were sinners. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). There is no doubt that God wants each and every

man to be saved. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Though doubtless, God loves all men, all men will not be saved—not because God does not desire it—but because man refuses to come to obedience that God might save him.

### **SALVATION IS ONLY IN THE EYES OF GOD**

It is God that determines the conditions of salvation and without His sanction no man can be saved. That said it behooves man to meet the conditions that God has set rather than to invent a system of his own device and then expect God to go along. This is what has happened that has caused the very religious confusion we see today.

There are various human devised plans that involve some form of *feeling* that is often, if not always, subjective. These plans suggest that one “pray through” until they *feel* saved, or until they experience some other form of emotional *enlightenment*. These kinds of plans have no support from God’s Word. In fact, many in these religions have had no such *feeling*, but they will say they have so others will not think there is something wrong with them. Since Jesus said that the Word would be our judge, we must instead study and learn what God wants us to do and then do it. Such has nothing to do with “feelings” or “emotions” but everything to do with the knowledge of God’s desire for man.

Still other plans suggest that one should “pray” their way into salvation with some form of “sinner’s prayer.” The problem with this device, other than that it has no Biblical sanction, is that it goes entirely contrary to what we know of the Scriptures. First, what is the condition of man because of his sin?

Behold, the LORD’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, And your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

If God “will not hear” because of sin, how then will He save the sinner by prayer? God has decided not to hear such prayers. The sin must first be removed before God will hear any pleas of man. Such

can only happen when the obedient person does what God requires to wash his sins away and clears the way for a renewed relationship with the Father. "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). There is not one verse that even suggests that man can be saved by prayer, yet the so-called *sinner's prayer* is one of the most prevalently preached human devices in our time.

Other man-made plans seek to make adjustments to what the Lord has said regarding salvation. Jesus plainly taught, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). It is the Gospel that must be believed and water baptism that must be obeyed for man to be saved. What has man said about this passage?

Some say, "He that believes and is **not** baptized shall be saved" and leave out baptism. These are those that suggest that baptism is not required by God for salvation, even though the Lord clearly put it in His plan. They suggest that baptism is merely "an outward sign of an inward grace" yet are hard pressed to produce one Bible passage that says as much. These people believe and teach they are saved prior to being baptized (yes, they still practice baptism but for some other purpose than salvation).

Others teach, "he that does **not** believe and is baptized shall be saved." These are the paedobaptists or infant baptizers. They show that one need not believe as long as they are baptized and will still be saved. Even among these, few practice an actual *baptism*, since aspersion does not meet the Bible criteria of being "buried with Him" (Rom. 6:3).

There are some who teach, "he that does not believe and is not baptized will be saved." These are the Universalists mentioned previously. The Bible also instructs concerning baptism: "The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21) Those who seek to play fast and loose with the Scriptures have made this

passage to say “doth also **not** save us” rather than **now** save us. No matter how hard man tries, however, the Bible still stands as the standard for pleasing God and, thus, being saved in the mind of God.

### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

So, what **does** the Bible say about salvation? Let us begin with *salvation* and its corollary, *saved*. Are there Bible passages that actually include these words and along with God’s conditions? Yes!

“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). This verse tells of the need to both believe and be baptized. The conditions of belief are also expressed in another verse regarding the need to confess our belief in Jesus.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

The facts of belief concern the resurrected Christ, but confession of belief is also necessary. This passage uses “unto salvation,” which shows that belief is only a step toward the goal but not the final goal. To go *unto* somewhere is not the same thing as having arrived there.

Having already shown that baptism is a part of God’s plan, we must also insure that we are a fit candidate for baptism to attain to that salvation promised by the Lord. We must comply with all that the Bible shows as prerequisites to baptism. We have already seen that belief is one of these conditions, but is confession also a pre-condition to being baptized?

And as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:36-37).

It is obvious that this Ethiopian nobleman had to confess his belief in Jesus prior to being baptized into Christ. We also notice

that the medium used was "water." Though man is commanded to baptize (Mat. 28:19), man has neither power nor authority to baptize in the Holy Spirit.

How about repentance? Is that also required for one to be baptized? "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). We notice in this verse that repentance was mentioned first, yet can we conclude it was required as a condition of baptism?

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4).

Just as one does not bury the living, we must first be "dead to sin" to be "buried with Him by baptism," thus repentance is a pre-condition of baptism. We should also be able to see that we are "baptized into Christ." This is the medium whereby we enter the body of Christ where salvation is. Those that reject the efficacy of baptism in their salvation do so at their own peril. Of course we must note a previously-mentioned verse as well:

The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

This shows us that baptism, indeed, "saves." It is not merely some sign or frivolous thing. In fact, there is far more evidence for baptism in the Scriptures than for any of the other things we have discussed.

The one area that I did not mention, and some might wonder about, was the idea of *hearing*. Many begin with this but I saved it to the end for a reason. Is hearing required? Since we already have discussed the need for belief, we must discover how belief comes about. The Scriptures indicate that the kind of faith required by

God is that faith that comes from His Word. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Faith derives from the Scriptures and our understanding of them. Is faith necessary? “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). Here we see the need for faith to please God, but we also observe how such faith is demonstrated by coming to God, believing in Him, and believing in His rewards (which includes salvation). The faith that God requires is not *blind* as some have suggested, but based on substance and evidence. “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (11:1).

If faith comes from the Word of God, what parts of God’s Word are preached to make someone saved? Looking again at the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8, we see that Philip “preached Jesus” to him (8:35). It is obvious that his teaching included baptism, or the Ethiopian would not have asked about baptism in Acts 8:36.

What all does “preaching Jesus” include? Before his encounter with the Ethiopian, Philip had been preaching the Gospel in Samaria, where the Bible says he “preached Christ” (8:5). Verse 6 says that the people “gave heed” to what he preached. What all did preaching Christ include? “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (8:12). The Samaritans were baptized after learning about the kingdom of God. According to the Scriptures, the church **is** the kingdom of God.

On the day of Pentecost, when Peter was preaching the first Gospel sermon after the resurrection, he had expressed part of the plan of salvation in Acts 2:38, but his sermon did not stop there. “And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls” (2:40-41). We can conclude that Peter taught them all they needed to do to be saved.

We can also conclude that those who "gladly received his word" were not only baptized but were "added unto" something. What were they "added unto"? "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (2:47). That church is the **one** church that Jesus purchased with His own blood (20:28). The Bible clearly shows there is but **one** (Eph. 4:4), and we are to be a part of that one. Any baptism that does not put us into the church of Christ is **not** the baptism of the Bible. You cannot be taught wrong and baptized right.

We can safely conclude that God's plan of salvation, as taught in the Bible, includes:

Hearing the Word of God

Believing that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead

Confessing our belief to men

Repenting (turning away) from sin

Being Baptized into Christ to wash away our sins

Being added to the church of the Bible

Remaining faithful until death (Rev. 2:10).

What we need to do about these matters is make certain that we are complying with them by having obeyed the Gospel and continuing to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all that we come into contact with.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen (Mat. 28:19-20).

### WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: BAPTISM

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## INTRODUCTION

The subject of baptism has long been one of controversy, especially concerning its purpose and its action. What men have written will not be the subject of this study, but what the Bible teaches. First, we must narrow the field of study because the Bible identifies several *baptisms*.

- Baptism in suffering (Jesus' crucifixion) (Mark 10:38-39)
- Baptism in water by John the Baptist (Mat. 3:1-5, 11; Mark 1:3)
- Baptism in water by Jesus through His apostles (John 4:1-2)
- Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mat. 3:11)
- Baptism in fire (Mat. 3:11)

- Baptism of Israel in the “cloud and the sea” when they left Egypt (1 Cor. 10:1-2)
- Baptism Jesus commanded in the “Great Commission” (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Of the foregoing baptisms, which one continues in force and is relevant to us?

The baptism of this study is the one described in Acts 8:36. A man from Ethiopia asked Philip the Evangelist, “Behold, *here is water*; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” It is the one Peter commanded at the household of Cornelius: “Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized? ... And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:47-48). It is the one that same apostle Peter wrote about in 1 Peter 3:20-21, referring to the eight souls that were saved through water in Noah’s ark, and then said:

Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

In about A.D. 62, Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “[There is] one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (4:5). He meant that only one baptism was in force at the time that he wrote. The other baptisms were either no longer operative or were not yet in effect. To which baptism was Paul referring? It was the one of which we have already read in Acts 8, Acts 10, and 1 Peter 3. It is also the same one of which Jesus spoke in Matthew 28:19-20:

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: [now note carefully His words] and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

The foregoing statement tells us the reason this baptism is relevant. If the world stands another two thousand years, it will be just as relevant then as it was when Jesus uttered those words—and as it is

now. “Unto the end of the world”—until Jesus comes—He ordered His followers to preach and administer this baptism.

Mere men did not *invent* the Bible act/doctrine of baptism. Jesus is its author, and as such, He alone has the right to determine every facet of it. The only source of that information is the New Testament, to which we turn to see what it teaches about baptism. We will study this subject by asking questions about baptism and seeking answers in God’s Word.

### SHOULD EVERYONE BE BAPTIZED?

Is baptism for everyone? (I am referring to those who are capable of hearing, understanding, and responding to God’s Word). This question has two correct answers. The first correct answer is, “Yes.” In God’s “ideal will” all persons should be baptized. Jesus’ words in Matthew 28:19-20 demonstrate His desire for all nations to hear and obey the Gospel, which includes baptism. The parallel account in Mark 16:15-16 has the same force: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.”

However, the second correct answer to that question is, “No, baptism is not for everyone.” God’s “realistic will” as revealed in the New Testament leads to the following conclusions:

**Baptism is not for unbelievers.** It would not spiritually benefit an unbeliever to be baptized as a religious act. Jesus said in John 8:24: “For except ye believe that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins.” Therefore, unbelievers (including infants, the mentally handicapped, and those who deny the evidence and remain infidels) should not be baptized.

**Baptism is not for unconfessing believers.** Even if one believes in Christ, if he is unwilling to confess his faith in Him before others, baptism will not profit him. When the aforementioned Ethiopian asked, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” Phillip answered, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.” The man responded: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:36-37—KJV). Philip’s words imply that he would not have baptized

the Ethiopian had he not confessed his faith in the Christ. Men must not only believe with their hearts, but also confess with their mouths to be saved (Rom. 10:10).

**Baptism is not for those who refuse to repent**, even those who have confessed faith in Christ. To repent means to change one's mind about his sinful behavior and then change his life to conform thereto. Thus the adulterer must decide it is wrong to commit adultery, and he must cease such activity, as must all others who behave contrary to the will of God, whatever their practices may be. Repentance also requires one to depart from erroneous religious doctrine and practice. On the Day of Pentecost, when believers asked Peter, "What shall we do?" he responded: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:37-38). Clearly, turning away from sin (in repentance) precedes forgiveness of sin (in baptism).

**Baptism is not for those who wish to be baptized for a motive other than to obey Jesus.** It is right for parents, a spouse, or a friend to strongly desire and encourage one to be baptized into Christ. However, if one is baptized merely to please another human being, his baptism avails nothing. When Peter commanded the people on Pentecost to repent and be baptized to be forgiven of their sins (2:38), about three thousand of them were baptized (2:41). They did so, not to please men, but because they "gladly received his word" (2:41—KJV). (Note: When a person who has not been baptized "gladly receives God's Word," he will never question the Bible's teaching on baptism. Conversely, when one argues with the Bible about baptism, he has **not** gladly received the Word.)

Paul reminded the Roman saints of their conversion, and he thanked God that, whereas they **once** were the servants of sin, they no longer were: "Ye became obedient **from the heart** to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). That "form of teaching" which they had obeyed from the heart involved baptism (6:3-4). They knew exactly **why** they were doing it. Their

motivation was to obey the will of God. If one does not desire to be baptized to please God, then he is not ready to be baptized.

**Baptism is not for those who do not know its Scriptural purpose or who, knowing it, deny or reject its purpose.** Some teach that as long as one is baptized “to obey God,” this is sufficient. However, *in order to obey God* is a statement of **motive**, rather than of **purpose**. Obedience to God and/or Christ is the primary Scriptural **motive** for being baptized, but this motive on our part must not be confused with the **purpose** of baptism as specified by the Lord. Some also teach that “as long as one is baptized for a Scriptural purpose,” his baptism is Scriptural. However, there is one—and only one—Scriptural purpose of baptism.

The New Testament states the purpose of baptism in a variety of ways. Baptism is to (1) be saved (Mark 16:16), (2) enter the kingdom (John 3:5), (3) receive the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), (4) be added to the church (2:41, 47), (5) wash away sins (22:16), and like expressions, but they all equal the same purpose. Baptism differentiates between those who are still in the world in their alien sins and those who have had their sins forgiven and have been added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). It distinguishes those who have not been forgiven of their sins from those whose sins have been washed away (22:16). Baptism is the *line* that Jesus has drawn between those who are still under “the power of darkness” and those who have been “translated...into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13; 2:12). Several other Biblical statements illustrate the purpose of baptism, which Peter summarized in his simple statement on Pentecost: **The purpose of baptism is “unto [in order to receive] remission [forgiveness] of sins”** (Acts 2:38).

In spite of the plainness of the Scriptural testimony, men continue to claim that the sinner need not know or understand the purpose of baptism. In spite of the foregoing Scriptural evidence, at least one book appeared a few years ago denying that one must know baptism’s purpose. If this premise is correct, then there are millions of people in the religious world whom we should embrace in fellowship, people who have been baptized without any Scrip-

tural concept of the purpose of baptism, or if they do, denying its Scriptural purpose.

The purpose of baptism is so innately entwined with the act itself that to negate its purpose is to render the act itself vain. Another such institution is the Lord's supper. Could a stranger come into a worship assembly on the Lord's day, knowing nothing about the meaning of the Lord's supper, partake of the elements thereof, and it be an acceptable observance of the Lord's supper for that person? Surely, none will affirm that it could. Even a Christian, who understands the meaning and purpose of the Lord's supper, stands condemned if he partakes without remembering its purpose (1 Cor. 11:29). To remove or ignore the purpose of the act renders the act itself vain. It is the same with baptism.

One who has been unscripturally taught concerning baptism cannot be Scripturally baptized. Millions of people, sincerely believing they were obeying Jesus, were baptized by someone who denied the Scriptural purpose of baptism. Some of these, even after learning the Truth concerning baptism, convince themselves that they were Scripturally baptized. Again, one cannot be taught incorrectly and baptized Scripturally.

The New Testament actually records a case of some who were baptized on the basis of incorrect teaching. Acts 19:1-7 tells us that upon Paul's return to Ephesus he found certain ones who had been baptized. He obviously assumed that they had been taught and baptized Scripturally. In conversation with them, he perceived that they were ignorant of certain things they would have learned had they been Scripturally taught and baptized. Did he say, "Well, that's all right? You did it 'in order to obey God.' That's all that's necessary"? Did he say, "You did it for 'a Scriptural purpose' "? Most preachers of today would have thus reacted, but not the apostle Paul. He immediately taught these men correctly and baptized them Scripturally (19:3-5), thus demonstrating that their previous baptism was to no avail. We must react in the same way to any similar circumstance.

## WILL THERE BE ANYONE IN HEAVEN WHO HAS NOT BEEN BAPTIZED?

Will there be anyone in heaven who has not been baptized (this question excludes those who die in infancy and those who are mentally incompetent)? This is a good question that deserves a Biblical answer, whatever the motivation of the querist might be.

This question also has two correct answers. The first correct answer is, “Yes.” The Bible teaches clearly that there will be many, many people in Heaven who were never baptized, even calling the names of some. Jesus said, “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 8:11). Although Matthew often speaks of the church as “the kingdom of heaven” (e.g., Mat. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 16:18-19, 28; et al.), he also uses this designation to refer to the eternal Heaven, as in this passage. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not and will never be in the church, but the Lord said they would be in the eternal state of the kingdom—Heaven. Yet, they never heard of baptism. Hebrews 11 records a long list of heroes and heroines of the faith. The implication is unmistakable that each one named will be saved in Heaven at last, but not a one of them ever heard of baptism. So, yes, there will be many people in Heaven who were never baptized. However, it is imperative that we understand the following principle concerning **everyone** of whom the Bible thus speaks: **They all lived before Christ died on the cross.**

If one is considering those who have lived since Jesus’ death and since the Gospel began to be preached in its fullness on the day of Pentecost, the Bible answer to our questions is, “No, there will be none in Heaven who were not baptized.” In our age of great permissiveness, tolerance, and non-judgmentalism, many people simply cannot comprehend such a statement of *exclusiveness*, as they view it. Most who profess faith in the Bible and in Jesus as the Christ have been taught that all that is necessary for one to be saved is to believe in Christ—“faith-only salvation.” Do not those who advocate salvation by faith alone draw a very exclusive line against

all unbelievers (e.g., Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists, Atheists, and every other kind of unbeliever)? As earlier noted, Jesus said, “except ye believe that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). However, the Bible just as certainly excludes those who are not baptized for the forgiveness of their sins from being saved. No one has the right to draw the line of inclusion or exclusion where the Lord has not drawn it. Several New Testament statements link baptism and salvation (or its equivalent) in a very concise statement. In every case, baptism precedes salvation, and baptism is related to salvation as cause is to effect. We will notice only eight of these passages.

### Mark 16:16

Jesus said: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned.” Notice the order: Belief, baptism, and salvation. It is not: Belief, salvation, and then baptism unless one wants to join a denomination. The Lord’s statement places baptism before and makes it, as surely as He does belief, a condition of salvation. But some object: “Jesus did not say, ‘He that disbelieveth and is **not** baptized shall be condemned’” It would have been redundant and superfluous had He done so. If one does not believe, he is certainly not going to be baptized.

### John 3:5

The Lord said to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God!” Only baptism fits the figurative expression, *born of water*. If being in the kingdom of God requires that we be saved (and it does, 1 Cor. 15:21), and if being born of water is baptism in water (which it is), then being baptized in water is absolutely necessary to being saved. *Except* has the force of **if and only if** or **apart from** being baptized.

### Acts 2:38

When those on Pentecost who believed on the Lord asked what they should do to be forgiven of their sins, Peter replied: “Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ

unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Notice the order here: Repentance and baptism both precede remission (forgiveness) of sins.

### Acts 22:16

Jesus sent a Christian named Ananias to Saul of Tarsus in Damascus. Ananias said to him: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name.” Notice that Saul’s sins were still upon him before he was baptized, but they would be forgiven (“washed away”) **when**, and **not before**, he was baptized. If this is not the meaning of the words of Ananias, words have no meaning.

### Romans 6:3

Paul asked: “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” Surely all who believe in Jesus as the Christ understand that salvation is to be found only in Him—only through the merits of the blood He shed in His death on the cross. Now, how does one gain access to that blood and enter into Christ? Paul says in this passage we are **baptized** into Him.

### Romans 6:4

Paul next wrote: “We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life.” When does the newness of life begin? It is **after**, when one has been **raised from**, baptism. In that act sin is forgiven. One has a new life in which to walk, having put to death the old “man of sin” in repentance and having buried him in baptism.

### Galatians 3:27

Paul stated: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.” Consider the following two columns, with their respective headings, in which the names of people might be Scripturally entered on the basis of the foregoing passage:

#### Those Baptized

1. Joe Brown

#### Those “In Christ”

1. Joe Brown

- |              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| 2. Jim White | 2. Jim White            |
| 3.           | 3. <del>Bob Green</del> |

According to this passage, I could not list any person under *Those "In Christ"* unless his name first appeared under *Those Baptized*. Notice the explicit language of the passage again: "For as many of you as [i.e., the very same number—not one more, not one less, no exceptions] were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."

### 1 Peter 3:21

The heart of Peter's simple statement is clear: "Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism" ("The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us"—KJV).

If I were going to concoct a "plan of salvation" that required only a single act, it would not be a "faith-only," a "confession-of-faith only," or a "repentance-only" plan. My one-act "plan of salvation" would be "baptism-only." In **every** detailed case of conversion Acts records, **baptism is always present, always mentioned, and is always the consummating act.** (Is it not exceedingly ironic that the one act—baptism—that the New Testament invariably mentions in the detailed cases of conversion is also the one act that Protestant dogma almost invariably rejects as part of the Lord's plan of salvation?) The New Testament does not teach salvation by baptism alone, faith alone, confession of faith alone, or repentance alone. Rather, the Bible teaches that **all of these** comprise the whole of the conversion process whereby the Lord forgives the sinner, delivers him out of darkness, and translates him into His kingdom, the church (Acts 2:37-47; Col. 1:13-14). Men have as much right to deny that faith is a condition of salvation as they do to deny baptism—**which is no right at all.**

### WHAT ACTION IS INVOLVED IN BAPTISM?

Paul described baptism as follows:

We were **buried therefore with him through baptism** unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

He repeats this definition later:

Having been **buried with him in baptism**, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead (Col. 2:12).

Acts 8:38-39 contains the fullest description of a baptism in the Bible:

And he commanded the chariot to stand still: **and they both went down into the water**, both Philip and the eunuch, and **he baptized him**. And when **they came up out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.

What did Philip do to this Ethiopian when the New Testament says “he baptized him”? Did he pour some water on him? Did he sprinkle some water on him? He did neither. He **buried** him in the water (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

One does not have to know the first letter of the Greek alphabet (the original language of the New Testament) to know beyond doubt that **Bible baptism is immersion and never any other action**. However, it might be helpful to know that there are three separate words in the Greek language for *sprinkling*, *pouring*, and *immersion*, just as there are in the English language. The Greek word meaning “immersion” is always the word that appears behind our English word, *baptism*, which means an overwhelming, a dipping, a plunging, an immersion—a burial—in whatever element is involved in the various baptisms the New Testament mentions (as enumerated previously).

The baptism that is to be preached and administered until “the end of the world” (Mat. 28:19-20) is baptism in water to be saved from sin. If the **action** of baptism is unimportant (as millions allege), then the **act itself** is unimportant and unnecessary (which millions also allege). The New Testament teaches, however, that the **act** of baptism is necessary and that only one **action**—immersion—constitutes baptism.

### **DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT SAY WHAT BAPTISM IS FOR?**

The King James Version states in Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (KJV). Many reject Peter’s words. They argue that the preposition *for* is capable of more than one meaning, which is true. For example, if one goes into a supermarket **for a loaf of bread**, he does so **in order to get** a loaf of bread. If, however, one has been arrested and jailed **for robbing a bank**, he is not there **in order to rob** a bank, but **because he has robbed** a bank. In the first case, *for* refers to something one seeks to accomplish, but which he **has not yet attained** (i.e., buy a loaf of bread). This usage therefore looks **forward** to a future desired result. In the second case, *for* looks **backward** to action already completed. The man was arrested and jailed **because of** something he **had already done**—robbed a bank. Those who reject the Scriptural purpose of baptism have long argued that Peter meant (and means) that men must repent and be baptized **because** they have **already received** remission of their sins. It is impossible, however, for this to be Peter’s meaning for several reasons:

First, the immediate context of Acts 2:38 neither allows nor supports a retrospective meaning of *for*. The acts of repentance and baptism are inseparably joined by the coordinate conjunction, *and*, which means that they are equally related to their common object, *remission of sins*. Therefore, if baptism is **because of** remission of sins, repentance is also. Neither God nor His Son ever promised or pronounced forgiveness of even one sin prior to repentance. Moreover, Jesus explicitly stated the necessity of repentance for salvation: “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3, 5). Paul wrote that God “commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent” (Acts 17:30). Since forgiveness of sins **cannot** precede repentance, **neither can it precede baptism**. Likewise, since repentance **must** precede forgiveness of sins, **so also must baptism**. To argue otherwise creates the following absurdity of Peter’s statement: “Repent for [in order to receive] remission of sins, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for [because you have already received] the remission of sins.” The grammar simply will not allow this meaning.

Second, the Bible is its own best commentary or interpreter. Acts 2:38 is not the only passage that contains *for remission of sins*. Its identical twin in English or Greek appears elsewhere in the New Testament. If *for* means “because of” in one passage, it must mean that in both. Likewise, if *for* means “in order to” in one, it must carry that meaning in both.

Now consider the parallel: “And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**” (Mat. 26:27-28—KJV).

Did Jesus shed His blood **because** men had already received remission of sins, or **in order that** men might do so? To ask this question is to answer it. Those living in the Patriarchal and Mosaic eras had poured out millions of barrels of animal blood over thousands of years to atone for sin, but to no final and permanent avail: “For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). However, a blood offering from some source was necessary to procure forgiveness of sins, for “apart from shedding of blood there is no remission” (9:22). The New Testament writer states only of the blood of Christ, “nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but **through his own blood**, entered in once for all into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption” (9:12). These statements of Holy Writ (with many others) explicitly set forth the Truth that Jesus shed His blood that we might be redeemed, and only through His blood may any person receive forgiveness of sins.

If this great blessing could have been accomplished by some other means, Jesus could have stayed in Heaven, thus avoiding all of the trials and temptations of the human frame and the agony of the cross. Unarguably, *for remission of sins* in Matthew 26:27-28 means “**in order to obtain** remission of sins.” This being so, it can mean nothing else in Acts 2:38, namely, that men must repent and be baptized **in order to receive** remission of sins. To be consistent, those who argue that baptism is **because remission of sins has already been received** must also accept the heresy that the Christ

poured out His blood on Calvary **because the redemption of men from sins had already been accomplished.**

Third, the Greek preposition translated “for” in the King James Version points **forward** rather than **backward**. The American Standard Version correctly reflects this linguistic fact in its rendering of Acts 2:38: “And Peter *said* unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **unto the remission of your sins**; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Fourth, remote contexts in numerous passages, some of which we have earlier cited and quoted (e.g., Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21; et al.) teach that baptism is a condition of salvation or forgiveness of sins. To allege that Peter, in Acts 2:38, teaches that remission of sins **precedes** baptism places Peter in conflict with all of these passages, including one which he later wrote himself.

### **IS BAPTISM A WORK OF MAN'S OWN MERIT OR RIGHTEOUSNESS?**

Some argue that to teach that baptism is necessary to be saved is to teach that one's own works can save him. Clearly, the Bible teaches that we **cannot** be saved by “works” (Eph. 2:8-9). Just as clearly, however, the Bible also teaches that we **are** saved by “works”: “Ye see that **by works a man is justified**, and not only by faith.... For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead” (Jam. 2:24, 26). Since the Bible does not contradict itself, we must conclude that Paul wrote of one kind of “works,” while James wrote of another kind. Paul identified the works of which he wrote as those which are “of yourselves” in which men could “glory” or “boast” (KJV). In a similar passage he further stated the futility of seeking salvation by such works: “Not **by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves**, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Tit. 3:5). It is obvious that no one can do enough good works to say boastfully, “I have saved myself from sin and condemnation. God owes it to me.”

When James wrote that we **are** saved by works, what sort of “works” did **he** mean? He cites the cases of Abraham and Rahab

in the context as examples of those who were justified before God by their obedient faith (Jam. 2:21, 25). The Scriptures everywhere, in both the Old and New Testaments, enjoin faith-actuated obedience. Such obedience is the means through which we are saved: “And having been made perfect, he [Christ] became **unto all them that obey** him the author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9; cf. Mat. 7:21; et al.).

Now to the pertinent question: “To which class of ‘works’ does baptism belong?” Is it a work of man, of which he can boast, or is it simply an act of obedience to Christ, based upon one’s faith? The Bible teaches that it is the latter. After stating that we are not saved by “works of righteousness” which we do ourselves, but through the mercy of God (as noted above), Paul then wrote that God saves us “according to His mercy” “through the **washing of regeneration** and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5). The only thing in the New Testament to which *the washing of regeneration* can refer is baptism. Please notice where Paul placed it. He **excluded** it from being a “work of righteousness” by which one might save himself, but rather identified it with **God’s merciful plan of salvation**.

Another statement from Paul reinforces the foregoing truth: “Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:12). Thus, if one is properly taught, one’s faith is not in himself in being baptized, but in “the working of God,” Who has proved we can depend upon His promise and His power by His raising Jesus from the dead. God has promised to forgive our sins when, upon believing in His Son, repenting of our sins, and confessing our faith in the Christ, we are baptized into Him. When we are baptized, we trust, not in ourselves, but in the “working of God” to fulfill His promise of forgiveness and salvation.

Thus, when Peter commanded the people on Pentecost to repent and be baptized unto the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38), and when Ananias commanded Saul to be baptized and wash away his sins (22:16), they did not command these various ones to submit to a work of their own righteousness or merit, but to God’s plan of

salvation. They were to be baptized to have their sins forgiven and thereby to become Christians. By no means is New Testament baptism a work of man's own righteousness or human merit.

### **WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BAPTISM AND THE BLOOD OF CHRIST?**

For failure to grasp the connection between baptism and the blood of Christ, many people woefully misunderstand the role of baptism in God's plan. I am convinced that, if they understood this relationship, they would no longer question the necessity of baptism. Those who deny that baptism in water is necessary for one to be saved sometimes accuse those who thus believe of teaching "water salvation" when we call attention to the unmistakable language of Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." The accuser may say, "You believe that if you just get the sinner in the water, the water will wash away his sins." I do not believe any such thing, nor have I ever met anyone who believed or taught such an obvious error and absurdity. Neither Acts 22:16 nor any other passage of Scripture even remotely hints that water can wash away sins. Had it been possible for water to wash away sins, the incarnate Word could have remained in Heaven.

Acts 22:16 does not tell the reader what element washes away or removes sins. Jesus spoke on this subject when He instituted the Lord's supper: "For this is my **blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many **unto remission of sins**" (Mat. 26:28). Peter wrote on the same subject:

Knowing that ye were **redeemed**, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but **with precious blood**, as of a lamb without spot, *even the blood of Christ* (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The principle stated in Hebrews 9:22 reaches all the way back to the offerings of Cain and Abel and culminates especially in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross: "Apart from shedding of **blood** there is no **remission**." After speaking of the Christ, John explicitly identified the cleansing agent for sin: "Unto him that loved us, and

**washed us from our sins in his own blood**” (Rev. 1:5—KJV). The old hymn has had it exactly right all along: “What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

The question then arises, “If Ananias was not telling Saul of Tarsus (Acts 22:16) what would wash away his sins, what was he telling him?” He was telling Saul **when** his sins would be washed away **in the blood of Christ**. The conclusions are irresistible: No baptism—no blood; No blood—no forgiveness of sins; No forgiveness—no salvation. Paul tied baptism and the blood of Christ together in one grand statement: “Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). This passage teaches us that Scriptural baptism is the sinner’s avenue of access to the saving blood of the Savior.

The foregoing demonstration of the Biblical relationship between baptism and Jesus’ blood explains the numerous statements of the inspired writers, earlier noted, to the effect that **baptism is a necessary condition for remission of sins or salvation** (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; et al.). The reason baptism is necessary for salvation is evident: Baptism, with its Scriptural precedents, is the consummating act of obedience by which sinners gain access to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus the Christ.

### **DOES THE BIBLE TELL US WHEN ONE SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?**

The Bible tells us, by implication, when one should be baptized. When the multitudes on the day of Pentecost heard the first Gospel sermon (preached in its fullness), Luke records the response as follows: “They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41). They obeyed the apostolic command immediately. When Philip “preached Jesus” to the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza, the man besought the evangelist to stop at the first body of water sufficient to immerse him: “And as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (8:36). Philip immediate-

ly complied with the man's request (8:38-39). When the jailor at Philippi asked Paul and Silas what he should do to be saved, it was already past midnight (16:25), yet Philip baptized the jailor and his household "the same hour of the night" (16:30-34). When Ananias came to Saul of Tarsus, he urged the sinner seeking salvation to act immediately: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (22:16).

The immediacy and urgency of these baptismal responses in each case are unmistakable. The faithful men who delivered the Gospel made it clear to these sinners that, until they were baptized, they were still in the guilt and condemnation of their sins, which would cause them to be lost eternally. The Bible therefore teaches that one should be baptized at the earliest moment he learns that he is a sinner in need of salvation and that he must be baptized to receive forgiveness of his sins.

### CONCLUSION

Baptism is more than a ritualistic exercise, a point of theological curiosity or discussion, or an optional religious act. It is more than a means of gaining admission to a humanly established religious organization. It is not an act of human merit or righteousness. Rather, the Bible teaches that baptism is the very act in which the Lord Jesus cleanses and saves the sinner from his sins by His own blood, whereupon He adds him to His church, His depository of those who are saved (Acts 2:27-47). Baptism, incidentally, also serves as a test of one's allegiance to the authority of the Son of God and His New Testament. We have studied what the **Bible** teaches, rather than what men have taught and teach, concerning baptism. It is sad beyond description that multiplied millions of people have stumbled and continue to stumble to their own eternal destruction at this simple test. I pray that none of those who read these words will be among those millions.

### WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

“Bible translations” is a very important study because it deals with the Word of God. Before beginning the study of translations, we must first understand the importance of the Truth. Truth should always be of primary importance. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). We have freedom by knowing and obeying Truth (8:32). Truth is important because we will be judged by it. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (12:48). When we understand the importance of truth, we should have a greater respect for the authority of the Bible.

If we truly believe that the Bible is the complete, inerent, inspired Word of God, then we must understand translation. It is important to know that we do not have the original manuscripts (autographs) that were actually penned. We do, however, have copies of those manuscripts and can, with great accuracy prove the validity of the Bible. With those manuscripts, we can have an inspired Bible today. However, if we are to have an inspired, authoritative Bible today,

then the version of the Bible must accurately say the same thing that was given in the original language.

### INSPIRATION

*Inspiration* comes from the Latin *inspiratio*, which means “the act of breathing in, breath of life” (“Inspiration”). The Greek word is *theopneustos* and means “inspired of God” (*Theos*, God, *pneo*, to breathe), and “is used in 2 Tim. 3:16, of the Scriptures as distinct from non-inspired writings” (Vine 263). Hence a message that is God-breathed, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of the Biblical writers. Peter explained it by writing:

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

The writers of the Bible were verbally inspired to write Scripture. Jesus said, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak” (Mat. 10:19). Inspiration included how and what they were to speak and write while they were guided by the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11). God inspired the thoughts and the words, yet did not prevent the use of human vocabulary or personality. Paul wrote:

For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

The writers of the Bible received planary inspiration. The revelation was complete with them. Jesus told His apostles:

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come (John 16:13).

Peter said, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3). Paul expressed these sentiments in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 when he wrote:

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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Jude explained that while he wanted to write about the common salvation in Christ, he was compelled to urge them to “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3).

Both in the Old and New Testaments the Bible claims inspiration. Isaiah wrote, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: For the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, And they have rebelled against me” (Isa. 1:2). Jeremiah said, “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer. 1:9). “God spake,” and “thus said the Lord” are used about 1300 times in the prophets and over 2500 times in the Old Testament. Jesus told His apostles:

But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

Peter exclaimed that what Paul wrote was Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16).

## TRANSLATION

Now that inspiration has been established, we move to translation. We do not have the original autographs, penned by the writer’s themselves. We do, however, have accurate translations (copies) of the autographs. By using these, we can have an accurate, inspired Bible today, which will teach us the way to heaven.

The Bible was written primarily in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. The majority of the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew, while small portions were written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek.

## Hebrew

The Hebrew language traces its roots to one of the two major language groups. Hebrew is from the Semitic language group (from Shem, the oldest son of Noah) (Geisler 324). It is part of the *Northwestern Division* of the Semitic language. “This division of the Semitic family includes the Canaanite subdivision as well as the Aramic elements and is represented by four dialects: Ugaritic, Phoenician, Moabite and Hebrew” (Geisler 325). The Hebrew and Aramaic dialects were the only ones of this group used in the translation of the Old Testament.

It is believed that Hebrew came from the Canaanite language. The Old Testament refers to its language in two ways. It is called the “language of Canaan” (Isa. 19:18) and the “Jews’ language” (cf. 2 Kgs 18:26, 28; Neh. 13:24; Isa. 36:11) (Jackson 19).

The Hebrew language was read from right to left and consisted of twenty-two consonates (Jackson 19).

The imagery of the Hebrew language is largely drawn from the activities and things of everyday life. It abounds with a variety of common figures of speech—parables, similes, metaphors, etc. As with other Semitic languages, Hebrew contains frequent anthropomorphic expressions, e.g., the “eyes of the Lord.” Any attempt to literalize these figures (as Mormon theologians do when they contend that God is a “man”) is the reflection of woeful ignorance (Jackson 20).

Geisler expands further about this language and explains that the Hebrew language is a “biography of a people and God’s dealings with them” (328). It is suited for this purpose for two reasons.

1. It is a *pictorial* language, speaking with vivid, bold metaphors that challenge and *dramatize* the story. The Hebrew language possesses a facility to present “pictures” of the events narrated.... The language shows “vast powers of association and, therefore, of imagination.” As a pictorial language, Hebrew presents a vivid picture of the acts of God among a people who became examples or illustrations for future generations (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11). Because the Old Testament was intended as a biographical book for believers, it was fitting for those truths to be presented graphically in a “picture-language.”

2. Further, Hebrew is a *personal* language. It addresses itself to the heart and emotions rather than merely to the mind or reason. Sometimes even nations are given personalities (cf. Mal. 1:2-3). Always the appeal is to the person in the concrete realities of life and not to the abstract or theoretical. Hebrew is a language through which the message is felt rather than thought. As such, the language was highly qualified to convey to the individual believer as well as to the worshipping community the personal revelation of the living God in the events of the Jewish nation (328-29).

### Aramaic

The Aramaic language was Semitic language, closely related to the Hebrew language. “In fact, of all Semitic languages, Aramaic is the most like Hebrew” (Jackson 20). The Hebrew language was considered the sacred language of the Jews. They, however, used Aramaic in their every day conversation and writing (Jackson 20). “In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century A.D., Aramaic, in one dialect or another, was the common daily tongues of Palestinian Jews, though it is probable that many Jews also spoke Hebrew and Greek” (Jackson 20). This language influenced “both vocabulary and form in the New Testament.... It was no doubt the language that Jesus used in day-to-day conversation” (Geisler 326).

The Old Testament was primarily written in Hebrew. There are very few passages that were written in Aramaic. Two examples of Aramaic in the Old Testament are found in portions of Ezra and Daniel.

### Septuagint

The Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek in the third century B.C. This translation became known as the Septuagint (or LXX). The name Septuagint is derived from a legend that approximately seventy scholars translated the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language.

The Septuagint gets its name from the 70 or 72 Jewish scholars supposedly commissioned in Alexandria during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.), according to the Letter of Aristeas to his brother Philocrates. These scholars were assembled to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language because Greek

was supplanting Hebrew as the language of the Jewish people. Aristeas comes up with the figure of 72 by calculating six elders for each of the 12 tribes of Israel. Adding to the legend and symbolism of the number is the idea that the translation was created in 72 days (“Septuagint”).

When the New Testament writers quoted from the Old Testament, most were from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew Bible.

### **Greek**

The New Testament was written in Koine Greek. *Koine* means “common” and was the language of the common man during the first century. Wayne Jackson says:

The New Testament was composed during that era known as the Koine age. This was a period of universal or common Greek. The Greek language was freely spoken throughout the antique world in that span from about 330 B.C. to 330 A.D. Koine was the normal street language in Rome, Alexandria, Athens, and Jerusalem. When the Romans finally conquered the Greeks, it was Greek influence that flowed throughout the empire. Augustus, the emperor of Rome, inscribed his seal in Greek. Paul, writing to the saints in Rome, the capital city of the empire, sent his message in Greek, not Latin! (21-22).

In Geisler and Nix’s *A General Introduction To The Bible*, they give two reasons why it was important that the New Testament was written in Greek:

1. Greek was an intellectual language. It was more a language of the mind than of the heart, a fact to which the great Greek philosophers gave abundant evidence. Greek was more suited to codifying a communication or reflection on a revelation of God in order to put it into simple communicable form. It was a language that could more easily render the credible into the intelligible than could Hebrew. It was for this reason that New Testament Greek was a most useful medium for expressing the propositional truth of the New Testament, as Hebrew was for expressing the biographical truth of the Old Testament. Since Greek possessed a technical precision not found in Hebrew, the theological truths which were more generally expressed in the Hebrew of the Old Testament were more precisely formulated in the Greek of the New Testament.

2. Furthermore, Greek was a nearly universal language. The truth of God in the Old Testament, which was initially revealed to one nation (Israel), was appropriately recorded in the language of the nation (Hebrew). But the fuller revelation given by God in the New Testament was not restricted in that way. In the words of Luke's gospel, the message of Christ was to "be preached in his name to all nations" (Lk. 24:47). The language most appropriate for the propagation of this message was naturally the one that was most widely spoken throughout the world. Such was the common (Koine) Greek, a thoroughly international language of the first century Mediterranean world (329-30).

We must recognize that the writers of the New Testament took common words used in their day to convey the message of salvation to a lost world. We know that, in God's providence, He employed the most effective language to cause even the simplest man to hear and understand what to do to be saved.

G. L. Archer observed:

Greek was the most ideally adapted linguistic medium for the World-Wide communication of the Gospel in the entire region of the eastern Mediterranean, Egypt and the Near East. Accurate in expression, beautiful in sound, and capable of great rhetorical force, it furnished an ideal vehicle for the proclamation of God's message to man, transcending Semitic barriers and reaching out to all the Gentile races. It is highly significant that the "fulness of times," the first advent of Christ, was deferred until such time as Greek opened up channels of communication to all the Gentile nations east of Italy and Libya on a level not previously possible under the multilingual situation that previously prevailed (870).

### **Latin**

The influence of the Roman Empire brought various forms of the Latin language. Classical Latin was spoken throughout the Roman Empire. Although the Bible was not originally written in Latin, some words were Latin in origin. It was not until the fourth century A.D. that Latin version of the Bible was made popular. Jerome translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew and the New Testament from the Greek. This became the standard Bible for what would become the Catholic Church.

By **500 AD** the Bible had been translated into over 500 languages. Just one century later, by **600 AD**, it has [sic] been restricted to only one language: the Latin Vulgate! The only organized and recognized church at that time in history was the Catholic Church of Rome, and they refused to allow the scripture to be available in any language other than Latin. Those in possession of non-Latin scriptures would be executed! This was because only the priests were educated to understand Latin, and this gave the church ultimate power...a power to rule without question...a power to deceive...a power to extort money from the masses. Nobody could question their “Biblical” teachings, because few people other than priests could read Latin. The church capitalized on this forced-ignorance through the 1,000 year period from 400 AD to 1,400 AD known as the “Dark and Middle Ages” (“The Pre-Reformation”).

### TEXT TYPES

For many years, the New Testament manuscripts have been grouped into “text types” or “families.” The groups of texts have been discussed and debated for many years. Some argue for the older texts, while others argue for the majority. These text types are generally categorized by the geographic area in which they were found and by their similarities in grammar and style.

### Alexandrian

The Alexandrian text is also called the Neutral Text by Westcott and Hort.

The **Alexandrian** Text Type seems to have largely developed around Egypt. It is the general scholarly consensus that the Alexandrian type often preserves the original reading. The typical Alexandrian manuscript is older than the typical manuscript of the other major type. Codex Sinaiticus, Codex Vaticanus (B), and quite a few other uncials and minuscules follow this type (“The Development”).

Westcott and Hort believed this was the oldest text and used this type in their Greek text. They also believed that other text types added to the text and, thus, said shorter was better. Most modern texts today, such as Nestle and UBS follow the Westcott and Hort theory. The American Standard Version and most modern versions today used this text family.

## Byzantine

The Byzantine Text Type seems to have developed in the area of Syria. Some call this the Koine type or (when they all agree) the Majority Text. The vast majority of late miniscule manuscripts belong to the Byzantine type, including those which were used in making early translations from Greek into English. The earliest extant manuscript of the Byzantine type is Codex Q, of the fifth century (“The Development”).

This text family uses the majority of the available Greek manuscripts for translation. This has also been called the Majority Text and Textus Receptus. Opponents of the Byzantine family say they are late manuscripts and thus corrupt. The King James Version and New King James Version were translated from this text group.

## Western or D Type

The **D Type** may have developed in Egypt also, although it was once called “Western.” The champion of the D Type manuscripts is Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis (D 05). Some people once believed that wherever the D Type reading was shorter, it represented the original reading. This is now known not to be true. However, the D Type often preserves unique readings, some of which may be the original. Some alterations in the D Type are regarded as intentional (“The Development”).

Some argue that the Western Text was taken to Rome, and then distributed throughout the world. One characteristic of the Western Text is that the reading is longer in many places and contains readings that are not in the Alexandrian or Byzantine Texts. Many contend that the Western text is unreliable and should not be considered a text type.

## Does the Text Type Matter?

It is obvious that there are differences in each of the text families mentioned above. These, however, are not enough to make significant differences in the translation or version. The problem arises in the **attitude** of those on the translation committees. Those who do not have a high regard for the authority of the Bible will be biased in the way they translate the sacred text. For us to have an accurate

translation today, it must be translated in an accurate and faithful manner according to the actual text.

### CONCLUSION

The Bible is truly a unique book. It is unique in its origin because it comes from the mind of God, not man. The Holy Spirit guided mere men to write this one-of-a-kind book through inspiration. The Bible has been translated into almost every language on earth today. It is available for the masses to read, study, and obey. We should appreciate the power of the Word of God and have respect for its authority. Paul wrote, “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 perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: WORSHIP

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## INTRODUCTION

What is worship? What do we think of when *worship* is mentioned? Do we just think of worship services? Worship is more than simply attending services and performing certain acts as vitally important as these are. Acceptable worship can only come from an acceptable life. Right daily living is vital if we are to worship God acceptably. Worship is not just formal services, for we can worship God outside of these. However, this is not to say, as some falsely teach, that all of life is worship.

## DEFINITIONS

Before we proceed, some definitions are in order that we might clearly understand what we are discussing. Definitions are useful and essential for communication, but in some situations they are inadequate for many reasons. We will mention one that relates to the matter of worship. Some things are so great, so magnificent, so deep, and so all-encompassing that they defy being reduced to simple definitions. *God* and *worship* are of this type; we cannot adequately define them.

However, to understand what worship is we need some sort of definition. The English word *worship* comes from an Anglo-Saxon word—“worth-ship” and thus we declare worth. In England they refer to the mayor as “his worship” and when speaking to a judge, “your worship.”

The *Oxford Dictionaries* defines worship as:

1[*mass noun*] the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity:

*worship of the Mother Goddess*

*ancestor worship*

religious rites or ceremonies, constituting a formal expression of reverence for a deity:

*the church was opened for public worship*

great admiration or devotion shown towards a person or principle:

the worship of celebrity and wealth

*archaic* honour given to someone in recognition of their merit.

The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary similarly defines the word.

A number of years ago the IBM magazine *Think* carried an article which sought to answer the question: “What happens when we worship? It gave three responses 1) We adore God. 2) There is a ‘give-and-take’ fellowship between God and man 3) There is a rededication or commitment of the worshipper to God” (Seidenspinner 23).

During World War II William Temple, at the time Archbishop of Canterbury (Church of England/Episcopal), urged the people of England to worship. He expressed what he meant by the term:

To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God (30).

We realize that all of the definitions we have given are from men, but they do help us to understand the meaning of *worship*. A summation of what we have said thus far is found in the words of Isaiah 6:1-9.

In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it

stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: The whole earth *is* full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, *which* he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid *it* upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here *am* I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; And see ye indeed, but perceive not.

Concerning this passage Andy T. Ritchie, Jr., wrote:

Nowhere else in the Bible is there to be found so complete a picture of everything that is involved in worship as here. In the record of the prophet's experience in the temple in the year that King Uzziah died, all of these steps and attitudes are seen: Isaiah's vision of God in his glory and majesty and the angelic being's giving voice to the Tersanctus. "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts," the confession of inadequacy and sin, the cleansing, the heavenly inquiry, "Who will go for us" and the response "Here am, I send me," and the commission, "Go, and tell this people" (6).

These definitions do not tell us whether those things involved in what is often called *worship* are acceptable to God—one reason being that these simple definitions are not totally adequate to give us an understanding as to what worship is acceptable to God. *Worship* is a Biblical concept; thus we need to understand what God's Word teaches about worship, which will be the thrust of this chapter.

### **IS IDOLATRY FOUND IN THE USA, EVEN AMONG CHRISTIANS?**

First, note some thoughts regarding idolatry, the worship of idols. A number of years ago a museum placed two objects side by side; one was an idol with the caption "Chinese god," the other with a more or less facetious caption, "American god." Is idolatry a reality

in the United States today? Is it found even among Christians? For all of the efforts that Christians have put forth to spread the Gospel, the *average* Christian is much nearer to a practical worship of a multiplicity of gods than we think. For example: mammon, fashion, nationalism, tradition, science, humanism, pleasures, entertainment, so called “idols” in entertainment and sports (*American Idol*). All of these have become *gods* to some who actually worship these idols. Many, I am sure, have heard the saying: “He’s a self-man man, and he worships his creator”; such is a form of idolatry.

When our hearts and minds bow down before them and serve them, they become objects of loyalty, devotion, and affection. We yield to their pressures and demands without thought as to whether God’s sovereignty is being violated. Sometimes we are conscious of allowing unimportant, even wrong things, to dominate our interest and our love. When we do, we commit a serious sin. Paul made it clear to the brethren at Colossae that covetousness is idolatry (Col. 3:5). This shows the dangers of idolatry that are prevalent and tempt us in many ways.

Under the Law of Moses, the Jews were in a covenant relationship with God, but many were idolaters. Many do not understand the extensiveness, scope or longevity of this. One of the principle missions of the prophets was to purge the people of their false gods and the evils that accompanied such worship. The Israelites had been chosen by God to bear witness to the nations of the one true God to whom they were espoused but yet had played the harlot. It took the children of Israel being taken into captivity for them to turn from this spiritual fornication. Note these words from the weeping prophet, Jeremiah:

The LORD said also unto me in the days of Josiah the king, Hast thou seen *that* which backsliding Israel hath done? she is gone up upon every high mountain and under every green tree, and there hath played the harlot. And I said after she had done all these *things*, Turn thou unto me. But she returned not. And her treacherous sister Judah saw *it*. And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not,

but went and played the harlot also. And it came to pass through the lightness of her whoredom, that she defiled the land, and committed adultery with stones and with stocks. And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD (Jer. 3:6-10).

Judah feigned worship. It was not true monotheism. It was not pure, sincere devotion as their hearts were not actually united with God. The Ten Commandments taught: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo. 20:3—“beside me”—marginal reading). Yet, they worshipped the gods of the Egyptians, Philistines, Phoenicians, et al., and bowed down before the gods of others and gods of their own creation. They even burned incense to the brazen serpent that Moses had made under God’s direction. Righteous Hezekiah finally destroyed the serpent and other idols (2 Kin. 18:4). Habakkuk showed the people the foolishness of idol worship:

What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; The molten image, and a teacher of lies, That the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it *is* laid over with gold and silver, And *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it. But the LORD *is* in his holy temple: Let all the earth keep silence before him (Hab. 2:18-20).

What God are you worshipping? Jesus said: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat. 4:10).

### **GOD—THE OBJECT OF OUR WORSHIP**

Our concept of the God that should be the object of our worship is often inadequate and wrong, which turns men away from true worship and turns them to things. Diverting and dissipating their loyalties and worshiping *gods* and not Jehovah God alone. Men often worship God inadequately because their concept of God is so poor. J. B. Phillips said something vital when he titled his book, *Your God Is Too Small*.

Worship, as well as man’s entire relationship to God needs clear and balanced knowledge and faith. With unbalanced concepts of God will come unbalanced worship. The Israelites correctly believed that God required justice in ethical behavior and animal sacrifice

in ritual. When these are given the wrong emphasis, the result is a distortion of the true nature of God and our relationship to Him.

Note Micah's statement:

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, *And* bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, With calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, *Or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born *for* my transgression, The fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what *is* good; And what doth the LORD require of thee, But to do justly, and to love mercy, And to walk humbly with thy God? (Mic. 6:6-8).

There are certain things we need to keep in mind about God especially when we worship. Our God is alive; we do not worship a dead God. The phrases used in Scripture: "Living God," "Spirit of the living God," and "living Father" all indicate that Christians worship a God who is **living**. In 1 Samuel 5 we have a picture of a dead god. The Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant and put it in the house of their god, Dagon. The next morning Dagon had fallen on his face; the same was true the next morning except there was nothing left but the trunk of the body. Dagon is dead, as are all the man-made gods of the Philistines and other nations.

Also, we worship a God whose existence is not derived from man. God has always and shall always live. He is eternal.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God. Thou turnest man to destruction; And sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight *Are but* as yesterday when it is past, And *as* a watch in the night (Psa. 90:1-4).

We live in a changing world governed by time, but we worship one who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). One who lives, who has always lived, and who always shall live. When we worship, we must remember the following: The God whom we worship knows all things. He is omniscient, all knowing. God's ways are beyond man's (Psa. 139:1-6). Man understands so little but our God knows all. True wisdom comes from God and His

Word, “a lamp unto my feet, And a light unto my path” (119:105). He is everywhere. He is omnipresent. He transcends time and space. Yet He indwells both (139:7-12). He is all powerful; He is omnipotent (Job 42:2; Jer. 32:17, 27; Luke 1:37). The love of God is amazing. Perhaps there is no other way for man to think and feel so meaningfully about God, the world, and mankind, as to think that “**God is love**” (1 John 4:8) and what it implies (Eph. 2:4-5). Man respects God more than any other reason because He is love. What if God only hated? That would be a fearful thought!

### OBJECTIVES OF WORSHIP

Let us now look at the objectives of worship. What does God expect from us, and what should we expect from worship?

When we worship, it should be to do God’s will. Those who claim the Bible as their authority would state: “God commands it,” thus, in their minds, settling the matter. However, if that is all, we have missed the mark! There should be something warmly personal in our communion with our Creator. It is obviously true that more is intended in such activities as praying, reading Scripture, and singing than simply obedience to a command. There is much more to worship than just fulfilling commands, as vitally important as that is.

Accepting the above, we move to a related objective that we desire to learn more of God’s will. We learn through consecration and dedication of ourselves: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Mat. 11:29). We learn not only through instruction but through impressions inherent in the spirit of real worship.

In our worship, we commune with God. Worship enables us to keep open vital connections between ourselves and God, the source of all spiritual life. It is the road the prodigal travels from sin to the Father’s house. It is the wire that connects a Christian with the dynamo of energy and light, the life-line through which flows the water of life. Worship is eating bread at the table of God. John Newton expressed it this way in his hymn, “Hungry, and Faint, and Poor”:

Hungry, and faint, and poor,  
Behold us, Lord, again

Assembled at Thy mercy's door,  
Thy bounty to obtain.

Thy word invites us nigh,  
Or we would starve indeed;  
For we no money have to buy,  
Nor righteousness to plead.

The food our spirits want,  
Thy hand alone can give;  
O hear the prayer of faith, and grant  
That we may eat and live! (424)

Tragic are the misconceptions and practice of some Christians that feed their souls on the husks of materialism, humanism, and mere amusement! How blind are those who see no dynamics in the Christian life and turn to fraternal orders, human governments, et al., rather than to the power that God supplies to provide life's meaning and challenges.

Another objective of worship is to stimulate and quicken. In acts of adoration and honor there should be awakened within us a consciousness of the presence of God that should cause us to be lost in **wonder**, **love**, and **praise** in worship to God. As we look around us, we see the wonders of the handiwork of God that should quicken us in our worship.

Not the least among the objectives of worship is the benefit that we received from the restoration of our souls in forgiveness and renewal. Through penitent prayer the child of God can receive the forgiveness of sins through the precious blood of Christ. There is an inescapable relationship between our worship and the lives that we lead. While no act of righteousness can earn a cleansed life nor can a rite of absolution remit the guilt of another, the spirit of repentance and asking on the part of the guilty in worship is an acknowledgement of the goodness and sovereignty of God. Who has not, as the result of worship, felt its renewing and refreshing influence? David, in Psalm 51, expresses a great sense of sin that he confessed, but also he pleaded for a clean heart and a right spirit. Forgiveness, though essential, is not enough; the child of God needs restoration and recreation. The shepherd leads into green pastures and beside still

waters, but this does not suffice. There needs to be the restoration to one's place in the fold, a sense of well-being is also necessary: "He restoreth my soul" (23:3).

A further objective of worship should be to praise the Lord. When we worship, we should praise God for all He has done for us. Much, if not all, of our worship should be pervaded with praise. In all that we do we are to be thankful and praise Him for all He has done. A reading of the Psalms will open our minds to true praise.

O for a thousand tongues to sing  
 My great Redeemer's praise,  
 The glories of my God and King,  
 The triumphs of His grace (Wesley 457).

Each aspect of worship that we have looked at is so much a part of the others it is difficult to make a distinction because there is a vital and indissoluble relationship between all the truly worthy objectives of worship. The final, all-encompassing point of worship is to associate with Him, experience Him, to become like Him, and to partake of His divine nature. Often we covet intimate contact with certain individuals, and we hope that some of their good will "rub off on us." We need to associate with God in communion with Him to partake of His likeness.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF WORSHIP AND LIFE**

In our introduction we stated: "Acceptable worship can only come from an acceptable life. Right daily living is vital if we are to worship God acceptably." Many seek to compartmentalize their lives between the sacred and the secular. However, our God is not confined to the church building, He not only desires us to worship Him in the formal assemblies of the church but also to serve Him in our daily lives (Rom. 12:1-2). If our daily lives are not acceptable to God, then our worship is also unacceptable:

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; Neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, And your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear (Isa. 59:1-2).

I hate, I despise your feast days, And I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept *them*: Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; For I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, And righteousness as a mighty stream (Amos 5:21-24).

Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Mat. 5:23-24).

Sin prevents worship from being acceptable to God. Thus, even if worship is in the authorized form, if we do not treat our brother in a right manner, then, according to what Jesus taught, we might as well not attempt to worship. We must first make it right with our brother and then come and worship.

Have you ever noticed children who appear bored in the assembly—maybe even some adults who have appeared bored? It could be that it is boring. If it were not, maybe our attendance would improve, more work would get done, and people would live more Christ-like lives. Our worship assemblies should be a time when we “get our buckets filled” and our “batteries charged” in such a way that we will be strengthened and sustained for the days between assemblies as we move about in this sin-filled world. Too often, instead of seeking the sustenance that they need, they are just watching to see how the song leader, preacher, teacher, et al., *perform* instead of being truly involved in the worship themselves. This does not mean that we have to change the format of the worship—but our attitude towards worship.

Far too often there is a difference between the songs we sing and what we are during the week. We sing *Purer in heart* yet tell filthy stories, gossip, and harbor bitterness. We sing *Take my life* but live selfishly in almost every way. We sing *Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. . . . praising my Savior all the day long* yet have fear and frustration while praising the Savior seldom, if at all. We sing: *Standing on the promises*, yet although we may stand to sing it, in reality we are

simply “sitting or standing on the premises.” We sing *I must needs go home by the way of the cross*, yet we are thinking “let’s hurry so we can get to the cafeteria or restaurant. We sing *What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear* yet deny that we have sins, except by vague or indirect admission. We sing *Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus* but go everywhere else, including the lodge, the psychiatrist, taverns, and places of pleasure for fraternity, peace, and fellowship. We could give more illustrations, but we have shown enough to make the point.

Because of the close relationship between worship and life, some teach that “all of life is worship.” Such is not taught in Scripture. In the New Testament there are some eighty references to *worship* or some form of the word. In each there is an allusion to an act performed or to be performed by someone toward another. Such is not always that which is directed to God. For example, the Ephesians were bowing in worship to Diana. When the word is used, it involves one to be worshipped, one to perform the worship, and an act of worship in addition to the special attitude or “spirit” (John 4:23-24). There is a sharp distinction that is drawn between the normal mundane course of life and in events of worship to God in the Scripture.

Elkanah, the father of Samuel, “went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh” (1 Sam. 1:3). His purpose in going to Shiloh was to worship; he had to make the trip to accomplish the worship. He was not worshipping in everything he did in life. To worship, he had to do something special. He had to make that trip, he had to plan for it each year, and when he reached Shiloh, he had to offer a sacrifice.

After the death of Solomon the kingdom divided. Rehoboam was king of Judah while Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, was king of Israel. Jeroboam reasoned:

If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah (1 Kin. 12:27).

Thus, he built altars at Dan and Bethel and placed golden calves there for the people to worship so the people would not go to Jerusalem to worship, as God had commanded.

Similar illustrations of this fact, such as the worship of Abraham when he was called upon to sacrifice Isaac, his son, could be given which show that worship involves a specific act and is not all that we do.

However, there are those who insist that **everything** in life is worship. The basic point that is made is that from the moment one comes up out of the waters of baptism, we are worshipping God in everything we do. Such is false and contrary to Scripture. The confusion comes when one does not draw the scriptural distinction between **worship** and **service**. They often quote Romans 12:1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which* is your reasonable service,” but use different translations that replace *service* with *worship*. There are distinct Hebrew and Greek words used for *worship* than those used for *service*. Space will not allow for a full discussion, however, a study of the use of these words clearly shows a distinction. The major word in Greek for “worship” is *proskuneo*—meaning “to kiss toward” or “bow down,” clearly indicating specific acts or actions.

It is argued: “Our life is a sacrifice, and since a sacrifice is an act of worship, then everything we do is, in fact, worship.” However, such is based on an incorrect translation of the Greek word *latreuo*. To *serve* is a broader term than *worship*. Hence, all worship to God is service to Him, but not all service to Him is worship. A refusal or failure to recognize this distinction brings confusion and departure from biblically approved worship. We are forbidden to worship men (Mat. 4:10) yet commanded to render service to: the “fatherless and widows” (Jam. 1:27); “all *men*, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10); and “all the saints” (Phi. 1:1). Jesus came “to minister,” that is “to serve” mankind (Mat. 20:28). Did Jesus come to worship men? Clearly **worship** and **service** are not

always used interchangeably or synonymous! To make them do so would make the Bible contradict itself.

Some problems clearly arise if this doctrine is accepted. If everything one does is worship, then none could worship in a wrong way. Burning of incense, counting of beads, washing feet, dedicating babies would all be acceptable. If all of life is worship, what about instrumental music? Either instrumental music to accompany singing would be unacceptable at any time, or it could be used in the assembly. What about women teachers teaching men in the school situation? If Satan can get across the idea that any service is worship, then what difference does it make whether one attends the worship assembly, for he could be worshipping God while mowing a sick neighbor's yard or repairing a car for someone who could not afford to pay to have it done. Now, one can sing praises to God while changing a baby's diaper. The singing would be an act of worship and the changing of a diaper could be an act of Christian service, but changing a diaper is not worship!

### WORSHIP REGULATIONS

We find guiding principles and direction for our worship from Scripture. The Word of God gives many conditions of acceptable worship.

Our worship must be with both the "spirit" and with the "understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15). Worship must be in the prescribed manner of spirit and understandable to those present. Our worship must also be carried out "decently and in order" (14:40). That is we must do those things prescribed for worship that have been commanded, but we do it effectively in a decent and orderly manner. Some thought needs to be taken with regards to our worship assemblies; we must plan to do things in an orderly manner and do that which has been authorized.

One might ask: "Is worship scriptural if it is not carried out 'decently and in order'? Could the lack of planning, the boisterousness, inattentiveness, and joking that occurs in many of our meetings be under condemnation as not being 'decently and in order'?" We are to worship in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). As Christians we

have long emphasized the need for worship being “in truth.” We look into the denominational world and see how far they have drifted from being guided by the Bible. However, such is not confined to the denominational world, for more and more we see where congregations are either ignoring or deliberately violating the “truth” revealed in Scripture. Sometimes, we fall short with respect to “in spirit.” We think of the right “spirit” or “worshipful spirit,” but such is not synonymous with “in spirit.” Worshipping “in spirit” seems to convey the idea of man’s spirit actually communing with God, who is Spirit. While true worship of Jehovah involves mechanical forms, the essence of worship lies within the spirit of man. However, the Bible nowhere indicates, nor are we implying, that we can worship correctly while ignoring the God-given directions for worship—the forms, the acts or avenues of worship—for something that comes from our inner feelings. However, we are emphasizing that for our worship to be acceptable, it must be more than simply “going through the motions” of the acts or avenues of worship that God has authorized. The outward form alone is not acceptable worship; it must be from the heart and “in spirit.”

To be pleasing to God, one must have the right pattern, standard, of worship (John 17:17). Noah and Moses built in accord with the divine pattern or blueprint (Gen. 6; Heb. 8:5). The Israelites were to worship God according to the precepts of the Law of Moses. Christians are under obligation, not to the Law of Moses, but to the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2).

When the church assembles on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2), there are certain acts of worship that are required. These are: prayer to God in the name of Jesus (1 Cor. 14:15; Acts 12:5; Col. 3:17; John 14:13), partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-29; Acts 20:7), giving of our means (1 Cor. 16:1-2), preaching and teaching (Rom. 10:17; Acts 11:26; 20:7), and singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12). These five acts of worship are the only ones authorized by God (Col. 3:17).

That worship must be in “spirit and in truth” should not surprise us. This is the way it has always been. We see where God refused Is-

rael's worship because of a wrong attitude (Hos. 6:6). On the other hand, God punished Cain (Gen. 4), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2), and Uzziah (2 Chr. 26) for not worship according to the pattern. Jesus condemned the Pharisees because they were adding to God's law and replaced Divine law with their own law, thus making their worship vain (Mat. 15:1-9).

Limitations of space will not allow a more detailed discussion of these acts or avenues of worship that God has authorized except to say that God does not give us authority to add to or take from these acts of worship.

### CONCLUSION

When we worship, we need to remember Who it is we are worshipping. Let us seek to worship as we ought that we might draw close to God. We can worship God in and out of the assembly, and we should, both publically and privately. Worship cannot be isolated from our daily living, although not everything we do in life is worship.

However, we must be sure that our worship is "in spirit and in truth." We must worship with the right attitude of heart and life as well as in accordance with God's instructions. It is not an "either/or" situation, but our worship must be in "spirit" and "truth." Andy Ritchie wrote:

Engaging in the so-called "acts of worship" which are authorized by the Scriptures and keeping out those unauthorized does not constitute worship either—unless the "acts" are engaged in thoughtfully and meaningfully.... Worship is big and most comprehensive. It is an acknowledgement of the greatness of God and of the need of man; it is a soul standing in awe before the mystery of the universe; it is the desperate cry of the lost soul and the grateful song of the saved one; it is the quickened, challenged soul dedicated again. (7-8)

Let us ever seek to: "Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (Psa. 29:2).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: COVENANTS

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## INTRODUCTION

*Covenant* is found many times in the King James Version. The import of the word is similar whether it is a translation of Hebrew or Greek. The general idea expressed by *covenant* is an agreement or promise enacted by one or more persons and having relevance to the same. The covenants of the Bible generally fall into one of two categories: a covenant between God and man and covenants between men. Both are found in the Bible: however, the covenants between God and men are by far the most important for the simple reason that the covenants made between men, for their own use, are regulated by the covenants between God and men.

The Bible contains the records of many covenants and even the Bible itself is composed of two covenants—commonly referred to as the Old and New Testaments. Simply recognizing that the Bible record contains covenants and that the Bible is made up of the Old and New Covenants does not automatically engender comprehension of what a covenant is or the particulars that identify the occasion as a covenant. The comprehension or understanding of what a covenant is, its constituent parts, and its inherent significance is the focus of this study of: What the Bible Says About Covenants.

## THE WORD COVENANT

There are two Hebrew and Greek words which are of particular interest in studying covenants. The Hebrew root word that is very often translated “covenant” is from: *berîth*. The Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew lexicon gives this usage for *berîth* (concerning a covenant between God and man): “covenant, as a divine [sic] constitution or ordinance with signs or pledges” (136). Concerning a covenant between men, Brown, Driver, and Briggs give these usages: “treaty, alliance, league; constitution, ordinance, between monarch and subjects; agreement, pledge; alliance of friendship” (136).

The Greek root word translated “covenant” is from: *diathêkē*. Thayer’s Greek lexicon gives these usages for *diathêkē*:

1. a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid...Gal. 3:15, where under the name of a man’s disposition is meant specifically a testament, so far as it is a specimen and example of that disposition...especially the last disposal which one makes of his earthly possessions after his death, a testament or will.
2. a compact, covenant...very often in the Scriptures for [berîth]. (136).

The main focus of this study will be a covenant as “a divine [sic] constitution or ordinance with signs or pledges” (Brown 136). This definition is at the *heart and soul* of God’s relationship to man. God’s creative work, as recorded in Genesis 1, implies a covenant or constitution. This subject opens the door to the question: “What are the constituent parts of a covenant?”

### WHAT MAKES A COVENANT A COVENANT?

As can be understood by the foregoing lexical entries for the Greek and Hebrew root words translated “covenant,” a *covenant* is an agreement or constitution enacted with expectations between two or more parties or a party and a thing(s) or object(s). The patriarch Job said, “I made a covenant with mine eyes; Why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). The grammatically literal second party in Job’s covenant was his eyes. However, the real agreement was between Job and the righteous demands of God (cf. Mat. 5:28). Although Job lived under the law of patriarchy, he was still required

to exercise control and not indulge in lust. Such is common to the covenants made by God with another.

### A Covenant from the Beginning

God's relationship to His creation is a covenantal one. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). However, that relationship is not that of the Deist who believes that God created the "heaven and the earth" but then adopted a "hands-off" approach, forsaking the universe and its inhabitants to self-sustainability. Neither is it the view of the Pantheist, who believes that God is everything. The Bible, the very mind of God revealed to men (2 Tim. 3:16), sets forth the truth. The Godhead not only created the universe (and all else besides Themselves—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) but upholds and sustains that creation:

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and **by him all things consist** (Col. 1:16-17).

Who being the brightness of *his* glory, and the express image of his person, and **upholding all things by the word of his power**, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and **thou preservest them all**; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee (Neh. 9:6).

Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains; Thy judgments *are* a great deep: O LORD, **thou preservest man and beast** (Psa. 36:6).

God did indeed enter into a covenant with His creation—a covenant of preservation. This is further shown by the first mention of a covenant, as found in Genesis 6: "But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee" (6:18). This covenant was made by God toward Noah and his family and the "seed-stock" of the terrestrial animal kingdom. This was a covenant of preservation

for man and animal against the global flood and its catastrophic consequences.

Notice the contrasts expressed by God.

God's global flood was for the immediate purpose of destroying wickedness out of the earth: "And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, **to destroy** all flesh, wherein *is* the breath of life, from under heaven; *and* every thing that *is* in the earth shall die" (6:17).

In contrast, God established a covenant with righteous Noah, his family, and particularly of the animal kingdom:

But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee. And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every *sort* shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep *them* alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every *sort* shall come unto thee, **to keep *them* alive** (6:18-20).

Relative to the above covenant, and actually its summation, is the rainbow of Genesis 9. God established the rainbow as a sign of His everlasting decree concerning the Earth and its population—including men. Signs, of varying degrees of exposure, often accompanied the establishment of God's covenants.

Notice now God's explanation.

God's covenant was established with man and the earth:

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that *is* with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth (9:8-10).

The covenant established a law of God that never again would the Earth be deluged: "And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (9:11).

The rainbow was set in place as the "token" or sign of the covenant:

And God said, This *is* the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that *is* with you,

for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which *is* between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This *is* the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth (9:12-17).

The “rainbow” covenant is very typical of God’s covenants. Within its structure one can see: (1) the parties relevant to the enacting of the covenant: God, man, and the earth (9:17; cf. 1 Cor. 15:39); (2) the constitution or law of the covenant (Gen. 9:11); (3) the sign or “token” of the covenant, confirming its supernatural origin (9:12-13).

### **A Covenant with Abraham and His Seed**

A further example of God’s covenants involves the one of circumcision. God called Abram, of Ur of the Chaldees, away from his homeland and family to sojourn in a land that would be given as inheritance to Abram’s seed after him (12:1-3). In establishing Abraham and his lineage (through Isaac) as His own peculiar people (cf. Deu. 14:2), God chose to set a mark in the flesh of all males of the house of Abraham and of his seed after him.

And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations. This *is* my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee (Gen. 17:9-10).

The covenant of circumcision enacted a law upon the house of Abraham:

Every man child among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which *is* not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that

is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant (17:10-14).

The physical aspect of the circumcision was the “token” or sign of covenant: “And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you” (17:11).

Once more the common three-fold composition of God’s covenants is easily seen: (1) the parties relevant to the enacting of the covenant: God and the house and lineage of Abraham (17:9-10); (2) the constitution or law of the covenant (17:10-14); (3) the sign or “token” of the covenant (17:11).

### **The Covenant at Sinai**

Great was the cry of God’s people, Israel, when they endured the cruel taskmasters of Egypt while in bondage to Pharaoh (Exo. 2:23; 3:7-9). Their despair and tribulation was looked upon by God and He sent Moses and Aaron to deliver His people from the hand of the Egyptians (2:23-4:31). God delivered his people from Egypt and brought them to Sinai by way of the Red Sea (13:18-19:1). When Israel was encamped in the wilderness of Horeb (Sinai), God prepared the people to receive His covenant saying:

Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel (Exo. 19:3-6).

God said further:

Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third

day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, *that ye go not* up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether *it be* beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount (19:9-13).

God showed, at the time allotted, a great and terrible “token” of the Divine authorship of the covenant He was making with Israel:

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that *was* in the camp trembled.... And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice (19:16, 18-19).

Further, God put forward yet another “sign” of His authorship of this covenant—He spoke to Israel from the mount, giving them the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20). These words were memorialized in stone by the finger of God:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them (24:12).

And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God (31:18).

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written. And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables (32:15-16).

At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words

that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like unto the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the LORD commanded me (Deu. 10:1-5).

The law of this new covenant made by God with His people Israel was epitomized by the Ten Commandments given orally by God from the mount: “And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone” (4:13).

One will find the same three-part framework in the covenant made at Sinai: (1) the parties relevant to the enacting of the covenant: God and the house Israel (Exo. 19:5-6); (2) the constitution or law of the covenant (20:1-17; this is a prelude to the entirety of the Law of Moses); (3) the sign or “token” of the covenant (19:16-20:18; 24:12).

### **THE INHERENT SIGNIFICANCE OF GOD’S COVENANTS**

The special significance of any covenant between God and men is the inherent authorship of that covenant. The existence of the covenant is not initiated by men nor are the terms and conditions within the jurisdiction of men. The responsibility of man is to comply to the law of the covenant, if that covenant has compliance stipulations. God has not so determined that men have any moral or legal right (nor ability) to argue the form or standards of any covenant between themselves and God. God lays forth a covenant and all those to whom it applies are, for righteousness sake, required to obey it. God determines the blessings and curses of His covenants, not men (cf. Deu. 27-29). In short: God determines the covenant—men accept it to their blessing or reject it to their punishment.

Lest any man say that God’s ways are unequal—that He is unfair in His dealings with men; notice the Hebrews’ writer:

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; **but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.** Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (12:5-11).

God's covenants with men have been for their good—their spiritual well-being. The purpose of God's covenants has been to provide to men those things which he needs; whether it be a satisfactory earthly home on which to dwell and serve God or whether it be a law of righteousness, which men must believe and obey that they may be in fellowship with God and be about His work. Yes, indeed, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose” (Rom. 8:28).

## CONCLUSION

When one examines the covenants that God has made with men through the ages, a pattern of form or standardized framework can be seen: the parties involved, the law or constitution of the covenant, and the accompanying sign or token.

The greatest covenant of all is no exception to the above—the covenant of the Christ. God declared that He would make a new covenant (Heb. 8:6-7) with Israel, not like the covenant made in the wilderness of Sinai (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Heb. 8:8-12). This covenant would be for all men (John 3:16; Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Tit. 2:11). The law of this new covenant would be the law of the Christ (John 12:48; Acts 17:30-31). The sign or token would be the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ (Luke 24:46-48; 1 Cor.

15:1-8). Finally, the memorial of the covenant is the Lord's Supper, which the faithful of God's children partake of each first day of the week (11:23-26; Acts 20:7).

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb. 13:20-21).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: CHRISTIAN GROWTH

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## INTRODUCTION

**B**lessings enjoyed in Christ include not only redemption but also a renewal. In baptism, we undergo a “washing of regeneration” and also rise to walk in “newness of life” (Tit. 3:5; Rom. 6:4). The renewal we find in Christ involves the concept of spiritual growth. Just as a healthy physical life is one of growth, so is a healthy spiritual life a process of growth. Sadly, not all Christians do so. Many have been Christians for years, with little change or improvement. They are often less useful to the Lord than when they first became Christians. Failing to grow, they become stagnant, like a pool of water. Spiritual growth does not happen by default. Unlike in the physical body, spiritual growth occurs only by choice. If we do not make that decision and stick to it, there will be no development.

Spiritual growth is commanded by God. In the great commission, Jesus commanded His apostles to make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things that He had commanded (Mat. 28:18-20). Implicit in the command to teach is that disciples would be obedient learners and constantly growing. Explicitly in the epistles it is commanded (2 Pet. 3:18). We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Peter begins his second epistle describing this process (1:5-8). We are to add to our faith the graces such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, etc.

Abounding in these graces, we are fruitful, which implies growth. When Christians stagnate they were sternly rebuked (Heb. 5:12ff).

Spiritual growth requires diligent effort unlike physical maturation. People do not grow by default. Unless there is some kind of disorder, the physical body will grow, if we feed it the right things, with very little effort on our part. The spiritual body, left to its own, will only become lifeless and useless to the cause of Christ. We should not think just because we are aging, that we are growing spiritually. Jesus said that it requires labor (John 6:27). Paul wrote that it requires work and pressing on (Phi. 2:12; 3:13-14). Peter told us that it requires diligence (2 Pet. 1:5, 10). Like physical health, spiritual growth requires regular exercise.

We are not alone in our efforts. While we work out our salvation, God is at work in us (Phi. 2:12-13). Just as He was with us producing our new birth, He is with us as we begin and complete our work (1:6; Tit. 3:5). We are strengthened by God in our efforts by providing the armor to stand strong in the power of His might (Eph. 6:10ff). There are blessings and comfort to those who will grow in the faith and put forth their best work as they strive to live the Christian life.

God expects much of His people. We can know that **if** we do it His way, we will be blessed and fruitful in our work as we mature in the faith. There is no room for those who sit idly by and allow the work to be done by others and then expect the same, or more, blessings that God will bestow upon the faithful.

## DISCUSSION

There has to be a basic understanding of how to bring about spiritual growth. It begins with the individual and his willingness to prepare himself to do the work that God has commanded. The following are examples of what God is expecting of each of us in our work toward development:

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments (Ezra 7:10).

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra

the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, *and* Meshullam. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maa-seiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people *stood* in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading (Neh. 8:1-8).

Can any person, with any understanding of what is above, not feel and desire this attitude toward the Word of God? Ezra first prepared his heart. If any of us want to understand and have the desire needed to faithfully obey and follow God, we must first prepare our hearts to do so. In contrast, choreographed assemblies we see today are a far cry from the reverence and somberness displayed by these in Ezra and Nehemiah.

They prepared their hearts and then were able to learn God's commands and judgments. It is a crying shame what some today present to God as worship and the Christian life. How many times have we looked out into the congregations and seen a very lax attitude toward the reading of God's Word or the teaching and preaching done within that assembly? We have all seen *Christians* who refuse to sing, give of their means, pray, or do much more than look

at their watches in disgust that the preacher has “only one more minute, then I’m heading to the house.”

When we read of the reverence the people had for God’s Word, we realize that we have lost much in our more modern society. Some have lost their willingness to prepare their hearts and participate willingly in worship each time we meet. Those who are properly prepared are glad to be able to come to a place of worship and actively gain knowledge there in that assembly.

### **Growing in the Grace and Knowledge of Jesus Christ**

An important element in having a fulfilled and blessed life is given by the apostle Peter: “But grow in grace, and *in* the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him *be* glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18). What does it mean to grow in knowledge and how can we make sure we are growing as we are commanded?

First, it involves the development of the eight Christian graces: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Pet. 1:5-8). We are to have conviction, goodness, correct insight, self-discipline, the ability to bear up under trials, a Godly character, and charity toward those within and without the Lord’s church. We must abound in these, and only then can it be said we are growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

This knowledge of Christ Jesus is more than just simply increasing our intellectual knowledge of Him. Though such knowledge has its place, we see it is just one of the graces we are commanded to have in use in our lives. Peter was telling us that our growth should involve a fuller and more personal knowledge. The way this comes about is by developing the Christ-like attributes defined above. The more we grow in these graces, the more we really know Jesus. Such knowledge comes only as we demonstrate these Christ-like graces in our lives.

Second, it involves developing these graces in conjunction with each other. *Add* means to supply or provide. The word suggests the idea of each grace working in harmony with the others to produce the overall effect. The preposition *to* suggests that each grace is to

temper and make perfect the grace that goes before it. For example, “to knowledge [add] self-control” shows that self-control enables one to apply properly the knowledge one has. Therefore, each grace is necessary, and all must be developed in conjunction with each other. We cannot be selective and just pick the ones that we like and leave the others behind.

Third, it involves diligent effort. *Diligence* means “zeal, sometimes with haste” (1:5, 10). To grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ requires much effort. We do not accidentally or naturally develop these graces. These are important and each of us needs to examine ourselves and determine if we are growing in the knowledge as we mature in Christ.

Grace and Peace are used as common forms of greeting in the New Testament. Grace is a greeting which requests God’s favor upon those addressed, and peace is the natural result of God’s favor. In 2 Peter 1:2, we note that the two blessings are multiplied in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. All men experience God’s favor and its result to some degree (Mat. 5:45), but only in Christ can one enjoy the fullness of God’s favor and peace (Eph. 1:3; Phi. 4:6-7). All things pertaining to life and godliness are given through this knowledge (2 Pet. 1:3-4). *Life* refers to our spiritual life and well-being and godliness to the conduct which comes out of devotion and loyalty to God. Only as we grow in this knowledge, do we enjoy the true, full life available by God’s Divine power.

Failure to grow in this knowledge results in spiritual shortsightedness (1:9). The ultimate goal for the faithful Christian is to become like Christ (Rom. 8:29; Col. 3:9-11). Making no attempt to mature is an indication that we forgot why we were redeemed by the blood of Jesus in the first place! To have our sins forgiven is the greatest gift given to man. We also must present ourselves before God like His Son in our living the life of a child of God.

We are promised by God that we will never stumble (2 Pet. 1:10), which does not mean that we will never sin (1 John 1:8, 10). The word simply means we will not fall into such a state as to lose our promise of salvation. Remember, this is true only if we are “giving

all diligence” to grow in the knowledge of Christ and thereby “making our calling and election sure.”

An entrance into the everlasting kingdom will be abundantly supplied (2 Pet. 1:11). This is the ultimate destiny of the redeemed. What we are able to do is live in such a way in this life that we can joyously anticipate what lies ahead—heaven, the home of the saved. How great and beautiful are the promises to those who grow in the grace and knowledge of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

### **Hindrances to Growth**

Growth is necessary in all areas of life: business, science, industry, etc. This is especially true in our lives as Christians (Eph. 4:14-15; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 The. 1:3). Below are some (not an exhaustive list) of the ways we are hindered in our growth as a Christian.

First, some show a lack of effort. Growing in Christ is not automatic. One may still be a “babe” after many years (Heb. 5:13). Growth requires effort, but those who are spiritually lazy will simply follow the course of least resistance. They will forever remain babes if they do not fall away altogether

Second, some become discouraged. Some make a good beginning but eventually quit. The reasons vary: problems in the church, personal problems, lack of encouragement from others, etc. The cares of this world and the selfishness so many have today can cause us to become more concerned with self and less with care of others.

Third, some do not apply what is learned from studies and lessons. A knife stays bright when used, but unused it becomes rusty and needs repair. We lose the knowledge, ability, and opportunities when we do not use them. If we are not earnest, we will simply drift away from the Lord (2:1).

Fourth, we allow the concerns of this world to drown out what is truly important. Crops, trees, and flowers do not grow well when they are crowded. Our spiritual growth will be hindered if we allow others to crowd out our spiritual life. Businessmen may become too busy to attend to God’s business. A woman may be so occupied with taking care of the home, children, or husband that she has no time for God. Young people may be so busy with school activities

that prayer, worship, good works, and Bible study are crowded out. Preachers might get so tied down in meetings and errands that they do not have time to spend alone with God. Jesus warned about this problem:

And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful (Mark 4:18-19).

No faithful child of God wants to become among the seeds in the thorns. It boils down to priorities and discipline. We cannot allow the cares and concerns of the world to take us away from our duties as Christians!

### **Practical Ways to Grow Spiritually**

**Become active in the work of the congregation.** Begin doing this immediately. I have known a few elders in my life, and I have not met many who said people came requesting to do **more** work in the congregation. It is important to understand there is work for everyone. It is best that you start with something that you are able to handle. Offer your services to the elders, and they will be glad to find work for you to do in keeping with your ability. They could possibly even give you work that is challenging and will open your eyes to talents that you never thought you possessed. Have the attitude of Isaiah: “Here *am* I; send me” (Isa. 6:8). Look for work that needs to be done. The best servant is one who can see things to be done and does them without having to be told every step to take. Most of us are good critics and the way to get away from that attitude is to take the initiative and not sit back and wait on someone to assign it.

**Start a program of regular private devotions.** Spend time each day alone with God engaged in prayer, Bible study, singing praises. Such time consistently spent will supply the spiritual nourishment necessary for spiritual growth. Many Christians do not grow because they try to exist on a “spiritual diet” and are starving. Families can set aside time to study together and enjoy the tackling of topics that come up in reading the Bible. Many of our children

are not getting the study and knowledge needed to overcome the problems they face each and every day. They are being flooded with all manner of false teaching regarding God, the church, morals, and other worldly desires. If parents do not teach their children, then the schools, teachers, and friends will give them all the things they need to be as worldly as the neighbor down the street. Family study time gives parents the opportunity to spend time with the kids away from the television and other distractions.

**Start a library in your own home.** The preacher is not the only person with the market on books that can help with study. Caution needs to be used depending upon maturity level, but all of us can have basic books that will help enhance our study time. There are many books out there, but we need to understand that some contain the doctrines of men. There is software available that is free or at low cost to help with geography, word studies, etc. We do not need to be wealthy to have books in our own libraries. We can ask for specific books on birthdays and other holidays. The elders and preachers of each congregation are willing to assist members to find books that will help us in our own personal Bible studies. Just ask!

**Become involved in leading others to Christ.** Beginning to implement the suggestions given above will increase our opportunities to share the Gospel. We need to pray for doors to be opened, and then when the doors do open, we need to be ready to teach others. Even if we do not do the actual teaching, we can do what Andrew and Philip did: lead a friend to Christ (John 1:40-46). Those involved in leading others to Christ rarely ever stop growing in Christ themselves.

**Practice constant self-examination.** The Bible calls us to examine ourselves in our relation to Christ (2 Cor. 13:5). There are many things we need to ask ourselves regarding our examination, such as: “Do I have a better Bible knowledge than one year ago?” or “Am I as interested in Jesus Christ today as when I was baptized?” or “Have I helped someone else to become a Christian?” or “Am I enjoying life as a child of God?” and “Do I set a good example for other Christians?” This is not an exhaustive list but gives us an idea of what we

need to be asking ourselves regarding our spiritual growth or lack of it. Self-examination is not an easy process, but true spiritual growth is impossible without it.

### CONCLUSION

It is sad, but true, that many Christians are often just religious enough to be miserable. The life of the Christian is intended to be one filled with love, joy, peace, and so much more (Gal 5:22-23). The Christian life is one of abundance that only Jesus can provide (John 10:10). May each of us work to be the most Christ-like in aspects of our lives and remember that we have a reward that is waiting to all those who will remain faithful and grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and *I pray God* your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful *is* he that calleth you, who also will do *it* (1 The. 5:23-24).

### WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: EMOTIONS

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## INTRODUCTION

A thorough study of what the Bible says about emotions is an enormous task. Almost any opening to which one turns in the Scripture, will have either an explicit or implied statement regarding the topic. While it is not possible to exhaust all that the Bible says about the subject in this chapter, we can strive to discuss some of the most important points on this broad subject.

The Bible says a lot about many different emotions including the basic ones of love, hate, joy, surprise, anger, sadness, and fear. The philosophies of men, of which we are to beware (Col. 2:8), often abuse, misuse, and even in some cases, encourage the suppression of human emotions. Luke wrote:

Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

The Epicureans believed that pleasure was the chief good. The stoicks (Stoics), on the other hand believed that all passions and affections were to be suppressed. As it relates to the emotions, other

men and groups of men also have the tendency to embrace one extreme or another. Some seem to have the idea that the emotions have no place in religion and one's relationship to God, while others rely on emotions as their guide in religious belief and practice. Both are wrong! What does the Bible have to say about emotions?

### **ON THESE TWO COMMANDMENTS**

A man who was a Pharisee and a lawyer, went to Jesus, and asked Him, which was the greatest commandment in the law. Jesus answered that the greatest was to love God with all of one's heart, soul, and mind. He went on to say that the second greatest was to love one's neighbor as one's self. When one begins seriously to search what the Bible has to say regarding emotions, what he is looking for is how all of his emotions and their attendant actions and reactions relate to loving God and his fellow men. All other emotions must be consistent with the two commands that Jesus gave in answer to the question.

### **GOD EXHIBITS EMOTIONS IN THE BIBLE**

If 1 John 4:8 were the only reference we had to God and emotions, it would teach us that God has an emotional side to His being. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (4:8). However, love is not the only emotion associated with God on the pages of Holy Writ. God is said to exhibit anger. Such was the case when Moses made the excuse that he was slow of speech and thus was reluctant to carry out God's command to appear before Pharaoh and the children of Israel.

And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Moses, and he said, *Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee: and when he seeth thee, he will be glad in his heart* (Exo. 4:14).

Many other passages also refer to God's anger or wrath (Num. 11:1, 10, 33; 12:9; 25:3; Deu. 4:25; etc.). The generation of Israel that came out of Egyptian bondage so provoked the anger of God with their continual murmuring and complaining that He swore in His wrath that they would not enter into His rest (Heb. 3:8-11).

God also hates. He hates those things that are abominable to Him (Deu. 12:31; Pro. 6:16-19). The Psalmist wrote, “The LORD trieth the righteous: But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth” (Psa. 11:5). Furthermore, God hates idolatry (Deu. 16:22), which is the foundation for His statement to Israel in the Ten Commandments that He is also a jealous God (Exo. 20:5; Deu. 5:9). This emotion is also said of Jehovah in Exodus 34:14. “For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God.”

As mentioned previously, God is a God of love. It was God’s love for the world that motivated Him to send His only begotten Son (John 3:16). God expressed His love when Christ died, not for righteous men, but ungodly men (Rom. 5:6-8). The point must be that God loved mankind despite his sinfulness. However, if one is to reap the benefits of that love, he must obey God’s commands. “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he *is* God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations (Deu. 7:9).

Jesus gives us the New Testament update of the Deuteronomy verse in the Gospel of John. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

God then is a God of love, especially to those who obey Him, but He hates those things that are abominable and evil, and He will at the end take out His vengeance on those who neither know Him nor keep His commandments. On the other hand, when Jesus said that heaven rejoices over the repentance of one sinner (Luke 15:7), the joy that is felt surely extends into the great heart of God.

### **JESUS CHRIST EXPERIENCED EMOTIONS**

Jesus was a man acquainted with sorrow. The shortest verse in the Bible so poignantly makes the point that Jesus sorrowed: “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). The greatness of Christ’s love was noticed by the onlookers at the grave of Lazarus, for as they saw the tears of Jesus they were moved to say, “Behold how he loved him” (11:36).

Near the end of the Lord's ministry when He entered into Jerusalem, He wept over it (Luke 19:41). Luke then immediately tells us how He cleansed the temple of the merchandisers. What a complexity of emotions, including sorrow, must have been involved in that act!

Jesus also knew the emotion of love. When the rich man came to Jesus in Mark 10, Mark records that Jesus looked on him and loved him (10:31). Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another, even as He loved them (John 15:12); then in verse thirteen, we learn that His love was supreme and complete. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." When the Hebrews' writer tells us that we have a high priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, the phrase, "be touched with the feeling of" (4:15), is from the Greek *sumpatheo*, which is transliterated by the English, *sympathy*. Thayer's Lexicon says in part that the meaning of this word is "to feel for, have compassion on" (596). Christ has sympathy or compassion upon us in part because He experienced the same things we know, including sorrow, love, anger, and joy. The difference between Him and us is that in all of His words, thoughts, deeds, and emotions He lived without sin.

Having established that God the Father and the Son both experienced emotions, it would be outlandish to deny the role that emotions play in man, the crown of God's creation.

### MAN'S EMOTIONS AND THE BIBLE

When we consider the emotional aspect of man's life, many passages can be brought to bear. One of the most touching verses in the Old Testament is Genesis 24:67. After the death of Sarah, the Bible says, "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's *death*." At least three important emotions sorrow, love, and comfort are at the forefront in this verse. The point to make here is concerning the emotion that is involved in the love between husband and wife. The comfort and security found in that relationship, including its emotional aspect, when it is what God made it and would have it be, is without doubt the greatest

bond on this material earth that can be shared between two human beings. We know that God would have it be that way, too (2:22-25; Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19).

One other Old Testament passage which expresses a proper, and important emotion is Psalm 122:1: "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." What a tragedy it is that many of God's people today are not glad to assemble with the saints in worship to God. Many look upon the assembly with improper emotions such as dread, reluctance, and apathy. Ephesians 5:19 actually touches upon the gladness we should have when we assemble for worship when it states that in our singing we make melody in our hearts, does it not? James commented on that when he wrote, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (Jam. 5:13). Although man's emotions play a part in worship, man is to worship God in both spirit and in truth. That is, with the heart, and according to the pattern God has given. It is sad and shameful that some have allowed their emotions to violate the Word of God by adding unauthorized acts such as handclapping, arm waving, and dimming of the auditorium lights during worship. These may artificially heighten the emotional level of the worshippers, but they are without authority in the New Testament.

One New Testament passage which demonstrates the emotional aspect of man's being is in Acts 21. In Acts 20, we learn Paul desired to be in Jerusalem at Pentecost, and he set sail to that end. Paul came to Caesarea and to the house of Philip. After he had tarried there many days, the prophet Agabus came from Judea. This prophet took Paul's girdle, bound his own hands and feet, then prophesied that the man who owned that girdle would be bound by the Jews at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles. Those in Paul's own company, and those of Caesarea, besought him not to go up to the city. Paul's response is recorded in verse 13. "Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

The happiness or joy of the Christian commences at the point of obedience, as it did with the Ethiopian eunuch. When that nobleman came up from the waters of baptism, he went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39). The joy, produced by the Christian's hope is to never fade. "Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice" (Phi. 4:4). Sin can temporarily interfere with that joy. Sin will turn laughter to mourning (Jam. 4:9). One who sins is to have godly sorrow, which works repentance (2 Cor. 7:10), but if we humble ourselves in the sight of God, He will lift us up (Jam. 4:10).

The above is not to say that Christians do not grieve over, for instance, the death of a loved one. When Stephen was stoned, devout men made great lamentation over him (Acts 8:2). We are to rejoice with those who rejoice, but also weep with those who weep (Rom. 12:15).

As involved as our emotions are in respect to our obedience to God, we must keep in mind that it is not our emotions which determine when one has become a child of God, but rather it is the Word of God. Many, who trust in their emotions, will be disappointed in the Day of Judgment. It is the Word of God which converts the soul (Psa. 19:7), and it is the knowledge that one has complied with God's commands that is the basis for joy at salvation. That is the way it was with the Ethiopian nobleman. That is the way it was with about three thousand on Pentecost who gladly received the Word and were baptized (Acts 2:41). It makes no difference how good a feeling one might have or how high an emotional plateau he may reach; unless one has obeyed the Gospel of Christ, his emotional excitement is vain. On the other hand, when there is obedience to the will of God, there is rejoicing. "For what *is* our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are* not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?" (1 The. 2:19).

### **MAN IS TO BE IN CONTROL OF HIS EMOTIONS**

The Bible emphasizes the need for one to control his emotions. When God was displeased with Cain's unacceptable sacrifice, Cain was very wroth (Gen. 4:5). Subsequently, when they were in the field, Cain rose up and slew Abel. The sad case of King Solomon

was that he loved many strange women, and they turned his heart away from Jehovah and he went after other gods (1 Kin. 11:1-5). By contrast, when Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce Joseph, he controlled his emotions, and thereby his actions, and made a statement for the ages. "*There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?*" (Gen. 39:9).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught the importance of controlling one's desires. "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Mat. 5:28). Peter wrote that Christians are to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11). After Paul exhorted the Ephesian brethren to be angry and sin not, he wrote, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice" (Eph. 4:31).

In the list of the things given by the apostle Paul, and identified as the works of the flesh, are emotions that are to be put off. Among those are hatred, wrath, and envy. By contrast, the fruit of the spirit includes the emotions of love, joy, and peace (Gal. 5:20-22). The problem with improper or uncontrolled emotions is that they so easily lead to unrighteous acts. The Proverbial writer points out the need to keep the heart with all of one's diligence for the issues of life come from it (Pro. 4:23). Jesus explained the principle clearly: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Mat. 15:19). When Peter listed what we refer to as the Christian graces, one of the things we are to add is temperance or self-control (2 Pet. 1:6). To control our actions, we must control our emotions. To control our emotions, we must control our thoughts. Our thoughts are to be under the dictates of the Word of God. This latter requires study, and we are most likely to engage in that study if we have the proper emotion toward the love of God. David expressed it in a few striking words. "O how love I thy law! It *is* my meditation all the day"

(Psa. 119:97). Later, in the same Psalm, David declares his hatred and abhorrence for lying and puts in contrast his love for God's law. Love for the law of God, studying it, and mediating upon it results in the motivation and the strength to control our emotions, and the control of our actions accordingly.

In the Ephesian letter, Paul wrote one of the most poignant, but perhaps overlooked passages connecting feelings (emotions) with actions.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:17-19).

The condition of the Gentiles of whom Paul wrote was that they walked devoid of truth, which resulted in the eyes of their understanding being blinded by their ignorance, causing them to be alienated from God. They were past feeling; they had no regard for righteous living and thus gave themselves over to filthy licentiousness with all sorts of uncleanness and greed. When one loses his feeling for doing right and abhorring evil, sin is not far behind. The words in the above passage, remind us of Romans 1 in which Paul describes how that the Gentiles, who did not retain God in their knowledge, turned and worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator. There comes a time when walking in unruliness against God hardens even the desires of individuals to want to please God. It cannot, then, be overemphasized that as Christians we must keep our hearts with all diligence, because it is indeed true that out of them are the issues of life.

### **AN EMOTIONAL MOMENT AFTER THE RESURRECTION**

Few scenes in the New Testament reach the emotional pinnacle, and we would suggest none exceed, the occasion after Christ's resurrection when Peter came face to face with the Lord. He had denied three times on the dark betrayal night that he even knew Jesus. So

distraught was Peter over his denial that he went out and wept bitterly. It is hard for us to imagine his emotional state when after the resurrection of Jesus; the Lord asked him three times if he loved Him (John 21:15-17) The significance of Jesus asking three times was that they stood for the three denials. John tells us that Peter was grieved the third time Jesus asked the question. Peter understood why Jesus asked it the third time. With each affirmative Peter gave to the Lord's question, Jesus told him to feed either His sheep or His lambs. It was not enough for Peter to affirm in words that he loved Christ; his love had to be demonstrated in his service to the Lord. Peter indeed fed Christ's lambs as both an apostle and as an elder in the Lord's church.

It is not enough for Christians today to say that we love Christ. We, too, must demonstrate our love by keeping His commandments (John 14:15). Later John wrote, "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it" (2 John 1:6). To love Christ, we must love what He loves. Not only does that apply to the truth and His commandments, it also applies to His church, the lost, the brethren, our physical families, our neighbor, and even our enemies. By the proper love for, study of, and application of the Scripture, the entire range of our emotions will be brought under the direction of the instructions God has given us in His Word.

### **LOVE FOR HEAVEN**

There is a sense in which we love life (1 Pet. 3:10). However, we are not to love the world nor the things in the world, because it and they will pass away one day (1 John 2:15-17). We are, however, to love heaven and through the assurance of hope that we have for it, run with patience the race toward that end.

For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (2 Cor. 5:1-2).

## CONCLUSION

There is an emotional side to the nature of God. As with every other aspect of His nature, God is perfect in His emotions and demonstration of them. Man, as the creation of God is also emotional. The basis for the proper emotions manifested by man is to love God, and his neighbor as himself. Man's emotions are part of what the Bible describes as man's heart. While man's emotions are involved in his salvation and service to God, it is the Word of God, not the emotions of man, that determines whether his relationship with God is pleasing to the Almighty. Man must control his emotions, and some are to be put off entirely (the works of the flesh), while some are aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. Only by diligent study of the Bible can man learn how properly to express the emotional side of his being.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: LOVE

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## INTRODUCTION

In beginning this Bible study concerning *love*, let us notice the importance of this term. In doing this, the reason for the study should be made clearer to the reader and its importance greatly magnified. Although the greatness of love is set out in numerous Scriptures, the following verses and logic will suffice to establish its importance. The apostle John tells us that God is love (1 John 4:8). Paul, the apostle, states that Christians are to be “imitators of God” (Eph. 5:1—ASV). The same apostle informs us that although faith and hope are great, love outranks them—it is the greatest of the three (1 Cor. 13:13). We may therefore correctly reason that: (1) since it is the case that God is love, and (2) since it is the case that Christians are to be “imitators of God,” and (3) since it is the case that love is greater than faith and hope, and (4) since it is the case that the only inspired primary source for the study of love is the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:1-12; Eph. 3:4; Heb. 4:2), then (5) it is the case that in imitating God, Who is love, one must study the Bible to have a correct understanding of love, then exercise it in one's life, and thereby imitate God.

Among faithful brethren we often hear of the importance of keeping the church as God would have it, and the same is true regarding marriage and the home. We recognize that to keep both of these institutions as God desires them to be, we must honestly, boldly, tenaciously, sacrificially, and without adding to, subtracting from, or altering in any way the Biblical doctrine about them, hold to the Bible's teaching concerning them. We must attach the same importance and disposition of mind to the study of the Bible doctrine of love. Thus, as is the case with all things necessary to man's salvation, we must be careful to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" concerning our study of love (Jam. 1:21).

To further emphasize the importance of this study, we note that since the devil has always corrupted God's teaching on anything when it serves his purpose, we must realize that he has done the same to the Biblical doctrine of love. All too often what passes for love today is a romantic, subjective, sick, sentimentalism, bearing no resemblance to love as it is defined and used by the inspired writers of the Bible. This false view of love permits many people to think that because God is love, He will not hold them accountable to Him for their sins—He *loves* them too much to do so. This corrupted concept of love makes it a synonym for permissiveness. Thus, to conceive of a loving God from this skewed and false perspective of love helps people to deceive themselves into thinking God will ignore their sins, or with God they can "talk their way out" of being punished for their sins for which they refuse to repent. Thus, many people think God is like those weak and permissive parents who, after repeated warnings to a child to stop doing wrong or suffer the consequences, are so *loving* that they rarely, if ever, and certainly not consistently, practice corrective discipline on the child. This they do all in the name of *loving* the child so much that they do not correctively discipline it. Thereby, a child is trained to give little or no attention to rules, regulations, authority in general, and God's objective standard of authority, the Bible, in particular. They care only for themselves and what they desire.

Furthermore, connect this false doctrine of love with other errors bearing on one's salvation (such as the false concept of grace that governs the thinking of many who believe in Christ), and they are reinforced in their erroneous belief that keeping or not keeping God's commandments is of little or no consequence for them. This erroneous view of God's grace teaches that one cannot do anything to be saved from sin or to remain faithful to God, even though the Bible clearly teaches to the contrary (Ecc. 12:13-14; John 12:48; 14:15; Rom. 6:17-18; Gal. 3:1; 5:4, 7; Heb. 5:9). To these rebellious people salvation is all God's responsibility. Thus, they falsely reason that (1) since it is impossible for any human to keep from committing sin, and (2) since God is so loving that He has favored man to be saved, and (3) since it is impossible for one to do anything to be saved from sin or remain in a saved state, or, as it is commonly stated by them, "to remain in a state of grace," then (4) one need not be that concerned about sin in one's life. As such people declare, "After all we can't be perfect any way. Thus, it is God's love and grace that saves us, not our being **legalist law keepers**." Something like the foregoing false view of grace existed in the first-century church to some extent or Paul would not have asked and answered the following rhetorical question: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid" (Rom. 6:1-2).

With such erroneous views of love, grace, and law coupled with other errors encouraging people to be disobedient to God, most of those who claim Jesus as "their personal savior" believe they can engage in sins of commission and omission with regularity without any fear of going to hell (Rev. 21:8). With their perverted view of God's love, grace, and law, these *believers* think that God's love for mankind will override His justice, thus allowing sinful man to escape eternal punishment in hell—the plain statements of the Bible to the contrary notwithstanding (Mat. 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 11:23; 23:15; 25:31-36; Luke 16:23; 2 The. 1:6-9; Rev. 21:8).

It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to learn from the Bible what God's definition of love is, His love for mankind, how Chris-

tians are to live within it, and how they are to manifest God's love in the Lord's church, daily practicing the same in their conduct toward Him, one another, and all men. With these salient points in mind, we trust that when this study is finished, we will have given the reader a better understanding of what God's love for us is and how we are to love Him, ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our brethren, and, yes, even our enemies.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF LOVE

As is the case with *love* in the English language, one Hebrew word is most commonly employed in the Old Testament for every kind of love. It is the verb *ahav* or *ahab* (phonetically pronounced *aw-hab'*) and the noun *ahava*. It covers the idea of love as does the English word. We see it in the following Scriptures: God's love (Jer. 31:3), love of God (Deu. 6:5), love of one's fellow man (Lev. 19:18), love of a friend (2 Sam. 1:26), love of a girl (Gen. 29:20), sexual relations (Pro. 7:18), love of money (Ecc. 5:10), and love of vanity (Psa. 4:2). All these kinds of love are identified by the same word (Strong).

Notice that God chose the Israelites because He loved them (Deu. 4:37; 10:15; Isa 43:1-4). Of course, Israel was to love God (Deu. 6:4-5) and He expected them to prove their love for Him by obeying His commandments (10:12-13, Jos. 22:5; Ecc. 12:13). They were also to love or exercise good will toward one another (Lev. 19:18).

Furthermore, in the Old Testament, love is presented, discussed, and understood within the culture, social constructs, traditions, and mindset of those ancient near-eastern peoples to and through whom God was in the process of unfolding His redemptive plan. This plan included their need to understand God's love for them, their love for Him, their love for each other, and their love for all men. In other words, in communicating His will to them through His revealed Word, revealing His love for them and teaching them to love Him and each other, God employed accommodative language—speaking on their level and manner of understanding. Thus, the concept of love in the Old Testament on most occasions is revealed by God's

concrete actions toward His people. Their love for Him or lack of it is seen in their responsive acts to His loving actions toward them. Thus, love in the abstract is much less common in the Old Testament than it is in the New Testament.

### GOD'S LOVE FOR ISRAEL

The Old Testament employs more than one literary form to show God's love for His people. Words such as *grace*, *mercy*, *lovingkindness*, *to know*, and *to choose* also declare His love for those who were under the Old Testament economy. Furthermore, the fact God affirmed Himself to be Israel's Father and that He had a covenant relationship with them served to declare His love for them.

In the Old Testament, different statements establish God's love for His people. When it is stated that man is made in the image of God (His moral likeness is in the essence of man's spirit), this clearly implies man's being was created to be in fellowship with God. The Divine record of God's dealing with Adam and Eve, Enoch, and Noah during the Patriarchal Age (the 2500 years covering from Genesis 1:1 until the giving of the Law of Moses to the Israelites in Exodus 19 and 20, Deuteronomy 5:1-5) proves His love for them. Indeed, during this same time period, Abraham is called the friend of God. Thus, in the New Testament, James presents Him to remind Christians that an obedient faith is what makes all of God's servants acceptable to Him or friends of God (John 14:15; Heb. 5:8-9; Jam. 2:20-24; cf. 2 Chr. 20:7; Isa. 41:8). The apostle Paul wrote about the relationship of faith with love: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which **worketh by love**" (Gal. 5:6).

The second time God appeared to Abraham to confirm His covenant with him, He, for the first time in the Bible, uses *to know* in describing His love for Abraham. God employs the same when He reports that He has heard Israel's "groanings" under the burden of their Egyptian bondage (Exo. 2:24-25). Again He used it of Israel when He spoke to Pharaoh about them. He calls them His first-born, that is to say, His dearly beloved son (4:22). Not long before

God gave His Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, He declared His love for Israel in the following language:

Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and *how* I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation (19:4-6).

Additionally, God's character is described in five statements found in the Pentateuch. The terms in these statements are descriptive of God's benevolent attributes. They are: lovingkindness, mercy, grace, longsuffering, and faithfulness (20:5-6; 34:6-7; Num. 14:8; Deu. 7:9-10).

### ISRAEL'S LOVE FOR GOD

In view of God's love for His children, He expected them to return their love to Him in complete obedience to His will. Repeatedly throughout the Old Testament God reproved, rebuked, exhorted, and punished His people—not only for worshipping false gods and in engaging in the evils that attended such worship, but because of their ritualism in keeping the Law of Moses. They were *going through the motions* by outwardly keeping His commandments while all the time their hearts were far from Him. Through the prophet Hosea God announced to His people, "I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. 6:6). The prophet is referring to their lack of love for God because it only involved on their part their outward compliance with His will. Hosea reminded them that God had commanded, "Thou shalt know no god but me." Then God drives home the point of what His love for Israel did for them that they could not do for themselves. "I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought" (13:4-5). As God's love manifested itself to Israel in acts of kindness, He expected their love for Him to reciprocate in their loving obedience to all things He commanded them to do, but without becoming ritualistic. Isaiah also made that same point about the Jews' attitude toward God when he wrote:

Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near *me* with their mouth, And with their lips do honour me, But have removed their heart far from me, And their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men (Isa. 29:13).

Furthermore, throughout the Old Covenant it is clearly revealed that God's love does not mute or make void His attribute of justice (Ecc. 12:14). Indeed, the prophets pictured God's judgment to be an act of love manifesting itself in discipline with one end in mind—the salvation of all those who would learn from it that it is better to obey “than sacrifice, *And* to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Sam. 15:22-23). To this day, many of those who claim to be God's friends fail to grasp that God's love for mankind demands that we reciprocate in kind by keeping God's commandments solely out of love for Him (Ecc. 12:13).

In unfolding the great Scheme of Redemption it remained for God in the greater and better covenant of the two, the New Testament of Jesus Christ, to embody His love for man and mankind's love for God in the person of the Christ and, then, to conceptualize love more fully in the inspired Words of His New Covenant with mankind (Heb. 1:1-2, 8-10; Gal. 3:24; John 1:14; 3:16; Eph. 3:4; 1 Cor. 13). As we shall note in more detail in the next section of this study, this He did by using different expressive words and combinations of them in the concise and precise Koine Greek language of the New Testament; words that express the different kinds of love. However, the foregoing information must not cause the Bible student to conclude that the attribute of love is absent from God's revelation of Himself to and His dealing with His people of the Old Testament, or that the Old Testament peoples were without understanding of God's love for them and what it was for them to express their love to Him, each other, and all other people.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF LOVE

As previously noted, in English *love* is singular in expressing what it takes four Greek words to do. Thus, we say we love God, fishing, dogs, sports, our children, our spouses, our parents, our country, roast beef, our car, music, etc. It is **what** we love and the **context**

in which the word is found that determines what we mean by our usage of this generic term *love*.

The Greek words for love are: *éros*, *philia*, *storgē*, and *agápe* (Vine). We shall now study the different senses in which these words are generally used in the New Testament.

*Éros* (ἔρος) is passionate love, with sensual desire and longing. Although the concept of sexual love is dealt with in the New Testament, the word *éros* does not appear in it. In America today, most people think the blazing passion of romantic sexual love is the only love there is. Hollywood and the whole entertainment community have greatly succeeded in deceiving America and the world into believing that. *Éros* becomes the chief motivational reason that many are attracted to one another and for them to marriage, if they continue to believe in marriage at all. When, therefore, one loses that strong fiery sexual love (in reality the physical appetite for sexual gratification) for one's spouse, he is *justified* (deceived) into believing that it excuses him in leaving one marriage because he has found that erotic love with another or others. Thus, fornication and adultery mean little or nothing to many people in a society where *éros* is the only or chief concept of love. Marriage, therefore, holds little or no importance to those who think of and are driven by erotic love or the unnatural lusts of perverted homosexual relationships.

*Philia* (φιλία) pertains to a general type of love. It pertains to the affectionate love existing between friends such as that relationship existing between Jonathan and David (1 Sam. 18:1). It describes personal attachments, a desire or enjoyment of an activity, and can refer to the affection existing between lovers.

*Storge* (στοργή) means the natural affection experienced by parents for their children or children for their parents. *Storge* does not appear by itself but combines with other words that almost exclusively describe relationships within and between family members.

All three of the foregoing loves involve the emotions or feelings peculiar to man in the areas they reference. However, this is not the case with the next Greek word for love.

*Agápe* (ἀγάπη) in the New Testament means unconditional love—the love of the highest good, as the Bible defines *good*. It means to prize highly and unconditionally; it seeks the welfare and best interests of the object loved (John 3:16; Rom. 5:5, 8) as God defines *the welfare* and *best interests* of mankind. It involves a rational devotion to God and the things of God. It therefore always leads and guides one to relate to God and man even as Christ did (Mat. 26:39, 42; 1 Pet. 2:21). It is a love that does the right thing as God in His objective absolute Word defines the right, even when it means hurt will come to the one who exercises it (Mat. 26:38-42). It is not an emotional love, but a love that can be commanded (John 8:29). *Agápe* is intellectual love having to do with reason and comprehension tied in with one's powers to purpose and will to comply with those in authority to command. Thus, Jesus commanded, "Love [*agape*] your enemies" (Mat. 5:44). He did not employ the emotional terms of *éros*, *philia*, and *storge*, but *agápe*. Thus, in personal relationships Jesus did not command family affection or a feeling of kind personal attachment prompted by sense and emotion, but the exercise of that love that is a mental resolve, an exercise of the will, to seek and do the highest good toward anyone, even our enemies (Vine).

Jesus loved (*agápe*) the scribes and Pharisees when He said to them, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites" (Mat. 23:13). Paul loved (*agápe*) the church at Corinth when he said, "For ye are yet carnal" (1 Cor. 3:3). Peter manifested his love (*agápe*) when he referred to false prophets as "natural brute beasts...spots...blemishes...wells without water...speak great swelling *words* of vanity...they themselves are the servants of corruption" (2 Pet. 2:12-19). In each of the foregoing cases the truth was taught manifesting our Lord's and His apostles' desire for the highest good to be realized by those they addressed and described (John 8:31-32; Gal. 4:16). Hence, *agápe* does not change when the emotions and passions surge and wane. Such is indicative of its relationship to an objective standard. It **always** leads one to obey without question the commandments of God—doing **what** God said, in the **way** He

said it, and for the **reason(s)** He said it (1 John 4:18; 5:3; Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 13:6). Through the Gospel, *agápe* proves the faith of man by soliciting him to choose between God and Satan (Jos. 24:15, 22; Psa. 119:30; Pro. 1:29; Isa. 7:15; Acts 2:41, 43; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; John 14:15).

*Agápe* is the highest love because it regulates with saneness and sobriety the emotional forms of love. Therefore no form of love, no matter how emotional, rises higher nor in any way sets aside that love that always leads one to obey God's law. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15—ASV).

For one's family affection (*storgē*) to exist and grow one must cultivate *agápe*. *Agápe* prompts obedience to the precepts of the Lord in all areas of family affection and life. If one would increase in *philia* (the love of affection and personal attachment), one must nourish *agápe*. Only in this way will God's truth guide one to a proper exercise of *philia*. Unless the regulatory power of *agápe* (love that always causes one to yield to the authority of God's Word) is exercised in one's life, the more emotional loves may well lead one to violate God's will in seeking to express them. Thus, the Bible's teaching on many things is ignored and discarded because of the emotional loves (*éros*, *philia*, and *storgē*) operating without the presence of *agápe* in one's life to keep them under the authority of and governed by God's Word.

Too many relationships, including marriages, are developed on the basis of *éros*, *philia*, and *storgē* with little, if any, *agápe* present in them. All too often *éros* is the only love behind a marriage. All such relationships can never be as God expects them to be, and most of them are doomed to failure. Passions, emotions, and feelings are not enough to cement close friendships and intimate family ties in times of illness, poverty, and the other dire calamities that are the common lot of mankind. In "sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, and for better or for worse" are vows that are stated by the bride and groom to each other and before God during the wedding ceremony (if it is the case that they continue to be included in many wedding ceremonies today). When they begin their lives together as

husband and wife, we doubt that most modern brides and grooms have a correct understanding of what their wedding vows obligate them to be and do in their relationship with one another as well as their relationship with their children in the home they have established. Do they have a love that will sustain them as they together meet life's joys, pains, disappointments, etc., resolving to faithfully deal with each other, their families, and all things according to the God's Word? Thus, the broken marriages, handicapped children, corrupted societies, and countless thousands of miserable people lurching toward God and judgment without a clue as to what awaits them.

### FAITH WORKING BY LOVE

A perfect example of the position, power, and relationship of *agápe* to the other kinds of love in a mortal's life is found in Genesis 22:1-14. Through the eye of faith we see Abraham obey God as he takes Isaac, his son, his only son, the son of promise whom he loves, and rising early in the morning, begin a journey that would last for three days, terminating at the foot of the mountains of Moriah. Father and son with their two traveling companions have come to the foot of that mountain for one reason—because God commanded Abraham to offer his son of promise for a burnt offering to Him.

The father of the faithful tells those traveling with father and son to wait while he and the lad climb up on Moriah to worship—the first time *worship* is used in the Bible. However, it is from the New Testament that we learn that Abraham thought God would raise Isaac up from the ashes of the burned offering, for the grand old father knew all of the promises God had made to him depended on Isaac living—and God does not contradict Himself (Heb. 11:19). No wonder then that, following Abraham's comment to those who accompanied them on their journey to remain behind, the faithful patriarch, in full confidence, told them that following their worship he and the lad would return "again to you" (Gen. 22:5). Following those comments, Abraham takes the knife, the fire, and laying the wood on his son, father and son climb the mountain together to worship their God as He had commanded.

What fatherly emotions must have pulsed in the heart of the old father when Isaac asked where the sacrificial lamb was! It was Abraham's *agápe* that answered the curious son. Abraham replied, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son" (22:8—ASV). Abraham built the sacrificial altar "and laid the wood in order." As he bound "his son," if not before, certainly by then, Isaac knew what must be. More than this is the fact that Abraham fully realized that Isaac also clearly grasped what God had commanded His father to do. With his arm outstretched and the knife poised to do the bidding of Jehovah, the angel of the Lord stayed the aging father's hand. We all know the rest of this great account that Moses gave us of a faith tried and a faith proved.

God provided a ram for the sacrifice and together Abraham and Isaac returned to the waiting servants at the foot of Moriah as he promised they would. Now Abraham knew the measure of his own faith in the great "I AM." Can anyone begin to imagine the rejoicing that must have burst forth from Abraham and Isaac in thanksgiving and praise to the God who would give His only begotten Son—**but there would be no one to take His place!?**

Abraham controlled the emotional loves of *storgē* and *philia* by loving (*agápe*) God above all else. This is the case because *agápe* "rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth" (1 Cor. 13:6—ASV). *Agápe* is the prime mover behind being "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (15:58). Thus, this love must be present in the one who is faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). It will have been the undergirding factor in the lives of those in their hope to faithfully serve God all the days of their lives so they can hear fall from the lips of their Savior, "Well done, good and faithful servant... enter ye in to the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. 25:21).

However, Abraham's *faith* in God and the *hope* he placed in His promises, which promises were to be performed through Isaac, were by themselves inadequate. Abraham's love (*agápe*) for God had to lead him to obey God's commands, no matter the cost to him personally. Yes, the greatest of these (faith, hope, and love) is love, and

he who penned as much tells us why love surpasses faith and hope. Paul wrote, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but **faith which worketh by love**” (Gal. 5:6). Thus, we see that love (*agápe*) is the mechanism enabling one’s faith to obey God and, thus, the things of God, no matter the sacrifice and pain involved. Jesus Christ, of course, is the greatest of which there is no greater in exemplifying to all mankind, but especially to the church, *agápe*/love in action for the eternal good of others, no matter the cost to Himself in bringing salvation to light in His Gospel (Isa. 53; 1 Cor. 1-4; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16).

### LOVE AND DOCTRINE

The following Scriptures reveal the truth of love’s relationship to doctrine and vice versa. Jesus taught His apostles, of whom John was one, the following regarding love and doctrine:

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.... This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.... These things I command you, that ye love one another (John 15:9, 10, 12-14, 17).

John, who penned the precious Words of our Lord, wrote to Christians about love and doctrine:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.... And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.... By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous (1 John 2:3-5; 3:22; 5:2-3).

Obviously the Son of God and the apostle of love teach that the love of man for God and the love of man for man reveal themselves only when love leads one to obey God regarding man's love for both.

Although the Bible contradicts them, the so called *post-modern Christian* does not view the Bible as a book of doctrine to be studied, believed, and obeyed (Mat. 22:29; Mark 12:24; Luke 24:27, 45; John 5:39; 12:48; Acts 17:2, 11; Rom. 15:4; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17; Eph. 3:4; 2 Pet. 1:1-9). Nevertheless, one needs to realize that one thing the *post-modern Christian* has done is systematize what the denominationalists in their attempts to defend their illogical and unscriptural doctrine have long believed, taught, and attempted to defend concerning salvation matters. They have declared that it does not make any difference what one believes only so long as one is sincere in believing and practicing it. They have taught that the church has nothing to do with one's salvation. Thus, they developed the view expressed in the following words. "You go to your church, I'll go to mine, and we'll all get to heaven together."

They have made light of and mocked the Lord's church with stories such as the following one. In this story the world has ended, God's judgment is over, and the saved are in heaven. All the different denominations are rejoicing in their eternal salvation when one of them says to another, "Don't pay attention to that little bunch over in the corner. They are the church of Christ and think they are the only ones here." Although it is true that post-modernists teach some things the more Biblically-oriented denominations do not believe, for all practical purposes, as noted earlier, they are only attempting to be more consistent in the application of what the denominations have practiced and attempted to defend for years.

To the post-modernist (at least some of them) the Bible is only an ancient outdated narrative that at best conveys to man his lost condition, that he cannot save himself, that God loves him, and Christ died to save all men. Of course, the preceding facts may be too dogmatic for some post-modernists, and in their relativism and subjectivism who knows what all they believe?

Given their false view of the inadequacy of language to capably convey information and their rejection of absolute objective humanly knowable truth, we should not be surprised when we hear them say something to the effect, “Let’s not talk about our disagreements. Doctrine divides; love unites.” Yes, the denominationalists as a rule have for years taken that position. However, as we have noted from Jesus, John, and the other inspired writers of the Bible cited previously, one quickly learns from the them that **love is not opposed to doctrine or vice versa and that it always reveals itself in the loving obedience to God’s will of His disciples.**

Jude exhorts those who love God and are loved by Him, His faithful children (Jude 2)—members of the church, citizens of the Kingdom of heaven, members of the body of Christ, joint heirs with Christ, Christians—to earnestly contend for “the faith” (true doctrine) (Jude 3). Again we see that post-modernists, as well as some who are not full-fledged post-modernists, make a division between doctrine and love that the Bible does not make. The following question makes that clear. **If doctrine does not define love and if love does not lead one to comply with Bible doctrine, what is it that does?** The inspired apostle Paul certainly did not recognize this false distinction between love and doctrine, for he wrote to Timothy saying, “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience” (2 Tim. 3:10).

### 1 CORINTHIANS 13

Having quoted Paul’s comments to Timothy in the last paragraph, let us learn more of what Paul teaches about love by examining what he wrote about it in 1 Corinthians 13.

The love discussed in this chapter is *agápe*—a love that does not mean being friendly and/or affectionate toward someone—but a love that denies one’s self for the good of another. In verses 1-2, Paul immediately points out that some of the Corinthians were squabbling over which miraculous gift was the greatest. The text reveals they prized the miracle of speaking in languages foreign to them more than the other miraculous gifts. Hence, the attitude or mindset motivating them to prize the gift of tongues and the ones who

possessed it above the other miraculous gifts of the Spirit and those who exercised them proved they did not understand the love of God that provided those gifts to them for the good of the church in the first place. Furthermore, the attitude causing them to elevate in importance one gift and the persons who exercised it above the other gifts and those who possessed them revealed that they did not have the love that God expects to be the supreme motivator and mark of every Christian as they go about faithfully doing God's will in their interaction with one another and non-Christians. Thus, they completely missed what is truly great in the Divine scheme of things. That being the case, Paul does not mince words in teaching them about what is truly great—*agápe*/love. He tells them that *agápe*:

1. seeks another person's highest good
2. does not change
3. will deny one's self for the sake of another
4. does not expect to be paid back for the good done
5. is extended to those that are unappealing to them
6. continues to love even when rejected
7. always gives out good things simply because it is good to do so
8. always leads one to submit to God's will.

Thus, without this kind of love the Corinthians were only so much noise. Today, we might say that brethren, who do what is right as the Bible defines the right, but without love as the motivator for their obedience, amount to no more than a rattling metal can being kicked down the sidewalk.

Paul thus seeks to focus the Corinthians on the godly motivator of their desires and actions by pointing them to why the miraculous gifts were in the infant church in the first place. The love that placed the gifts in the infant church and the love that should motivate their use would never permit them to think more highly of one gift and those who possessed it over the other gifts and those who possessed them. Paul points out in no uncertain terms that when love is absent in the most learned and capable persons in the church,

although men may highly magnify them for their accomplishments, in reality they amount to nothing.

Would not the best measure of a Christian's spiritual level be seen when he gives all he possessed to feed the poor, or when a Christian gives his body to be burned (13:3)? Paul answers in the negative. The best measure of the Christian's true spirituality is his love for God and the things of God. It is one thing to give grudgingly to help others and quite another to give of one's means cheerfully. Also, it is one thing to be dragged kicking and screaming to the stake to be burned because one is a Christian, but quite another to walk quietly and willingly to be burned at the stake for the cause of Christ. Isaiah pictures that loving (*agápe*) disposition in his marvelous prophecy of the suffering Savior in chapter fifty-three of the Old Testament book that bears his name.

In summarizing 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, we learn that, of everything the Bible reveals to be good, without love those other good things are useless. Let us not be found guilty of choosing a good thing, but in so doing bypass the greater good. This is what the Corinthian brethren did, and they received the appropriate rebuke for and correction of their error.

### **Paul's Description of Love (*agápe*) Continues**

Having shown the Corinthian brethren that faith and hope are very important, but that love is greater than either of them, the apostle Paul now explains how love manifests itself in one's life. Thereby the Corinthians could determine whether they possessed or did not possess *agápe*. Paul gave the Corinthians (and all Christians) a check list of fifteen attributes of love whereby all can evaluate our actions and determine whether love is involved in discharging our obligations to God and man.

Paul states that love "suffers long." He does not say that love *feels* like this or that, but he points out that love is seen in the actions of Christians. He is writing about how Christians demonstrate love in their actions.

Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not will-

ing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Love is seen in Christians enduring with people—even those that do not appeal to us, or annoy us, or hurt us, even as God restrains Himself from bringing the world to an end and calling all men to the judgment bar of Christ. Why does God do this? Because He does not want anyone to go to hell! Is this attribute of love seen in our actions?

Paul also writes that love is “kind.” Have you ever noticed that children will not respond to unkind people? Think about the types of actions that will cause a little child to respond to you, and you will see the nature of the disposition of mind that results in acts of kindness, the caliber of actions in which we ought to engage as we associate with others.

Here again we must not think that kindness permits us to compromise the Gospel. All too often people think that being kind contradicts being bold, frank, emphatic, and candid in our conduct. To contend for the truth of God’s Word on any topic with all boldness, candor, and frankness is considered by many blinded souls to be judgmental, harsh, hateful, cruel, and unloving. However, Jesus Himself said to the Jews, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Does anyone think that Jesus actually violated the principle of love when in no uncertain terms He told them what they must do regarding His claim to be the Son of God for them to save their souls? Indeed, Jesus was very kind to them in stating exactly what their fundamental problem was. We must act as Jesus did and allow the Bible to define our terms lest we follow a corrupt concept of kindness that permeates the world’s concept of acting kindly. As we previously wrote, many people think that love is a sick syrupy, subjective, romantic sentimentalism that seeks to make peace at any price.

As Paul has given us the component parts of love in action, he now lists eight things that love is not. Love is **not**: envious, proud, arrogant, rude, cliquish, touchy, suspicious, or happy and content with evil taught and practiced (1 Cor. 13:4-6).

1. Love does not **envy**. As to how heinous envy is, please consider the following. Why did Cain kill Abel? **Answer:** Genesis 4:3-8. Why was Joseph sold into Egyptian slavery? **Answer:** Genesis 37:11, 28. Why was Jesus crucified? **Answer:** “Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ? For he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Mat. 27:17-18).

2. Love does not **vaunt itself**. Love does not *show off* or parade itself around. It does not seek places of prominence in an effort to promote itself. It does not seek to be seen of men to receive their accolades. It has been reported that the late Gospel preacher J. D. Tant said: “There is no amount of good we can do if we do not care who gets the credit.” In other words, love can work anonymously and be truly satisfied with the result.

3. Love is not **puffed up**. It is not *swell headed* and only focused on itself. To the contrary, it focuses on the needs of others. Arrogance finds no place in actions of love. However, some of the most arrogant characters in the world are those who think their spirituality makes them superior to their brothers and sisters in Christ and anyone else. They are nothing more than *parson-nosed* pious twits, hypocrites, and frauds. Indeed, the most terrible kind of pride is seen in the church member who is puffed up over his relationship with God.

4. Love does not **behave itself unseemly**. Love is not rude. Christians are courteous and mannerly. Love takes into consideration the elderly person who is standing and gives up that seat so that one may sit down. Love speaks to and treats others with respect. Love says, “Yes Sir,” and, “No, Ma’am.” Love is hospitable toward all.

5. Love does not **seek her own**. In Romans 12:10 and Philippians 2:4 respectively, Paul wrote of the same trait. “*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.*” “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.” Thus, love is not self-centered. It is ever considering the needs of others. A Christian does not only

seek to make himself comfortable, but is very interested in the comfort of others. Especially is this the case when it comes to the salvation of the souls of men.

6. Love is not **easily provoked**. One is not easily irritated or annoyed by those who act in the wrong way. How serious is this matter? Moses was prohibited from entering the land of Canaan because he allowed the people to provoke him to anger which anger caused him to sin against God (Num. 20:2-11). It was also the apostle Paul who said that the Old Testament accounts were written for our learning, and that includes this negative example for the life of Moses (Rom. 15:4).

7. Love does not **think evil**. To think evil of another or desire to do evil to anyone (as the Bible defines and uses it) is foreign to love. We do not love if we keep a list of the wrongs others have committed against us. To harbor evil in one's heart is to create bitterness and a vengeful spirit that in time will make itself known in one's actions. Although lack of space prohibits a discussion of them, we must discipline our minds to think on the things Paul listed in Philippians 4:8-9 and not those bad or evil things that have happened to us or that we would do to others.

8. Love does not **rejoice in iniquity**, but **rejoices in the truth**. Deeds done that are contrary to the whole truth of God's Word or any component part thereof are never deeds of love. As truth is pure and good (whether men recognize it or not) so is the love that Paul enjoins on Christians. One may be highly educated, a great orator, a tremendous "people person," "a glad hander," "a back slapper," have a wonderful smile, dress well, and even smell good, but if such a person does not live, teach, and defend God's truth (the whole of it) and nothing but it, he is a liar and the truth is not in him (1 John 1:4; 5:2).

Following his list of what love is not, Paul points out four more things that love is. It is *strong, believing, hopeful, and enduring* (1 Cor. 13:7).

### Love:

**Bears all things.** *Bears* can be translated “covers.” Notice what Peter wrote, “above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sin” (1 Pet. 4:8—ASV). People and, yes, even members of the Lord’s church can commit egregious sins against one another. However, love is ready to forgive anyone who obeys what God requires of one to do to be forgiven, which requirement demands repentance (Luke 17:3). Once a person is forgiven and proves his fidelity to God in faithful service to Him, we should do as does God concerning the penitent person—remember his sins and iniquities against him no more (Heb. 10:17).

**Believes all things.** Nothing is excluded. Until and unless adequate evidence and/or credible witnesses cause us to believe otherwise, we are to believe the best about someone. Indeed, we are to “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). That includes what we believe about people. Also, love takes God at His Word. Love does not attempt to serve God with reservations, for such is no service to Him (Luke 18:18-23).

**Hopes all things.** Biblical hope is expectation coupled with an earnest desire to receive our promised reward. Paul declared that we are saved by hope (Rom. 8:24). Love does not adopt and practice the view that it was bad today and it is going to be worse tomorrow. God is in control of all things. As Paul declared, “If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us?” (8:31)? Through hope we look beyond this vale of tears and see the eternal reward awaiting the faithful. It simply draws the future reward near us. Thus, with such a hope, we rise up to face the day, knowing full well what awaits us in heaven.

**Endures all things.** Love (*agápe*) does not endure temporarily. It never gives up. As Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Love allows the Christian to realize that no matter how bad anything is in this world, it will pass away. It is not permanent. Thus, we are strengthened to endure, to quote Shakespeare, “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.”

Of course, Jesus personified and embodied love. His every thought, word, and action constituted thoughts, words, and actions of love. If we would bear, believe, hope, and endure **all things** we must exercise love. Indeed, Paul's treatise on love sets out the mark of Christian maturity.

### **Paul's Emphasis on Faith, Hope, and Love**

It is not in the scope of this chapter to discuss all that Paul teaches on miraculous gifts in verses 8-12. Thus, the following comment regarding miraculous gifts will suffice. The miraculous gifts that the Corinthians valued so highly would cease when the New Testament was completed. However, faith, hope, and love would remain. Love is the greatest of these.

All Christians are continually laboring to develop their faith, hope, and love. This need is emphasized throughout the New Testament. That being the case, let us notice the following Scriptures that give emphasis to the importance of faith, hope, and love.

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father (1 The. 1:3).

But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation (5:8).

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love (Gal. 5:5-6).

Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently* (1 Pet. 1:21-22).

Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love *which ye have* to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel (Col. 1:4-5).

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against

that day. Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:12-13).

### **The Permanence of Love**

We like and appreciate good permanent things. A permanent thing abides and does not go away. Love is permanent. Paul wrote, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity [love—ASV]” (1 Cor. 13:13).

The faith in God and godly things we presently possess will not remain as it is but will be enhanced at the coming of Christ. One’s faith in someone does not necessarily cease on the basis of our coming into that person’s presence.

Hope will end when Christ returns with His eternal reward for those who were faithful to Him on earth. In Romans 8:24-25 Paul informs us that once we receive our eternal reward, we no longer expect it because we will then possess what here we only could expect and long for.

However, love will continue on because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). Since God is love, and God is eternal, then love is eternal. God does not possess faith or hope. However, the essence of Deity is love, and those that practice love in their lives on earth, as the Bible teaches it, will experience it to perfection in glory in the very presence of He who is love eternal.

### **CONCLUSION**

Paul wrote that love fulfills the law. He did not say that of faith (Rom. 13:10). True love of God always leads us to have a faith that obeys God (Heb. 5:8-9). Without obeying God, we cannot prove that we love God (John 14:15). According to the inspired apostle Paul, we can have “all faith” but lack love and, thus, lose our soul (1 Cor. 13:2). If we get love (*agápe*) right, it will work in us to have an obedient faith formed and sustained by the rightly divided Word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). This is a faith that always leads us to act only on the authority of God’s Word (Col. 3:17), leaving undone those things not authorized by it or things specifically prohibited by the same. This keeps us walking by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). On that basis in this world, our faith will be a living one, and our

hope of heaven genuine and effective. Nevertheless, without *agápe* we will not fully, consistently, and with regularity obey God—doing what He said, in the way He said it, when He said to do it, and for the reason(s) He gave. The previous matters are at least some of the reasons that love is greater than faith or hope.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: HATE

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**he *American Heritage Dictionary* defines *hate* as: “To feel hostility or animosity toward; detest. To feel dislike or distaste for.” This strong emotion is normally thought of as directed toward individuals; however, it can be directed at things: food, work, a television show, a sports team, etc. Of course there is a vast difference between hating some broccoli, which is not a sin, and hating a person, which is a sin. Jesus taught:

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you (Mat. 5:43-44).

Hate truly is the opposite of love.

Hatred is alive and well in the world. It always has been, for that matter, but it seems to be on the rise for a number of reasons or excuses. An example of that is politics, especially with an upcoming presidential election. With politics being what it is, there is a strong dislike for other people’s views of the direction this nation is heading. The problem arises when the dislike for one’s views turns to outright hatred of the individual who holds those views. This is also true with it comes to religion. Christians are increasingly hated for their belief in the one true God of the Bible and their practice of such beliefs. Again, not only are Christian beliefs hated, but the

individual is hated for holding those God-given beliefs. This form of hatred usually turns to persecution, which is nothing new for the child of God. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

It is important to note that to have hatred in one’s heart for someone else is an attitude that poisons the soul. To believe a person can hold this sinful attitude in their heart and it not affect their action is foolishness in the *n*<sup>th</sup> degree. As Solomon wrote, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; For out of it *are* the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23). Later he wrote, “For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he” (23:7). Jesus warned His disciples that it was not eating with unwashed hands that defiled a man

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man (Mat. 15:18-20).

### BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS OF HATE

*Hate* and its different forms are found scattered throughout the Bible. The Hebrew word translated “hate” is *sane* which is found around 145 times. The Greek word is *miseo* and is found approximately 40 times. The general meaning is “to hate, detest, or disregard.”

Paul lists it as one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20). However, “hatred” in that passage (translated “enmities” in the ASV) comes from the Greek word *echthra*. W. E. Vine makes the point that *echthra* “is the opposite of agape, ‘love’” (201). Depending on the context, *hate* can be used in a variety of ways. Sometimes *hate* is commended by God while at other times it is condemned.

Since God hates evil, Christians should hate evil as well. When we have a knowledge of God’s Word, we will hate evil: “Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104). Solomon wrote, “The fear of the LORD *is* to hate evil: Pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, And the froward mouth, do I hate (Pro. 8:13). Since God abhors evil, Christians should as

well: “*Let* love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). If Christians will have the proper reverence for their Father in heaven, they will hate evil as He hates evil. Amos put it very simply as: “Hate the evil, and love the good” (Amos 5:15). This form of hatred is commended by God.

Other times *hate* is directed at a person: “And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him” (Gen. 37:4). Jacob loving Joseph more than his other sons led them to hating Joseph so much they could not even speak peaceably to him. Their sin was later compounded by selling Joseph into slavery. James Orr defines this form of hatred as: “A feeling of strong antagonism and dislike, generally malevolent and prompting to injury (the opposite of love); sometimes born of moral resentment” (1343).

At times this form of hatred and animosity is even demonstrated in the family of God, usually by brethren who are being opposed due to their sinfulness. It is difficult enough when a fellow Christian turns their back upon you for standing for the truth, but one cannot help but wonder if they would like to sell you down the road as well. Paul warned, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Gal. 5:15). This feeling of hatred that prompts one to injure another was demonstrated by Cain murdering his brother, King Saul trying to kill David, Stephen being stoned to death by the Jews, and the enemies of Jesus crucifying Him on the cross. The Apostle of love warned: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15). This form of hatred is condemned by God.

At times *hate* is not used as one might think, but simply refers to loving someone or something less. Jesus taught, “If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26). However, the Bible says we are to honor our father and mother (Exo. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Mat. 19:19; Eph. 6:2), so is there a contradiction? No. The word for *hate* in Luke 14:26

simply means to love less. In other words we are to love our family members and our own life less than we love Christ. Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Mat. 10:37). That is the point Jesus was making in Luke 14:26, not that we hate or do not love them, but we love Jesus more. In Matthew’s account it is in connection with family members who oppose the Lord and His teaching (10:34-36). Brother Leo Boles commenting on Matthew 10:37 wrote:

Father and mother are here supposed to stand against Christ, and to throw their parental influence against the child’s espousing His name. Jesus and His name can be second to none other; we must love him above all others, or not have his love...where the affections for parent would seduce us to sin their power must be rejected (237).

Anyone or anything that would hinder the Christian from attaining eternal life must be rejected. Simply put, God must come first in the Christian’s life. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). Other examples of hate actually referring to “love less” are found scattered throughout the Bible (Gen. 29:30-31; Deu. 21:15; Rom. 9:13).

### **HATE THE SIN, LOVE THE SINNER**

How many times have Christians heard this taught over the years? Too numerous to count, but what exactly does it mean and can it be done? This writer remembers hearing a talk show host commenting that it was impossible for a Christian to hate an individual’s sin without hating the individual at the same time. It was simply beyond this person’s comprehension, whether from ignorance of God’s Word on the subject or his refusal to accept God’s Word; either way he was wrong. However, he was and is not alone in believing this. The sin of sodomy or homosexuality comes readily to mind as an example. When Christians oppose the sin of homosexuality, they are vigorously attacked for hating not the sin, but hating the individual committing the sin. They are often slanderously called

“homophobic,” which is “an extreme and irrational aversion to homosexuality and homosexuals” (“Homophobia”). This often used tactic and many others are simply a deflection of the sin involved by attacking, and yes, hating, the one who is opposed to such a sinful lifestyle. It is ironic that they get away with what they condemn in others, but being consistent or practicing what they teach has never been a strong suit with the liberal mind set.

Not only does God hate the sin of homosexuality (Lev. 18:22, 29; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10; Jude 7), but all sin of every stripe, and yet, God does not hate the soul of the sinner. If God hated the sinner, He would not have sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross for him.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved (John 3:16-17).

God loved sinful man even when sinful man did not love Him, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God is also “longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Just these few passages leads man to understand God loves the soul of the sinner. Since God loves their soul, the Christian must also. This does not mean that it is always easy to do, nor does it mean Christians can overlook sin an individual has committed, because God will not overlook their sin (Num. 32:23; Rom. 2:9; Gal. 6:7-8; Col. 3:5-6).

Our dear Lord and Savior, while He was here on this earth, demonstrated the attitude of hating sin, but loving the soul of the sinner. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). When questioned by the Pharisees of eating and drinking with publicans, Jesus responded, “They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (5:31-32). How many Christians turn away from reaching out to the worst offenders of

this world because of the vile wickedness some demonstrate in their lives? Too many! Hate the sin, but love the soul of the sinner, and love it enough that we will strive to save their souls. Corinth was one of the most wicked cities in the days of the apostle Paul, and yet he was willing to preach there. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 he gives a list of sins people were involved in, and they still are today. Paul then makes the glorious statement, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11). They were forgiven of these vile sins through the preaching of the Gospel and obedience to it. Paul hated their sins, but loved their souls.

### **ARE WE WILLING TO BE HATED BY THE WORLD?**

When the first Gulf War began, a few in the military did not want to go because actual fighting was not something they signed up for. They evidently did not mind getting a paycheck and doing the work as long as conflict was not involved. Some Christians are like that, they do not mind being asked to do some of the work as long as fighting is not involved. Conflict, as in standing for the truth of God’s Word against all attackers, foreign (in the world) and domestic (in the church). All Christians have taken an oath, not just preachers, not just elders, but all Christians to defend the Truth. As Jude stated:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that *ye* should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Are Christians willing to be hated by the world? The more permissive of sin this nation becomes, the more it attacks those (Christians) who hate sin. This is not something that should surprise the child of God, for Jesus Himself taught:

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have

persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also (John 15:18-20).

Christians must be willing to be hated for righteousness sake, as Jesus taught:

Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Re-joyce, and be exceeding glad: for great *is* your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Mat. 5:11-12).

*Blessed*, came from the Greek *makarios*, which carries the idea of happiness. Fortunate is the one who is persecuted for the Lord's sake (Strong).

However, there are still many Christians who are not willing to be hated by the world. They are afraid of what someone may think, what someone may say about them behind their backs, or even of some form of reprisal brought against them. Jesus made it clear the only one we need to fear is the Father: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28). Thankfully, the Apostles had this attitude or the Gospel never would have been spread by them. Even after they had been beaten by the Sanhedrin, they had the correct attitude: "And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name" (Acts 5:41). The apostle Peter had been afraid when he denied Jesus three times, but after that he was a lion for the Lord. He would write:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But re-joyce, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy *are ye*; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or *as* a thief, or *as* an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if *any man suffer* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf (1 Pet. 4:12-16).

More than ever, Christians need to stand and be counted as true soldiers of Christ. With this nation and the world in general being more and more won over by Satan, we need to stand as lights in a dark world (Mat. 5:14-16; 2 Cor. 6:14-17; Eph. 5:8-14; Phi. 2:15). As the first-century Christians were hated and persecuted by the Empire of Rome, it is a very real possibility that Christians may even feel persecution from the American government. For decades, it has been the agenda of godless politicians and godless judges to make new laws that would try to limit the Christians influence in this country. An example of this that many Christians are paying close attention to is the Hate Crime Legislation. It might make it a criminal offense to preach against the sin of homosexuality. Brother Lynn Parker has an excellent chapter on this subject (“Hate Crimes Laws”) in the Bellview Lectureship book of 2011, *Moral Issues We Face*. It is already a criminal offense to preach against homosexuality in Canada and in France, and if it does become a crime in America, what are Christians to do? We are to speak “the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15), but make no mistake about it we are to: “Preach the Word” (2 Tim. 4:2)—whatever the consequences are. Peter made it very plain to the Sandedrin and to all Christians: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Christians must be willing to be hated by the world.

### **ARE WE WILLING TO BE HATED BY BRETHREN?**

When the Corinthian brethren were divided, Paul wrote to them:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Paul later wrote, “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (11:19). In commenting on this verse, brother Lipscomb wrote:

It is a part of the policy of God in governing the world to test those serving him, and to that end he allows evil men to come into their midst.... So God allows evil men to come among his people

who would lead away from God and his order, to try and test who among them are faithful and true to him (170).

Sadly, brethren have been divided over the years; there have been countless heresies or factions in the brotherhood and seemingly always will be. The history of the Lord's church points this out in painful detail.

Understanding that God allows this to take place begs the question: what side will the Christian stand on, the Lord's or unfaithful brethren? If Christians are willing to stand for the Lord, they must be willing to be hated by their own brethren. A classic example of this took place over the mechanical instrument that was brought into the worship of the church in the 1800s. The progressive (liberal) brethren wanted the instrument, and the faithful refused to accept it. Isaac Errett, editor of the *Christian Standard*, believed the instrument was simply a matter of opinion and should not be a test of fellowship (West 2:88). Ben Franklin, editor of the *American Christian Review*, believed the introduction of the instrument was not a matter of opinion, but was an unscriptural innovation (West 2:88). Brethren, like brothers Franklin, David Lipscomb, and many others fought long and hard against the instrument; they became hated by the heretics of that day. This heresy led to the eventual split in the Lord's church that came about in the latter 1800s.

The latest heresy that has divided the Lord's church has been the false doctrine of Dave Miller. Brother Miller's false teaching on "Re-evaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders" and "Marriage Intent" has split once-faithful brethren. Those opposed to Dave Miller and his supporters have been criticized, castigated, and, dare one say, hated for standing against them and standing for the Truth of God's Word. Many who have gone along with continued fellowship of this false teacher are simply not willing to be approved and made manifest among the Lord's people (1 Cor. 11:19). Others, who know better, simply do not want to be ridiculed and hated by Miller's supporters and will sadly, blindly follow their blind leaders; "both shall fall into the ditch" (Mat. 15:14). Faithful brethren who continue to speak and write on what has taken place are usually referred to as trouble

makers and dividers of the Lord's body. This is a time-honored practice of liberal brethren down through the years and should not stop the faithful. It did not stop the prophets of old, nor the apostles, and it certainly did not stop the Lord. Brotherhood publications, no matter the criticism, must continue to educate brethren of this and any false teaching or practice so brethren will not be fooled and lost as well (Eph. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 1 John 4:1). A case in point is the stand Ben Franklin made in his publication against the instrument in the 1800s. Brother West, in writing about Franklin's publication and the good it did wrote:

Many of the more liberal preachers to arise in the future found the *Review* very much against their liking, and because the paper was so popular with the people, they found it difficult to wean the people away from it to their more liberal ideas (1:308).

Christians at times must be willing to be hated even by their own brethren.

### CONCLUSION

Hate the sin but not the sinner is what the Bible teaches. Hate the things God hates is another. Even with brethren who teach false doctrine and those who are committed to fellowshiping them, Christians are to hate what they teach and stand for, but love their souls and pray they will repent and return to the Lord before it is too late. Remember always, if they hated the Lord, they will hate the faithful child of God. "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Pet. 4:13).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE HOME

*Tim Cozad*

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## INTRODUCTION

It would be difficult to estimate how many books and instruction manuals have been written over the years on the home, but the number must be staggering. Many of them contain *how to* tips that encompass a large range of subjects dealing with everything from marriage to parenting. For example, there are books for the newlywed to the empty nesters, along with books on raising infants, raising young children, and surviving the teenage years. Evidently the subject is important to many people, but most of these books are not worth the paper they are printed on and many do more harm than good. An example of one of these would be Dr. Spock and his drivel titled *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* that was published in 1946. He emphasized the child's self-indulgence and his feelings over self-discipline and respect for authority that in many ways led to the decline of the home in this country.

There is only one perfect instruction book on the home, and that is the Holy Bible. If more people, and, yes, if more Christians would follow God's instructions, the world would be a better place because the home would be a better place. The old saying that, "as the home goes, so goes the nation," is a true saying. The home has always been one of the building blocks of any nation or civilization. With that being said, why not go to the Scriptures to find out God's inspired instructions for the husband and wife, and for parents and

children are? Why not go to the original architect of the home, and the original architect of marriage? As Jesus taught:

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mat.19:4-6).

### A TRUE DEFINITION OF THE HOME

How the world defines the home and how the Bible defines the home could not be further apart. For example, the world says the home can be defined as two people living together even though they are not married. The world also says the home can be defined as two homosexual men or two lesbian women living together. The Bible says otherwise by condemning those lifestyles:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate [homosexuals—NKJV], nor abusers of themselves with mankind [sodomites—NKJV], Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

Those living together are not husband and wife but fornicators; they will not inherit the kingdom of God. Homosexuals, or abusers of themselves with mankind (sodomites) as this previous passage taught, cannot inherit the kingdom of God and cannot be considered husband and wife. Neither can lesbians be considered husband and wife, which lifestyle is also condemned by God in this passage and others (Rom. 1:26-28; Gal. 5:19). As Jesus taught in Matthew 19:4-6, when God instituted marriage at the very beginning, He created them male and female, i.e., husband and wife. God in His infinite wisdom understood it was not “good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). So God created the first woman from Adam’s rib in the Garden of Eden as Genesis 2:21-22 teaches. Adam and Eve were not only the first man and woman; they were also the first husband and wife: “So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God cre-

ated he him; male and female created he them” (1:27). Two people living together, committing fornication, does not define a marriage nor a home, and two homosexual men or two lesbian women living together and committing fornication will never be a definition of marriage in God’s eyes. These ungodly unions will never be a home!

God also understood the importance of children in the home, and from the very beginning He wanted man and woman to: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (1:28). The first children in that first home were Cain and Abel: “And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. And she again bare his brother Abel” (4:1-2). The Bible says that children are a blessing from God:

Lo, children *are* an heritage of the LORD: *And* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; So *are* children of the youth. Happy *is* the man that hath his quiver full of them: They shall not be ashamed, But they shall speak with the enemies in the gate (Psa. 127:3-5).

However, what God desires for all mankind is not just a home, but a Christian home—a Christian environment for the husband and the wife—and for the children to grow up in and be nourished physically and especially spiritually. P. D. Wilmeth gave these simple definitions of family and the home:

(1) Family—two people who have entered into wedlock and are living together. Children may or may not come to bless this home. (2) Home—a family living together happily. (3) Christian Home—a family whose relationships are Christian, to please God (11).

Although these definitions are simple in nature, they are true. Brother Wilmeth went on to write:

The home is the oldest institution in the world. Before there was ever a human government, school, church or business organization, there was the home. It is the foundation unit in orderly society. The rise and fall of nations have been measured by the purity and stability of family life (26).

## PROBLEMS IN THE HOME

Many homes today are broken due to divorce that is rampant in the land. One often hears that the divorce rate in America is at 50% or very close to that number. According to one website there are 6.8 marriages for every one thousand population and 3.4 divorces (“FastStats”). Sadly, most who keep these statistics agree that the divorce rate will rise in the next few years. The strain on the couples going through a divorce is difficult enough, but it has a tragic effect upon the children in the home. According to one website, the effect upon children can be life-long:

When a parent leaves the household, this can make the child withdraw and feel unwanted. It can affect their schoolwork, social skills, and their activities. They may act out in different ways, to show you they are not happy with this change in their life. It may also affect the child when the child becomes an adult. When the child becomes a parent, they may think it is not important for their child to have both parents involved in their life (“Divorce Rates”).

Another problem in the home is the increasing number of single parents raising one or more children. According to Susan L. Pollett:

Due to an increase in the numbers of children born outside of marriage and the rise in divorce rates, there has been a “three-fold increase in the proportion of children growing up in single-parent families since 1960.” According to 2005 statistics released by the U.S. Census Bureau in August 2007, “there are approximately 13.6 million single parents in the United States today, and those parents are responsible for raising 21.2 million children (approximately 26% of children under 21 in the U.S. today).” Another way to look at it is that as of the year 2000, about one third of the births in the U.S. were to unmarried mothers, which is one of the most “profound changes in American society.”

Children need both a loving father and mother to grow up properly, as God realized when He instituted that first family. Without proper direction they will never mature as they should; as Solomon wrote, “My son, hear the instruction of thy father, And forsake not the law of thy mother: For they *shall be* an ornament of grace unto thy head, And chains about thy neck” (Pro. 1:8-9). To grow up properly, children need and deserve Christian parents in their lives.

Sons need a father figure to model their lives after and daughters need a father figure as well to evaluate a future mate. Both need a mother, especially in the early years of child development. The apostle Paul saw the importance of Timothy's mother and grandmother in his development as a godly man: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1:5). Paul would later write of Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15).

Adding to the travesty of divorce is the practice of those of the same sex raising children. This country has come a long way in its tolerance of sin and its inability to blush, as in Judah's day: "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush" (Jer. 6:15). The world revels in its tolerance and acceptance of the most grievous of sins to show how liberal or progressive they are in their thinking. Paul rebuked the church in Corinth for its toleration of sin:

It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you (1 Cor. 5:1-2).

The toleration of sin and the rejection of the Bible is the greatest cause of problems in the home.

In the generation this writer's parents grew up in, divorce was practically unheard of and if there was a case of divorce in town, it was not a badge of honor but one of shame. The Bible says that God hates divorce or "putting away," as Malachi calls it: "For the LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away" (Mal. 2:16a). The one exception for God's rule of marriage, one man for one woman for life, is fornication (Mat. 5:32; 19:9), and only the innocent part can remarry. The Bible says, "Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God

will judge” (Heb. 13:4). If children are taught (beginning at a young age and taught often) that marriage is for life, they will have no misconceptions when they make plans to marry. “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mat. 19:6). Also, if children are taught to marry another Christian when the time comes, they can then help each other as husband and wife in achieving the goal of eternal life with God.

Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with *them* according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).

### RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE HOME

The Bible has much to say about the responsibilities between husbands and wives, along with the responsibilities parents have toward their children and children toward their parents. Some of these instructions, and yes they are commands, are found recorded in Ephesians 5-6. The responsibilities that wives have to their own husbands are recorded in Ephesians 5:22-24. Verse 22 states, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” Thayer defines *submit* from the Greek word *hupotasso* as “to arrange under, to subordinate; to subject, put in subjection...to subject one’s self, to obey, to submit to one’s control” (645). She is to submit herself to her own husband as she would to the Lord. Of course, groups like the National Organization for Women despise this kind of teaching as not only archaic but, most important, chauvinistic as it makes the woman appear inferior to the man. The Bible gives the reason she is to submit in verse 23: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.” Thayer states regarding *head* that it is used metaphorically describing “anything supreme, chief, or prominent” (345). God has chosen the husband to be the head of the family, but that does not make the wife inferior or less important than the husband. God has simply given different roles for husband and wife. A great reason for so many divorces today is women not willing to

submit to their own husbands as Sarah submitted to her husband Abraham (1 Pet. 3:5-6).

In Ephesians 5:25 and following are the responsibilities God has given to the husband: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” To what degree should the husband love his wife? Even as or in proportion as Jesus loved the church and was willing to die for it (Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). Does that really mean the husband should be willing to lay down his life for his wife? That is exactly what it means, but it may involve even more than that. Jesus constantly demonstrated a selfless attitude, an attitude of putting the needs of others before His own, and so should this attitude be seen and demonstrated by the husband to his wife. Likewise, as the desire for the salvation of man prompted Jesus to die on the cross, the husband should feel a great desire for his wife’s salvation. Adam Clarke wrote:

So then husbands should, if necessary, lay down their lives for their wives: and there is more implied in the words than mere protection and support; for, as Christ gave himself for the Church to save it, so husbands should, by all means in their power, labor to promote the salvation of their wives, and their constant edification in righteousness (463).

Paul sums up the responsibilities of husbands and wives when he wrote: “Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband” (Eph. 5:33). If the responsibilities (actually they are commands) recorded in this chapter (5:22-33) are followed, divorce would cease.

In Ephesians 6, Paul continues his discussion on the home by stating the responsibilities that children have toward their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth (6:1-3).

A couple of things need to be mentioned about these passages. First, they are referred to as responsibilities, but they really are more than that; they are commandments from God. Whether the child’s

parents are Christian or not, they are to obey them. A number of commentators believe the child Paul mentions is one that is a Christian, but the limits of obedience are referred to in the phrase “in the Lord.” David Lipscomb wrote:

This limits the submission. That is, whatever can be done in obedience to the parents without violating the law of God, that do; but beyond this no child dare go without deep condemnation upon itself (118).

Children are also to honor their parents, which is a command found throughout the Bible (Exo. 20:12; Lev. 19:32; Pro. 23:22-25; Mat. 15:4; Luke 18:20; Col. 3:20). Disobedient children are a great disappointment in God’s eyes and a great sin of mankind. One of the many sins of the Gentiles as they turned from God was the sin of being “disobedient to parents” (Rom. 1:30). Paul mentioned this grievous sin again in 2 Timothy 3:2. The home would be a better place if children obeyed and honored their parents.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HOME**

What the Bible says about the home is not only important to the home, but it is also important to society in general. For example, when the home begins to fail, so does society. This country is teetering on the brink of falling headlong into the abyss of destruction due to its willingness to forget God and His Word (Deu. 30:15-20; Hos. 4:1-6). If this country will take a step back from the abyss, it will begin in the home, one family at a time, who is willing to keep God’s Word. Long ago, God stressed to Israel the importance of teaching His Law diligently to their children:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deu. 6:7).

What would be the outcome of following God’s commands? Moses sums it up at the end of the chapter: “And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us” (6:25).

The first classroom children attend will be the home, and if it is a godly home (which every child deserves), it will invariably be the most important of classrooms. With what children have to face in the world today, they need to be “rooted and grounded in love” (Eph. 3:17). Both *rooted* and *grounded* speak of strength and stability in an unstable world. Children also need to be brought up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:4). Furthermore, parents cannot begin teaching their children too soon about God and His Word. “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). The Psalmist wrote: “O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works” (Psa. 71:17). Even Jesus, when He was a child, “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

The blessing of growing up in a Christian home is a blessing the child can always reflect upon and be thankful. The blessing of having parents who not only teach but practice what the Bible teaches. One of the greatest commendations a parent received for teaching their children, was the one God gave to Abraham:

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

With Abraham, there was no doubt in God’s mind how his children and the children of his household would be raised. Since God knows all, including how parents raise their children, parents need to ask if they are raising their children in the way of the Lord, as Abraham did his.

## CONCLUSION

What the Bible says about the home is the only guide that is perfect in its instructions to man at this time and any time—perfect, flawless instructions for marriage—perfect, flawless instructions for parents and for children growing up in the home! If this country will change from its godless ways, it will begin with the Christian

home, one family at a time. Think of how great this country could be if all the parents were like John the Baptist's, who were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: MORALITY

*Gene Hill*

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**Gene and Jerry obeyed the Gospel in 1975, at the old Andrews Avenue Church of Christ in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He began studying at the Florida School of Preaching beginning in 1976, and graduated in 1978. This was during the tenure of the late B. C. Carr as the school's Director. Gene began full-time preaching in 1982, serving congregations in Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. He is currently working with the congregation in Indianola, Mississippi.**

The title of this lesson contains the boundaries and purpose for its contents. We are concerned with and limited to what the Bible says about Morality. Granted that this is a discussion that will touch on worldviews, and we, therefore, must discuss what others may think; however, it is what the Bible teaches that concerns us. For our basis of discussion, we are presupposing the existence of a Supreme Deity whom the Bible identifies as "the God Almighty" in Genesis 17:1 and as Jehovah in Exodus 6:3. Likewise we are presupposing an adequate translation of the Bible from the various sources used to make that translation.

Those that claim not to have any religion probably do not understand what it means to be religious. I found a quote, whose original source I neglected to record and have subsequently modified, that helps us to understand what religion is. "Your religion is any idea or set of ideas in which you believe so strongly that such belief affects your behavior." Everyone has an ideology which they pursue religiously. *The American Heritage Dictionary* says, "Religion—an objective pursued with zeal or conscientious devotion." With these statements and definitions, and upon reflection of the lives and accomplishments of well-known historical figures as Hitler, Lenin, Pol Pot, and Charles Manson, as well as others that could be named,

we see each clearly had an idea or set of ideas that affected their behavior and which they pursued with devotion. Granted, it was a religious worldview of darkness, but a religious worldview none the less.

Our religion is an expression of our worldview, our way of interpreting the world around us in which each of us exist. There are two foundations from which one draws one's world view. Either you believe that all that exists originated from a special act of creation or you believe that the nature of matter is eternal.

Note a quote from the late eminent astronomer, Dr. Robert Jastrow, which he made in an interview as quoted in Wikipedia:

His expressed views on creation were that although he was an "agnostic, and not a believer," it seems to him that "the curtain drawn over the mystery of creation will never be raised by human efforts, at least in the foreseeable future" due to "the circumstances of the big bang—the fiery holocaust that destroyed the record of the past."

In an interview with *Christianity Today*, Jastrow observes "Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation to which you can trace the seeds of every star, every planet, every living thing in this cosmos and on the earth. And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover. That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact" (Jastrow).

Furthermore, the Law of Causality states: "Every effect must have a cause sufficient to produce the effect." We therefore believe that it is entirely rational to affirm a special creation with a Cause that is outside of the effect and sufficient to bring about all that is. We believe that Uncaused First Cause to be God as He is revealed in the Bible. John Hicks said, "God is 'the infinite, eternal, uncreated personal reality, who has created all that exists other than Himself, and who has revealed himself to his human creatures as holy and living'" (qtd. in Warren v).

Now what about a moral code? Does the Bible inform us of an idea which man is expected to incorporate into his life in such a way

that it informs his intellect and emotions directing his every activity? The answer is a resounding yes!

Consider the first three chapters of Genesis as a beginning. God created man and woman on the sixth day and communicated His will to them. We have some specific instructions from God as to what He expected of them in Genesis 1:28-29, 2:15-17, 24-25.

The relationship they had with God was at the very least one of familiarity, for we see God in the Garden seeking them and calling out to them, asking where they might be (3:8-9). We see in the ensuing conversation God gives very specific instructions and consequences to the couple as a result of their actions in the eating of the forbidden fruit.

However the most striking thing in the aftermath of this transgression of God's law is the fact that Adam and Eve are still standing, alive, and well. How can that be since they were told that they would surely die in the day that they ate thereof (2:17)?

They are still alive and well because God had a plan for the soul of Man. He had this plan from before the foundation of the world. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet. 1:20). The purpose of the plan was for Man's purification and sanctification (Heb. 9:11-12, 15-23; 10:1-4, 9-10, 19-22) in order for us to have fellowship with Almighty God and have Him to walk among us, His people (Deu. 23:14; Lev. 26:12; 2 Cor. 6:16).

The reason for the preconceived plan is that God is able to look down the stream of time and know what would happen (Psa. 147:5). Man, created in God's image, has free moral agency. He, therefore, is able to make independent decisions and act. As we have seen in the Garden of Eden, man does not always make the correct choice. Therefore, God had a plan in place for the time when man would break the bond of fellowship.

In view of God's threat of death for partaking of the forbidden fruit, why did their destruction not immediately follow the act of

touching and partaking? Sin is transgression of Law (1 John 3:4; 5:17). Sin causes separation from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Blood needs to be shed for sin to be remitted (Mat. 26:18; Heb. 9:11-12; 10:3, 22; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:16-18). Since this is all the case, observe what Genesis 3:21 says, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” God made coats of skins to clothe them and hide their nakedness. Where did the skins come from? Could it have been the animals used to sanctify the sinners from their sin, thus restoring fellowship with God?

There is unquestionably a divinely-instituted moral code man is to follow to maintain a proper relationship with God, man with himself, and then with his fellow man (Mat. 22:35-40). Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18 and states that all the law and prophets hang on these two commandments: love God with your entire being, and love your fellowman as yourself (Mat. 22:37-40). The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:3-17 can be divided into two sections. The first four commandments (20:3-8) deal with the Israelites relationship with God. The next six commandments (20:12-17) define how the Israelites were to interact with their fellow Israelites and by extension even strangers.

Jesus’ statement regarding the first commandment in Matthew 22:37-38 corresponds to Exodus 20:3-8 and Matthew 22:39 corresponds to Exodus 20:12-17. It is not the case that Christians, or any one today, for that matter, are to keep the Ten Commandments or any other portion of the Mosaic Law. It must be understood that the Divine principles expressed in the Decalogue are restated in the Law of Christ, and, as such, we are to observe those principles as the Law of Christ (Mat. 28:18-20; John 12:47-50; Acts 17:29-31; Rom. 3:23; 6:23).

God has established a universal moral code for which all mankind is held equally and individually accountable, which moral code is revealed in the Bible (2 Cor. 5:10). As Creator (Gen. 1:1-3), God has all the power necessary (Luke 1:37) to enforce His divine will (Isa. 43:13).

The Bible teaches God is holy in an ethical sense (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2), and it is demanded that we, likewise, are to be that way in conduct flowing from our hearts (Isa. 6:3, 5; Psa. 24:3ff).

What are some specifics of this moral code to which all are amenable? The first (and it would seem to be the most obvious) is the institution of marriage. The relationship is introduced on the sixth day of creation, as recorded initially in Genesis 1:26-28 and in more subsequent detail in Genesis 2:18-25. In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus accepts the historical accuracy of the Genesis account by His approving use of it in teaching on the marriage relationship.

We can learn that the marital relationship is for those with sufficient maturity to leave the home of their parents and establish their home and family. The woman that is fit for marriage ought to already possess or be able to acquire the qualities as described for us in Proverbs 31:10-31. This woman is labeled as a virtuous woman in verse 10. It must be strongly noted that the only man qualified to have a woman such as this for his wife is described for us in Ephesians 5:22-33. He is to have a love for her that is as sacrificial as is that of Christ for His church. The husband is to cherish her at least as much as he does his own body. It is **this** man that a Proverbs 31 woman will submit herself to and reverence as she ought.

A God-joined marriage (Mat. 19:6) is a relationship between a man and a woman only, a male and female exclusively. These two are to have never previously contracted a marriage (1 Cor. 7:36-38), or if they have been previously married, the marriage must have been one dissolved by either the death of a spouse (Rom. 7:1-4) or by the adultery of the spouse (Mat. 19:9).

To the unacceptability of divorce we must add the unacceptability of separation for even a brief period of time. The only exception to this is for the reason of fasting and prayer, and it must be a mutually-decided upon event that is brief and temporary (1 Cor. 7:5). How brief? Brief enough so that neither spouse is defrauded in their personal needs to avoid fornication in the first place (7:2-4).

Another area covered by this moral code is that of civil government (Rom. 13:1-7). Paul states that civil government as a concept

is ordained of God (13:1-2, 4, 6). Agents of civil government are God's ministers. They are to serve His purposes in ruling in the affairs of men. The purpose of civil government is to protect the innocent citizen against evildoers as a revenger against that evildoer.

Citizens are to be obedient to rulers that serve in that capacity and manner (13:2; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). We are not authorized to submit to ordinances that violate any law of God (Acts 5:29), but we must be willing to suffer the consequences without complaint on the basis of persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

The last item of this list of moral issues is that of the church. Keep in mind that *morality* is defined as the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct and a system of ideas of right and wrong conduct (*American*). This body is part of God's plan from the beginning.

Under the Christian Dispensation beginning in Acts 2, all of mankind is obligated to come to God through Christ (John 14:6; Eph. 1:3). Bible students know that there is a way and manner of life that God has mandated all must follow to have hope of eternal life (Heb. 11:6; 1 John 1:6-7; Mat. 7:13-14; Jer. 6:16; 10:23).

The church which Jesus built (Mat. 16:18) is now the place in which sanctification through His blood is to be found (Acts 20:28; Heb. 9:11-12, 21-23; 10:22, 29; 1 Pet. 1:2). To gain entrance into this body, and to then possess a real hope of eternal life, there are conditions one must meet. These conditions are ordained of God (Eph. 2:8-10).

One must understand who the Father is and what that means (John 6:44-45). Coming unto Jesus as the Messiah is required (John 1:29; 8:24). A change of conduct called repentance, from one way of morality to another, is required (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 26:18; Col. 1:13-14). Confession of Jesus as Lord and Savior on the part of the one coming to the Father is next (Mat. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10). Immersion in water to obtain remission of sins is the final step to be granted addition by the Lord into His blood-bought body (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:16-18).

There is a moral standard to which all mankind is amenable. It is a source of Truth that transcends the human condition being absolute, objective, and obtainable. It is the rule against which all are to be judged concerning our behavior during this period of time we recognize as our span of life. At the close of this period of probation, our book of life will be closed to be opened again when we stand before the judgment bar to receive the things done in the body. The consequence of ignoring this Moral Standard has eternal consequences (Mat. 25:46).

Remember, everyone has a religious worldview through which they interpret and interact with the world around them. What worldview do you possess, and is it in harmony with the God of this universe?

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: MODESTY

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## INTRODUCTION

Certainly one of the greatest gross inadequacies of the moral fiber of this country, as well as the world as a whole, is the seeming *en masse* disregard for modesty in dress and behavior. One need only look about in the world around him to see the horrors portrayed and perpetuated by the media outlets of film, Internet, and television, to enumerate but a few. Sadly, the immorality of the media is eclipsed by the general populace of the world. Men, women, and children, from vast divergences of culture, social class, and financial standing, all exhibit the influences of a morally corrupt world as regards modesty.

How desperately this world needs to know, understand, and do the inspired words of Solomon, who wrote, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: But sin *is* a reproach to any people" (Pro. 14:34). To the extent that any nation or community allows its citizens to live immodest lives, through dress and behavior, is the extent (by at least that one avenue) of that people's sad reproach before their Creator and Almighty God. Let every person that lives know that no man or nation that lives in the reproach of God shall see the good days of the blessings of God, nor shall they find an eternal home in Heaven.

Modesty is truly a matter of spiritual life or death. The comprehension of such matters brings to mind the words of Peter:

And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds; (2 Pet. 2:7-8).

As the great immodesty of Sodom and Gomorrah sorely distressed Lot, so the righteous today are grieved by the often total disregard of God's injunctions for modest lives by those living in this present world.

As great as the sin of immodesty is—there is a balm for the afflicted eyes of the righteous. The healing of the nations is the Word of God (Mal. 4:2; cf. Rev. 22:2). God has laid forth the way of righteousness as regards modesty. One need only to “harden not your [his] heart” (Psa. 95:7), and “receive with meekness the engrafted word” (Jam. 1:21).

### ΚΟΣΜΙΩ AND THE CREATION

*Modest* is found but once in the King James Version of the Bible. Paul wrote to Timothy, “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array” (1 Tim. 2:9). The King James Bible in common use today is the revision of 1769. What did *modest* mean in 1769? The answer is found on the pages of Samuel Johnson's 1768 dictionary, “Modest, a.—1. Not arrogant; not presumptuous, *Young*. 2. Not impudent; not forward. *Dryden*. 3. Not loose; not unchaste. *Addison*.” Modesty encompassed moderation, honor, and morality. To dig deeper into the meaning of *modesty*, the Greek text should be consulted.

*Modest* is the English translation of the Greek word κοσμίω (*kosmio*), which is found only in 1 Timothy 2:9. One must consult the root word for κοσμίω—κόσμιος (*kosmios*) to find the lexical usage of the word. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon* gives: “well-arranged, seemly, modest” (356). *Well-arranged* may be understood by two entries from Webster's International dictionaries of 1895 and 1907 (these dictionaries are contemporary with Thayer's Lexicon of 1896): In the 1907 dictionary, the verbal form of *arrange* is defined:

to put in proper order; to dispose (persons, things, or parts) in the manner intended, or best suited for the purpose, as troops arranged for battle (83).

In the 1895 dictionary, the adverb *well* is defined:

1. in a good or proper manner; justly; rightly; not ill or wickedly.
2. suitably to one's condition, to the occasion, or to a proposed end or use; suitably; abundantly; fully; adequately; thoroughly (1640).

*Well-arranged* then would be: purposefully ordered for a certain and intended outcome. Thayer also cited “seemly” and “modest” as usages. Webster's International dictionary of 1895 defines *seemly*:

- a.—suited to the object, occasion, purpose, or character; suitable; fit; becoming; comely; decorous (1304).

The 1907 edition defines *modest*:

- a.—1. restrained within due limits of propriety; not forward, bold, boastful, or presumptuous; rather retiring than pushing one's self forward; not obtrusive; as, a modest youth; a modest man. 2. observing the proprieties of the sex; not unwomanly in act or bearing; free from undue familiarity, indecency, or lewdness; decent in speech and demeanor;—said of a woman. 3. Evincing modesty in the actor, author, or speaker; not showing presumption; not excessive or extreme; moderate; as a modest request; modest joy (935).

*Seemly* and *modest* from the turn of the twentieth century may be said to mean: unpretentious and purposeful moderation in dress and behavior.

One should notice that *purpose* and *moderation* are central themes of the lexical studies explored, thus far. These two terms are exemplified in the creative work of God, which calls for further study.

Upon examination of Thayer's lexical entry for κόσμιος (*kosmios*), one will notice that the Greek root word κόσμος (*kosmos*) is inserted as a parenthetical reference. A connection between κόσμιος and κόσμος becomes evident when the lexical entry for κόσμος is considered. The first four usages are: “1. an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order... 2. ornament, decoration, adornment... 3. the world, i.e. the universe... 4. the circle of the earth, the earth” (356-57). Notice now κόσμος in the following verses, where it (as the root word) is translated *world*:

He was in the **world**, and the **world** was made by him, and the **world** knew him not (John 1:10).

God that made the **world** and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands (Acts 17:24).

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the **world** are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

One may notice that κόσμιος (*kosmios*) is a Greek adjective. How does it derive its adjectival meaning of “well-arranged, seemly, modest”? The derivation is from its connection to the Divinely “well-arranged” κόσμος or universe. At this point, a return to the beginning will shed necessary light for one’s comprehension of κοσμίω (*kosmio*) and modesty.

The beginning in question is the *beginning* of Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The next verse states: “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep” (1:2). The earth was without proper arrangement, for it was “without form, and void.” The elements (2 Pet. 3:10) were in place but without order. The Divine constitution for the universe had yet to be enacted. However, that which was yet lacking in sequence, God would shortly set in place. Twenty-nine verses and six days later the κόσμος was complete—the world was well-arranged:

- The first day, light was created (1:3-5).
- The second day, the waters pertaining to the earth were divided from the waters above the earth. The expanse of the sky was that divider (1:6-8).
- The third day, the waters pertaining to the earth were allotted their proper places, and the dry land was divided from the seas. The dry land brought forth plant life bearing forth after its kind (1:9-13).

- The fourth day, the celestial bodies, besides the earth, were created and given their proper relation to the earth and one another (1:14-19).
- The fifth day, sea creatures and the flying fowl were created (1:20-23).
- The sixth day, beasts and creeping things of the earth were created, and lastly man was also created (1:24-31).

The orderly progression of the creation cannot be denied. The needs of each constituent element were supplied in the preceding step. Man and beast were supplied with their nourishing herbs in a preceding step (1:29-30). The nourishment of light and earth were supplied before the fauna were created. **No part needed was neglected, neither were any parts allowed to be superfluous: only perfect simplicity existed—no more and no less.** The list could continue until every secret of our universe was discovered. Truly the creation of the κόσμος was *modestly* done.

Notice now the perfect arrangement—the perfect seemliness—of the earthly creation of God:

The earth was not brought forth haphazardly but with a measured foundation:

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? Or who hath stretched the line upon it? (Job 38:4-5).

An orderly process, called the water cycle, refreshes the oceans of the earth: “All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea *is* not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again” (Ecc. 1:7).

Psalms 104 clearly speaks of the complex systems of sustenance and renewal in the natural world. The following are but a few examples:

He watereth the hills from his chambers: The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, And herb for the service of man: That he may bring forth food out of the earth; And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, And oil

to make *his* face to shine, And bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart. The trees of the LORD are full *of sap*; The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; Where the birds make their nests: *As for* the stork, the fir trees *are* her house (104:13-17).

Plants, beasts, and men are cared for by the orderly arrangement of the earth. "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork" (19:1). How appropriate are these words when one realizes the perfect suitability and disposition of God's created universe in relation to its intended purpose. The few examples given above are but a glimpse of the wonders of the natural world.

Comprehension of the inherent well-arranged, seemliness, and modesty of the created universe, which said properties were bestowed upon it by the Creator, clearly shows the interrelationship of κόσμος with κόσμιος and thus with κοσμίω the latter's grammatical derivative, which is the word translated *modest* that is under examination in this chapter. The created universe is God's empirical illustration of modesty.

### THE COMMAND AND THE PRINCIPLES

The foregoing, rather detailed, explanation of the background of *modesty* has been given to lay a foundation which one may use as a springboard to grasp the intended meaning of the word in the verse from 1 Timothy.

Again Paul wrote, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in **modest** apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array" (1 Tim. 2:9). The immediate context in which *modest* is used is in connection with the apparel or clothing of women in the worship services of the Lord's church. Women were to dress modestly when attending these worship services. They were to dress in modest clothing and have modest attitudes. Their attitudes are addressed by the terms: "shamefacedness" and "sobriety." These words could be understood rather simply as "modesty (based in reverence)" and "rational self-control." "Good works" (2:10) has reference to the actions enjoined upon men by God for the fulfillment of our responsibility toward

God and His good will. In both dress and behavior, Paul commands that that **which is necessary should not be neglected and that which is unnecessary is superfluous** and must be avoided. Thus, one is brought back to the very essence of the standard of modesty exemplified in God's creation of the universe.

### The Principles

It would be great folly to assume that God's injunctions of modesty were confined only to women and only to times when the church comes together for worship. Are men called upon by God to be modest in dress and behavior? The answer is found in the next chapter of 1 Timothy. Paul declares that one of the qualifications for an elder is that he be "of good behaviour." The phrase "of good behaviour" is the translation of κόσμιον (*kosmion*) which has as its Greek root κόσμιος, just as *modest* does from the previous chapter. Elders must be modest in behavior—this certainly includes their dress.

Modest dress is commanded by God of all people. This is understood by the commands God has given men concerning their dress and the consequences subsequent to their choices. How one dresses advertises the intents of the heart. When Judah's daughter-in-law desired to conceive by her father-in-law she dressed herself as a harlot to lure him in by the seduction that her dress implied (Gen. 38). When Samson came to Gaza he identified a harlot by her appearance, "Then went Samson to Gaza, and **saw there an harlot**, and went in unto her" (Jud. 16:1). Wise Solomon warned of the harlot that seduces with beckoning attire and flattering words (Pro. 7:5-27). Ezekiel, by inspiration, described the spiritual adulteries of Judah and Israel in the terms associated with the actions and attire of harlots:

And furthermore, that ye have sent for men to come from far, unto whom a messenger *was* sent; and, lo, they came: **for whom thou didst wash thyself, paintedst thy eyes, and deckedst thyself with ornaments**, And satest upon a stately bed, and a table prepared before it, whereupon thou hast set mine incense and mine oil. And a voice of a multitude being at ease *was* with her: and with the men

of the common sort *were* brought Sabean from the wilderness, which put bracelets upon their hands, and beautiful crowns upon their heads. Then said I unto *her that was* **old in adulteries**, Will they now **commit whoredoms** with her, and she *with them*? Yet they went in unto her, as they go in unto a woman **that playeth the harlot**: so went they in unto Aholah and unto Aholibah, the **lewd women** (Eze. 23:40-44).

In like manner, John described the great harlot in these terms:

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the **great whore** that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have **committed fornication**, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. **And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication**: And upon her forehead *was* a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (Rev. 17:1-5).

In each of the above accounts, the intents of the heart were made manifest by the outward expression of the clothing and the actions employed to seduce. One may recall the wicked wife of Ahab, Jezebel, who was known for her sinfulness: “And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it peace, Jehu?* And he answered, What peace, so long as the **whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel** and her witchcrafts *are so many?*” (2 Kin. 9:22). A few verses later it records, “And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard *of it*; and **she painted her face, and tired her head**, and looked out at a window” (9:30). Jezebel’s ungodly heart was shown in her dress and behavior—in short, she was very immodest.

Men and not just women can be immodest in their dress. Male immodesty is certainly implied in the circumstances of female harlotry and Paul wrote of the vile abominations among men in the Gentile world:

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:27; cf. Gen. 19:4-11).

The idea of male immodesty brings forth yet another avenue of sin—the immodesty of pride. The Herod of Acts 12 manifested his immodesty and subsequently his life was required of him:

And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, *saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.* And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost (Acts 12:21-23).

Herod sought the praises of men and arrayed himself in such clothing, retinue, and speech as to gain the praises he sought. His immodesty was vividly exposed by God’s judgment against him.

The self-righteous sect of the Jews, the Pharisees, also sought the praises of men:

**But all their works they do for to be seen of men:** they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi (Mat. 23:5-7).

The immodesty of the Pharisees engendered partiality and strife that God has condemned (Jam. 2:1-9). Paul wrote, “*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*” (Phi. 2:3). “Strife” and “vainglory” describe immodesty, while “lowliness of mind” and “esteem[ing] other better than themselves” describes modesty. Humility is the foundational principle behind modesty. In contrast—brazen, crass, shameless, indiscreet, vulgar—these are all words that are associated with the immodest person; because, they describe the person puffed up with conceit and arrogance. How sad it is that the immodest person has **neglected the necessary and adopted the superfluous.**

## CONCLUSION

Modesty is first found in the heart. Jesus said, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things” (Mat. 12:35). Immodesty bespeaks of a problem of the heart. Immodesty can and certainly does entail not covering one’s nakedness as one should—he has neglected the necessary. Immodesty also entails the one who embellishes himself (by clothing, ornamentation, or manner) to draw unwarranted attention to himself for the sake of praise—he has added the superfluous. The great example of God’s modesty is clearly seen in His creation—“The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1). The immodest have only their own hearts to blame—“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead”; therefore, all men regarding modesty “are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE CHRISTIAN'S FRUIT

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**B**earing fruit requires growth. You will grow in Christ, or you will be lost in eternity. You will not stand still in your growth. “For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8). Trees that produce no fruit are worthless in the garden and God’s children who are barren of fruit are likewise of no value to the kingdom or the world. Additionally, while on this subject, the Christian’s fruit and personal growth are inseparable.

## **GOD DEMANDS THAT YOU BEAR FRUIT**

Bearing fruit is not optional, and growth is active—not passive. It does not come as a result of wishful thinking but rather real, focused, attention to one’s soul. If I know the car battery is weak or has a dead cell, I do not fix the transmission. Rather, I replace the battery. You must work on yourself. You will not have all power over changing others, but you can change yourself. You can, and must, look more like the Savior from day to day and year to year. People, like zebras, do not often “change their stripes” unless properly motivated, and Christianity provides the perfect motivation for improvement. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21—KJV). Eliza Hewitt captured in words this point in beautiful fashion:

### Stepping In The Light

Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
 Trying to follow our Savior and King;  
 Shaping our lives by His blessed example,  
 Happy, how happy, the songs that we bring.

How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
 Stepping in the light, stepping in the light,  
 How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
 Led in paths of light.

Pressing more closely to Him Who is leading,  
 When we are tempted to turn from the way;  
 Trusting the arm that is strong to defend us,  
 Happy, how happy, our praises each day.

Walking in footsteps of gentle forbearance,  
 Footsteps of faithfulness, mercy, and love,  
 Looking to Him for the grace freely promised,  
 Happy, how happy, our journey above.

Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior,  
 Upward, still upward, we follow our Guide;  
 When we shall see Him, "the King in His beauty,"  
 Happy, how happy, our place at His side.

Peter's second epistle draws attention to the very personal matter of bearing fruit and growing as we should.

Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in *your* virtue knowledge; and in *your* knowledge self-control; and in *your* self-control patience; and in *your* patience godliness; and in *your* godliness brotherly kindness; and in *your* brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins (2 Pet. 1:5-9).

Another passage illuminating the fruit produced in the Christian is Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.

When we as a child of God walk by the Spirit, our life is adorned with the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). It is no accident when we bear fruit. It is the result of dedicated focus on our walk with God. When we look at the Savior, we see His glorious attributes. We then look at ourselves and see our flaws and imperfections, and we determine to add the Christian virtues to our lives. It does not come easily, but it does occur when we work at it.

### Love

Christians are people who know Biblical love—it is part of our life. I note “**Biblical love**” because so many have reduced love to mere shallow, warm emotion. The Christian loves God supremely and others enough to attempt to save their souls.

And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell (Eph. 5:2).

And this is love, that we should walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, even as ye heard from the beginning, that ye should walk in it (2 John 6).

The fruit of the Spirit is a love in your life that mirrors Christ’s love for souls. Jesus spoke the truth, He invited souls to come to Him for rest, and He laid down His life for all mankind.

### Joy

The fruit of the Spirit is joy. The Christian is a person who knows real joy. “For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17). The world seeks in vain for joy and happiness in every wrong place and activity. The Christian’s joy comes from the hope of heaven and the confidence that we will be with the Lord when life’s little day ends. “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit” (15:13). Joy comes from knowing that God holds the future within His all-powerful hands, and in the darkest hour everything will work out fine—even though we cannot see how it will ever work out at all (8:28)! Joy and suffering are connected in the Bible.

“But insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, rejoice; that at the revelation of his glory also ye may rejoice with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:13). No one will find real, lasting joy in alcohol or other drugs. Immorality will not bring it. We will not find it in a worldly life. Hobbies or secular pursuits will not produce joy in our life. It is all vanity (Ecc. 1:1-14). We will not find lasting joy with money, things, or popularity.

But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content. But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

We find joy when we live a godly Christian life—a life based on a proper relationship with the Savior. When we know, from the Word of God, that our soul is right, then we have real cause for rejoicing. “For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:8).

### Peace

The Christian fruit includes peace. Much akin to joy, the Christian finds peace in life by first being right with God.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful (John 14:27).

These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (16:33).

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus (Phi. 4:7).

The chaos and anxiety of this world can be depressing if they rule in our lives. The child of God needs a peaceful refuge where comfort is found. In Christ, there is nothing that can forcibly take us away

from a life of hope and promise. We can move away from Christ but no one can force us to leave Him. Sometimes people break promises and betray others, but the Lord will not forsake us or desert us.

What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died, yea rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Even as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; We were accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:31-39).

Life is not worth living when one leaves the Lord and forfeits the only source of real, lasting peace. “*There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked*” (Isa. 48:22—KJV).

### **Longsuffering**

Longsuffering is the fruit of the Spirit in the Christian's life. Vine writes, “Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy, and is used of God” (377). God is longsuffering toward mankind, and aren't we glad He is (2 Pet. 3:9)! “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation” (3:15). Paul wrote, “howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffering, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life” (1 Tim. 1:16).

### **Kindness/Gentleness**

Kindness (gentleness—KJV) is the fruit of the Spirit that must be present in the Christian's life. This “refers to benignity and kind-

ness, a quality that should pervade and penetrate the whole nature, mellowing in it all that is harsh and austere" (Wuest). If we grow as we should, our nature becomes gentler—kinder.

Goodness has been defined as kindness in action, or kindness "energized" into action. Barnabas was "a good man" (Acts 11:24). He was known for being an Encourager (4:36). Barnabas was glad to see the progress of the Gospel, and he encouraged the brethren to "cleave unto the Lord" (11:23).

### Faithfulness

The fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness. "Most men will proclaim every one his own kindness; But a faithful man who can find?" (Pro. 20:6). Rare indeed, faithfulness means we keep our commitments and handle with care that which is entrusted to us. Wilkin Bacon's poignant song asks this sobering question:

*Can He depend on You?  
His blessed will to do?  
Will you be crowned with the faithful and true  
Can He depend on You?*

### Meekness

Are we meek? One man won a badge for humility and then had it taken away when he wore it! The fruit of the Spirit is meekness. Barclay wrote that

we treat all men with perfect courtesy, that we can rebuke without rancor, that we can argue without intolerance, that we can face the truth without resentment, that we can be angry and sin not, that we can be gentle and yet not weak (qtd. in Copeland).

### Self-Control

Self-control is to be a part of the Christian's life. It is seen in our self-restraint of our desires and refusal to let sudden or extreme passion rule our conduct. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). To wicked Felix, Paul "reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come," and "Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will

call thee unto me” (Acts 24:25). It is an indispensable characteristic of the Christian race.

Every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things.

Now they *do it* to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected (1 Cor. 9:25-27).

### PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

An impediment to bearing fruit and real growth is a cold heart and shallow religion. Many professing to be Christians have never developed a real love for God, His Son, and His church. Their superficial allegiance to duty has them attend worship assemblies (most or some of the time) but offer little more to the kingdom. Some “profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him” (Tit. 1:16). Can we be just going through the motions and have no real appreciation for what was accomplished on the cross?

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died (2 Cor. 5:14).

And one of the scribes came, and heard them questioning together, and knowing that he had answered them well, asked him, What commandment is the first of all? Jesus answered, The first is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength (Mark 12:28-30).

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

The Lord sees our very heart and knows its every intent. Our thoughts are on constant display before the eyes of an all-seeing God. Superficial offerings to God are not sufficient.

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt-offerings and meal-offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But

let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream  
(Amos 5:21-24).

Insincere worship habits create weak brethren and hinders fruit-bearing. Cold, formalistic worship is seen where we go through the motions, but our hearts are a million miles away. When we do not worship acceptably, we deprive yourself of the blessings and strength derived from this crucial aspect of the Christian life. We ought to try this test on ourselves Sunday. Can we say that with each song our mind was attuned to the words? Did we say in our mind, "Amen," to each request and expression of thanks in the prayer? Did our mind go back to Calvary and the death of Christ when partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine? On we could go but surely the point is clear that healthy worship habits not only are required by God, but they are to your benefit as well. Bearing fruit requires acceptable worship.

Growing Christians teach others; stagnant brethren do not. If we are serious about bearing fruit, it will be seen in our desire to assist others in knowing and obeying the Gospel. A number of brethren in the Lord's church are unfruitful in this important work. God does not set a number quota for us but He does demand that we make conscious efforts to teach the truth to the lost.

Fruitful brethren love the company of Christians. Our desire to keep company with brothers and sisters comes from the fruit of the Spirit we have borne in our lives. We have matured and grown close to those of a like precious faith.

If we are bearing fruit, we will encourage, exhort, and build others up. Immature folks use their days to tear down, gripe, criticize, and pick. Christians handle problems and move on; immature souls dwell on perceived mistreatment. Growing, fruitful Christians take criticism and grow and learn from it. The immature sulk and pout when reproved. Growing Christians do not get easily offended and certainly are not looking for excuses to quit. Immature Christians are forever getting their feelings hurt and their pride wounded. Growing Christians look for challenges in the kingdom of God.

Stagnant, immature Christians want nothing but a life of ease while here on earth.

### CONCLUSION

We were not born again to be barren or unfruitful. Living below our privileges, capabilities, and blessings is a tragedy we and the Lord's church simply cannot afford. So if we are going to wear the name Christian, then we should put our whole heart and life into our heavenly vocation. We must be fruitful. Grow. Progress. Go forward. But we do not dare become complacent and regress in Christ. The church is full of the lukewarm and unfruitful. Hell will be filled with them, too.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: SATAN

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Almost everybody wants to be taken seriously—artists, musicians, teachers, radio talk show hosts, salesmen, politicians—just about everyone. However, Satan does not mind being mocked or caricatured—because it makes his work easier. Most of us would resent being trivialized, but Satan probably welcomes it because it aids in his deception. He is often portrayed as a mean-looking orange individual, with horns and a trident-style tail, carrying a pitchfork. The story is told of a man dressed just like that who was walking to a costume party in the countryside in England. A sudden rain shower came up, and he sought shelter in the only place he could find—a church building where people had congregated for evening worship. As he opened the creaky door, everyone turned to see who dared to interrupt during the midpoint of the worship. As they looked it thundered loudly and the lightning flashed. There in the doorway stood the man dressed as the devil. Several screamed and ran out—even the minister. After a moment, only one older man remained; he seemed totally unafraid as he faced “the devil.” After a few seconds, he said, “I just want you to know that I’ve been a member of this church for 40 years, but I’ve been on your side the whole time.” That would explain a lot about some congregations.

From Flip Wilson's, "The devil made me do it," to "the Church lady's" frequently asked question, "Could it be—Satan?" it is clear that many do not take seriously the real power that is possessed by God's chief enemy. Underestimating the evil one is a huge and often fatal mistake. What do the Scriptures teach concerning this individual?

### ORIGIN

Only two possibilities exist for the origin of Satan. Either he is eternal, or he was a created being. If the devil were eternal, he would possess all the other attributes of Deity with respect to omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence. If not, why not? Can there be an eternal being with limited or no power? Anyone Who is self-existent would be equal with God. Some have thought that the good and the evil in the universe matched each other and are therefore the reason for the continuous conflict that we observe in the universe. However, two beings cannot, by definition, both be *all-powerful*. Both could be powerful, but it is not likely that either one could ever prevail against the other because of the spiritual nature of both. However, the Bible teaches that only God is eternal and that Satan will ultimately be defeated, confined, and tormented forever (Rev. 20:10). Therefore, Satan is not eternal in origin and was a created being.

The next question that comes to mind is: "Did God create him as an evil being, or did he become evil?" When God created the heavens and the earth, He pronounced it "very good" (Gen. 1:31). No evidence suggests that He did anything less when He made the spiritual creation. God does not tempt anyone (Jam. 1:12-15), nor can He fellowship evil (Hab. 1:13). To suggest that God created evil is to question the goodness of the Almighty! Yet evil does exist. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that, whereas God did not create evil, nevertheless, He of necessity created the opportunity for evil to exist. The only way to keep evil out of the universe was not to have a universe. To create even one being, whether human or angelic in nature, and to endow him with a free will, was to put goodness and harmony at risk.

By the very nature of things, opposites exist. If there is good, evil can exist (except in God whose attributes are infinite and incapable of change). If righteousness exists, the potential for wickedness is present. Harmony's opposite is discord. Pride is in the opposite direction of humility. Therefore, **if obedience is required, the door is open for rebellion.** Since the Bible makes it clear that Satan is not flesh and blood, God made him as a spirit-being, and he was one of the host of heaven. He was a created angel of some kind (cherub, seraph, etc.).

Satan, therefore, was living in perfect harmony in heaven with the other sons of God (as Job refers to angelic beings in 1:6 and 38:7), whom He had created. No one had yet done anything evil at this point, and who could be dissatisfied with perfection? Most human beings long for heaven, where no sorrows or ungodliness dwells. Many spend their lives seeking forgiveness, worshiping God, and serving Him with a view toward reaching such a blessed state. Satan had it but did not appreciate it. Was he vain enough to think that he could rival his Creator? Perhaps; Paul confides that the devil was lifted up with pride (1 Tim. 3:6). He was the first to think that his way was better than God's way—to think, "If I were in charge, things would be different and better." He was the first to recognize that obedience implies rebellion—and then to act upon that knowledge. He had the temerity to oppose the One who created him; did he delude himself into believing that he was cleverer or more powerful?

Nevertheless, he was not content to stand alone. He desired to have followers of his own, and he persuaded other angels to join him. Now, how does he persuade anyone to give up heaven? What appeals can he make to other angels to convince them that there is something better than perfection? That is how good he is! Christians should never become over-confident and underestimate his ability. If he can talk residents of heaven out of their home, what kind of havoc can he wreak upon those who have never had the experience of being there in the first place? We may imagine that he used one of the same techniques that he used upon Eve—an appeal

to pride and the notion that God was holding something back that would be profitable for them to have. At any rate, Satan disobeyed God because the option is present with those who possess free will, and he persuaded many others to join him. God did not spare the angels who sinned, “but cast *them* down to hell and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment” (2 Pet. 2:4). Probably the devil promised them a better future than what they received.

Notice that the angels were neither created nor born depraved; neither were Adam and Eve. Yet, some of the angels and Adam and Eve sinned. No one has ever needed the false doctrine of hereditary total depravity to explain sin. Free will is the only explanation that has ever been needed. The effect of the depravity explanation is to think that sin is not the fault of human beings; we cannot help it because we were born that way. The fact is that neither angels nor human beings were created with a sinful nature. We sin because we choose to do so. Unlike the angels, however, we have a means of redemption, which comes to us through the grace of God and the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. Although we could sin without prodding from the devil, he nevertheless has made it his life’s work to be a perpetual stumbling block to us by encouraging us toward evil.

### DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Two questions which are difficult to answer regarding these matters are: (1) When did God create the angels with respect to the creation of the world? (2) If they are confined in prison, how is it that they are able to tempt mankind?

With respect to the time of God bringing them into existence, we know that it was before the creation of the physical universe because God Himself so taught in Job 38:4-7. The morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy when the foundations of the earth were laid. Since the heavens and the earth were created on the first day (Gen. 1:1-5), all the sons of God had to be in existence prior to that day. Some argue that the angels were also created on the same day, but there is no need to suppose that such is

the case. It might be argued that when God finished the six days of creation that He testified that everything was very good (1:31) and that therefore no sin had entered into the world.

Genesis, however, deals with the physical creation and does not comment on the spiritual creation. The angels were in existence at least by the first day, yet nothing is said about them. Also, if Satan and his angels rebelled after the creation week, but before Genesis 3:1-6, nothing is said about that, either. If the spiritual creation is included in Genesis 1:1, it is remarkable that nothing is said about them specifically—nor their rebellion. When we are introduced to the “serpent” in Genesis 3:1, he is not even identified as Satan, although we learn that later on from other Scriptures. We have no explanation for how evil was present in this world. Satan is just there. The cherubim at the east of the Garden of Eden just exist; no foundation has been provided for them, either. The reason is that Genesis deals with the physical universe and makes no explanation at all for the spiritual realm.

How long before the physical creation were the angels in existence? The Bible does not say. Furthermore, we do not know how time operates in the spiritual kingdom. God is outside of time (2 Pet. 3:9). However, there are indications that angels are not (Dan. 9:20-23; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). So, we do not have the precise time of the spiritual creation, but we know that it preceded the physical.

The second question also contains difficulties. We know that the angels left their first estate (Jude 6) and that they were cast down to Tartarus (2 Pet. 2:4), which is generally regarded as the place of torment in the Hadean world. If they are in chains and under punishment, how are they able to cause so many problems? In Revelation 20, Satan is bound—but only in one sense; he is no longer able to establish a world empire. However, he is not restricted in other aspects; he yet tempts people to sin. People who are imprisoned today are not denied all access to the outside world. They are allowed to write letters and have visitors. Although Tartarus is the home of the angels who sinned, they have a way of influencing people in this world. They have no more power than what God allows them to

have (1 Cor. 10:13). These angels are bound but not totally separate from this world. In eternity, they shall be completely bound with no access to the heavenly realm ever again.

### SATAN'S NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS

The devil is a champion at enticement and can suggest far worse things than what we might have initially imagined. If we had no desire to sin, he provides one for us; if we already had the desire, he works at making the thought irresistible. He knows how to take advantage of the lusts and weaknesses that we have to maximize the opportunity for our descent into sin, from which he plans that we shall never return. The following definitions are either provided by the Scriptures or are definitions from *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*.

1. Satan: "*saw-tawn*"; from 7853; an opponent...the arch-enemy of good:—adversary" (H7854).
2. Devil: "*dee-ab'-ol-os*;...false accuser, devil, slanderer" (G1228).
3. Belial: "*bel-ee'-el*...worthlessness" (2 Cor. 6:15) (G955).
4. Abaddon: "*ab-ad-dohn*"; of Heb. Or. [11]; a destroying *angel*." (Rev. 9:11) (G3).
5. Apollyon: "*ap-ol-loo'-ohn*;...a *destroyer* (i.e. *Satan*)." (Rev. 9:11) (G623).
6. Dragon (Rev. 12:9).
7. Serpent (Rev. 12:9).
8. Deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9).
9. Accuser of our brethren (Rev. 12:10).
10. Angel of the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1).
11. Beelzebub: "*beh-el-zeb-ool*";...*dung-god*...a name of Satan:-Beelzebub" (Mat. 12:24) (G954).
12. Prince of demons (Mat. 12:24).
13. Prince of this world (John 12:32; 14:30; 16:11).
14. Ruler (prince) of darkness (Eph. 6:12).
15. Prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2).
16. Power of darkness (Col. 1:13).
17. God of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

18. Adversary (1 Pet. 5:8).
19. Roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8).
20. Evil one (Mat. 6:13).
21. Wicked one (Mat. 13:19, 38).
22. Enemy (Mat. 13:39).
23. Liar, the father of lies (John 8:44).
24. Murderer (John 8:44).
25. Oppressor (Acts 10:38).
26. Subtle (shrewd, clever, wise) (Luke 16:8).
27. Angel of darkness (implied) (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

*Lucifer* was not included in the above list for two reasons. Textually, a careful reading of Isaiah 14:4ff (*Lucifer* is found in verse 12) will show that the person under discussion is the **king of Babylon**. A second reason is that the Hebrew word is *Heylel* (Strong H1966), “*hay-lale*’; . . . the *morning-star*:—Lucifer.” According to the *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, when Jerome translated the Vulgate, he used *Lucifer*, a form of the Latin word for “light” (*lux, lucis*). Tertullian and Gregory the Great understood the Isaiah passage as the fall of Satan, and that interpretation remains generally accepted (McClintock 5:542). Dr. Henderson is accurate in his remarks about this passage in his commentary on *Isaiah*: “The application of this passage to Satan, and to the fall of apostate angels, is one of the gross perversions of Sacred Writ.” He adds that such an interpretation stems from “a proneness to seek for more in any given passage than it really contains” and “an implicit faith in received interpretations” (qtd. in McClintock 5:543). The *Cyclopedia* also points out: “In the figurative language of the Hebrews, a *star* signifies an illustrious king or prince (Numb. xxiv, 17; compare Rev. ii, 28; xxii, 16).” They also say: “Falling from heaven denotes a sudden political overthrow—a removal from the position of high and conspicuous dignity formerly occupied (comp. Rev. vi, 13; viii, 10)” (McClintock 5:543).

What we do **not** find in the list of 27 characteristics is that Satan is honest. Neither is he a friend; he only pretends to be. From the previous list, it is clear that Satan is our adversary (as well as God’s),

a liar, and a murderer. He desires that as many people be lost as possible. He rules over the kingdom of darkness and desires to keep as many people as possible from seeing the light of truth.

### SATAN'S POWER

What we know for certain about the devil's power is that he possesses more than we do, but less than God. With respect to Job, Satan had power over the wind (which resulted in a *natural* disaster, in which the lives of Job's seven sons and three daughters were lost). He also arranged for Job to lose all his earthly possessions through a sequence of events. The *enemy* then proceeded to afflict Job "with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7; see also Luke 13:16 and 2 Cor. 12:7). These demonstrations of Satan's power cover just about every avenue of life. Add to all of these that Satan hindered Paul from achieving certain spiritual goals that he had set (1 The. 2:18). His actions might be termed "negative providence" (cf. Job 1). Although some object that Satan no longer possesses the power that he had in the days of Job, their reasons for saying so are not compelling. Brethren agree that Satan has no miraculous power today, but he definitely operates within the sphere of providence, as Paul clearly stated in 1 Thessalonians 2:18, and the great wind that destroyed the foundations of the house that Job's children were in was not necessarily miraculous.

In the first century, Satan demonstrated miraculous or supernatural abilities, but God's power was always greater (Luke 10:18). He is not allowed to operate directly upon human beings any longer, but his greatest power has always been that of temptation. His expertise is surpassed by no one. An indication of the wicked one's shrewdness is that he knows the best techniques to use, as he demonstrated right from the first in the garden of Eden: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:15-17). All three were used on Eve (Gen. 3:4-6), and even though a few thousand years passed by, we find those same techniques being used on Jesus (Mat. 4:1-11). Satan knew enough about mankind that he could be a stumbling block to us right at the start.

His power, however, is not unlimited. God restricted him twice in Job (1:12; 2:6). The devil will never have enough power to unseat God or to successfully challenge Him; God, however, can bind or loose Satan according to His will, and He protects His children from having to bear more than they can endure (1 Cor. 10:13; John 10:27-29), which restricts the power of the devil. God forbade Satan from overcoming Peter (Luke 22:31-32).

### **SATAN'S PURPOSES**

Why does he hate so much? Why does it give him such pleasure to see the once-faithful fall? Why is he so insistent on fighting against God at every turn? The answer probably lies in the fact that either he hates to be proven wrong or, if he knows that he is in the wrong, he desires to do as much damage as he can out of spite. If he could have persuaded every angelic being to follow him, he would have felt justified in rebelling against God. The more humans who reject the Gospel, the stronger he believes his case is. Does he yet hold out hope that he will win in the end, or is he just acting out of spite? Regardless of his motives, we know his goals.

He ever lives to fight against God. Having begun in Heaven, he carried the battle to Earth. Beginning with the first sin, and continuing through the entire Old Testament, Satan is God's adversary. He helped introduce sin into this world, and ever since he has tried to obstruct God's plan of redemption. Time after time he tried to destroy the nation of Israel (or at least the seed line) so Jesus could not be born. Herod slaughtered all the children of Bethlehem in an effort to keep Jesus from being king (or Savior). Then Satan tempted Jesus with everything in his arsenal in an effort to disqualify Him from serving as the perfect Lamb of God. Satan's record is one of centuries of failure. His only recourse is to prevent souls from obeying the Gospel, entice Christians away from their Lord, and to weaken and ruin the church.

His second goal (one which also helps him carry out his first goal) is to destroy humanity so everyone—even faithful Christians—will ultimately be lost (1 Pet. 5:8). **He slanders the name of each Christian** (as he did Job's) to the Father (Rev. 12:10) and continues to

misrepresent God to the Christian. His desire is to destroy the soul of every individual (Mat. 25:41).

A third goal is to make the church ineffective. He wants to destroy the unity of brethren (John 17:20-21) and cause brethren to get sidetracked from their evangelistic mission (Mat. 28:18-20). Another aim is to make certain that the church suffers from a continual lack of leadership. If complacency does not already exist in the church, the devil works diligently to get it there—so congregations are deliriously happy when they are doing nothing more than “keeping house.”

### TEMPTATIONS

Satan tempts us by prompting individuals to think about things in such a way that committing the sin seems desirable—perhaps even a necessity (Mat. 4:1-11; Jam. 1:12-15). He suggests sin (John 13:2). Perhaps someone was not even thinking about doing anything wrong. He may have just emerged from a worship assembly or from having read the Holy Scriptures with the possibility of sinning far removed from his thoughts. Suddenly, he finds himself acting on some impulse that he was totally unaware of just seconds ago; suddenly he becomes conscious of the fact that he has “missed the mark” once more. Or maybe he successfully confronted the sinful idea and was confident that he had overcome the inordinate desire, but, almost without thinking about it, he has done the very thing he was determined not to do.

1 John 2:15-17 lists three categories of sins: “the lust of the flesh,” “the lust of the eyes,” and “the pride of life.” The first of these includes those things that would unlawfully satisfy fleshly appetites such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness (and other sexual sins and perversions), drunkenness, gluttony, reveling, and the use of drugs or narcotics in any form. The “lust of the eyes” refers to the idea of wanting something not lawfully yours so much that you would become unscrupulous in the way you went about obtaining it. Among these sins would be covetousness, idolatry, certain wrong attitudes, and possible combinations of other sins mentioned both previously and following.

Pride is perhaps the worst of the three because it is the least recognizable. It often works in tandem with evil attitudes, defects of character, and sins of the flesh and of the eyes. It lies at the root of stubbornness and rebellion, the uncooperative spirit, and doctrinal error; it participates in every kind of sin imaginable. It not only contributed to the first sin committed by Eve, but it was at the root of the hardheartedness of the Pharisees who constantly disputed with Jesus. The fact that we are familiar with these (Gen. 3:6; Mat. 4:1-11) does not seem to help us fight against them very successfully. In recent years, certain well-known preachers have succumbed to the lust of the flesh (refusing to repent of adultery), concerning which they had once warned others. One's will can override one's knowledge. Even those who are not ignorant of his devices (1 Cor. 2:11) can still fall prey to them.

Satan can fill a person's heart (Acts 5:3). Sometimes a Christian may convince himself that the thing he is contemplating is not really so bad—or maybe it is, but he *feels* that he has no choice. He deludes himself into thinking that he must gain his objective—no matter how—and he dwells on the success he thinks he shall enjoy (as Amnon did concerning Tamar). Like the base Amnon discovered, however, sin just beguiled him. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Satan is clever enough to seduce even the most spiritual and most saintly of brethren—if they are not careful. (Christ had to rebuke Peter—Mat. 16:23; years afterward Paul found it necessary also to rebuke Peter, saying that he was to be blamed—Gal. 2:11.)

Some become the devil's captives (2 Tim. 2:26), meaning that they are frequently doing his will, although they are oblivious to the fact, thinking that they belong to the Lord. Satan blinds minds to prevent them from obeying the Gospel.

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not

believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

It appears that those who are blinded are willing participants. They crave an excuse; they want an *out*. Satan just helps them in their self-deception. Paul mentions their counterparts in 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12. They would rather believe lies instead of the truth because: (1) they do not possess a love of the truth, (2) they did not believe the truth when they heard it, and (3) they delighted more in the pleasures of unrighteousness than in living godly. For Satan to succeed in keeping souls out of the kingdom is bad enough, but even worse is his ability to reclaim those who had escaped the pollutions of the world (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The latter end of those who return to such pollutions is worse than if they had never obeyed the Gospel (2:20-22).

### OTHER TECHNIQUES

Temptations do a tremendous amount of damage, but the devil does not rely upon them alone. He throws other techniques into the mix. First, he tries persecution or some other method of discouragement. In the parable of the sower, the first category of souls involved those who had no interest in spiritual matters and never became Christians. The second category, those on “stony-ground,” actually rejoice when they receive the Word, but they prove themselves to be shallow by giving up their faith in the face of persecution (Mat. 13:20-21). It remains the case that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus informed the church at Smyrna that “the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Revelation is written largely to encourage, admonish, and exhort brethren not to quit when faced with severe trials.

A second type of Christian in the parable is the one who becomes unfruitful because “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word” (Mat. 13:22). These snares could be avoided by a strong faith in the providence of God, as Jesus taught in Matthew 6:25-34. In America we undoubtedly over-emphasize the need

for wealth. Christians today are not always free from materialistic desires. All must still take heed (Luke 12:15).

Satan hinders Christians from accomplishing the spiritual goals they have set. On more than one occasion Paul had purposed to see the brethren in Thessalonica, but Satan hindered him from doing so (1 The. 2:18). Other good intentions also fail, and brethren may think poorly of themselves; Satan may be throwing obstacles in the way (negative providence). Brethren should try to avoid discouragement while pursuing the goal that much more diligently (if it is good, right, and in harmony with the will of God).

Satan can use the righteousness of Christians (their good thoughts and good motives) against them. Consider the text of the passage from which comes the phrase, “**for we are not ignorant of his devices**” (2 Cor. 2:11). In Paul’s first letter to the brethren at Corinth, he had commanded them to withdraw fellowship from the brother living with his father’s wife. They followed Paul’s instructions—so well that, apparently, they would not accept the penitent soul back into fellowship. Paul tells them that the punishment was sufficient and that now they ought to forgive and comfort him—lest Satan take advantage of them. Their righteousness had sparked so much zeal that it crowded out compassion for the heart that had truly repented.

One of the chief failings of the Pharisees was their self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14). They were attempting to do right, live right, and be right, but such noble purposes can often give way to ignoble practices—namely, thinking that they were better than others or that somehow they deserved to be saved (or had earned their salvation). Satan loves for Christians to take Biblical principles and bash others over the head with them. Many Bible subjects, such as faith and works must be harmonized, since neither one by itself saves. Statements in the Scriptures made to emphasize one aspect of a subject do not negate other aspects; both must be harmonized (Eph. 2:8-9; Jam. 2:17). Zeal for righteousness cannot be allowed to turn into self-righteousness.

Satan often uses people as stumbling blocks. They could be strangers, friends, family members, or even Christians. Jezebel was a perpetual stumbling block to Ahab. Even when he was impressed with Elijah's success at Mt. Carmel, she was not. In fact, she vowed to take Elijah's life (1 Kin. 18:39-19:2). Later, it was her plan that resulted in the death of the innocent Naboth (1 Kin. 21). She was a continual hindrance to her husband, stifling every good, noble, decent impulse he might have otherwise had or acted upon.

Peter inadvertently threw a temptation into the path of Jesus. When the Lord made known the suffering and death that awaited Him at Jerusalem, Peter began to rebuke the Lord, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan!" (Mat. 16:21-23). No one could doubt the sincere motives of Peter, but he did not grasp the significance of what Jesus had prophesied.

What about Christians? No one thinks of himself as a stumbling block, but it could happen. A husband or a wife could serve as a hindrance to spiritual growth and development in the home. Does one or both regard school activities or making money in a career more highly than learning the Word of God and holy living? (How sad would parents be, on the Day of Judgment, to learn they had proved to be the worst stumbling block of all to their children—that they played a major role in keeping them out of heaven!)

Are some stumbling blocks in the church? When a brother advances a new idea, are the rest of us quick to quench his enthusiasm over it? Do we set forth positive plans for church growth ourselves, or just criticize everyone else's? The effort it requires to tear something apart is considerably less than it takes to build something up.

### **THE DEVIL'S REWARD**

Hell has been prepared for the devil (25:41): he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone; he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10). It is nothing less than he deserves, since in several thousand years he has not shown the least interest in repentance. He is committed to evil; his punishment has already been decreed. Additionally he will take with him those who nei-

ther love nor obey God. He will have made every effort to take as many as he can with him to the place of torment (Mat. 7:13-14). Although some were eager to follow him, others were just careless and unprepared (5:1-13). Others were lazy (25:14-30; Rev. 3:14-22). Some just lost their first love (Rev. 2:1-7). Christians must take heart and follow the example of Jesus, Who overcame all sin (Mat. 4:1-11; Heb. 12:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:22).

There are only two kingdoms: Christ's and Satan's. Everyone is a member of one or the other (Mat. 12:30). When one becomes a Christian, he turns "from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God" (Acts 26:18). Paul wrote that God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed *us* into the kingdom of the Son" (Col. 1:13). All of God's children must be certain to remain steadfast (1 Cor. 15:58), knowing that the rewards of Heaven will be great—far greater than we can imagine. We truly lament and regret those who chose not to obey the Gospel and those who strayed from the fold. However, we cannot be deterred by any setbacks; we must continue to "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Phi. 3:14).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

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The “works of the flesh,” Paul and the Holy Spirit testify of in Galatians 5:19-21, are “manifest” or unmistakably wrong to any observer of humanity who tries to be “led by the Spirit” (i.e., to be guided in their life by the revelation of the Holy Spirit—the Word of God). “Through thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104). As the once Bible-cherishing American society runs headlong into the arms of hedonism and atheism, we see the works of the flesh become the predominate fruit of this rotten tree called “modern culture.” Though almost two thousand years have passed since Paul wrote of this spiritual consequence of not following God’s Word, it still thrives in humanity today.

Many a sermon by a faithful preacher has been fashioned around Galatians 5:19-21 and the works of the flesh. I remember growing up hearing sermons on the dangers of dancing, drinking, and fornication for the young Christian. I was warned “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (5:21). Thankfully, I heeded that warning and still do. What is the definition of *works of the flesh*? For me the works of the flesh are quite simply the opposite of the “fruit of the Spirit” given in Galatians 5:22-23. They are the

tragic fruit of men, women, boys, and girls who give in to the passions of the flesh and make a practice of sin.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Gen. 4:6-7).

The apostle Paul laid out for us in Galatians 5:19-21 four different categories of the works of the flesh: sins against purity, sins of atheism, sins of disposition, and sins of excess (Merideth 201-202). His aim is to show us what things we need to avoid to go to Heaven, and, contrariwise, what things will keep us out of Hell?

### SINS AGAINST PURITY

Sexual purity was a threatened ideal in the First Century world. The ancient Jews had a standard of decency, the Law, but abused it. For example, in John 8, Jesus was tempted by a mob to judge an adulterous woman. Jesus rightly applied the Law (cf. Deu. 17:7) and responded, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). Likewise, many of the Gentiles had long forsaken any standard of purity (cf. Rom. 1:28).

The apostle pulls no punches and is plain spoken in his admission of **adultery** as a work of the flesh. *Adultery* is “to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife” (Thayer 417). Adultery always starts with lust and covetousness. For example, King David first lusted after Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:2; Mat. 15:19) and when he found out that she was married to Uriah, he “coveted” his neighbor’s wife (Exo. 20:17). His covetousness became an adulterous affair with Bathsheba which eventually led to the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband and David’s neighbor.

Men and women often seek to take the sting out of the sin of adultery by calling it “an affair” or “a fling,” but it is still an assault against that three-way covenant of marriage (Mat. 19:6). However Hollywood romanticizes it, adultery often results in broken lives, broken homes, and broken children. It sullies the God-ordained institution of marriage (Mal. 2:14-15).

Another work of the flesh and a sin against purity is **fornication**. *Fornication* refers to illicit sexual intercourse in general, married or not. Paul used ringing words when he wrote, “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Cor. 6:18). God gave us a body to bring glory to Him. Fornication cheapens or dirties the sexual urges common to all. It makes us no different than a barnyard animal. Jesus paid the price so we might be able to avoid fornication and glorify God in our bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Sexual promiscuity among young and old is common today. Male and female virginity is looked upon as an oddity if not laughable (the result of two generations of sex education in our schools!). It downgrades the state of matrimony to a “relationship” with our “partner.” Couples forsake the lifelong commitment of “marriage” for “living together.” For their dishonor of His institution of marriage, the judgment of God awaits both fornicators and adulterers (Heb. 13:4).

Another work of the flesh listed as a sin against purity is **uncleanness**. This sin cannot be removed by soap and water but refers to “the impurity of lustful, profligate living” (Thayer 21) and can include homosexuality and self-abuse. The first-century Gentile world tolerated, if not encouraged, such activities. “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19). Most had no standard to gauge their lives by, so they continued the slide into moral and spiritual darkness.

Today, “uncleanness” describes much of what passes as popular culture. The standard of God’s Word has been tossed aside and ridiculed. It has been replaced by **tolerance** or the toleration of what the Bible teaches as intolerable. Like some immense tsunami, uncleanness is pervading almost every corner of our society. For example, once the Presidency of the United States was held aloft as an upholder of public virtue and decency—though not every holder of that office fulfilled those expectations. The current inhabitant of the White House, President Barack Obama, has shown himself to be in willing concordance with every unclean, perverted goal of the homosexual movement’s agenda: same-sex marriage, societal acceptance of ho-

mosexuality, legal protection as a minority group, and the silencing of those who oppose them. “Who, knowing the ordinance of God, that they that practise such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but also **consent with them** that practise them” (Rom. 1:32—ASV).

The final work of the flesh which can be classified as a sin against purity is **lasciviousness** or “lewdness” (NKJV). *Lasciviousness* is defined as “filthy words, indecent bodily movement, unchaste handling of males and females” (Thayer 79-80). Filthy language (profanity, obscenity, cursing) has become an important part of American language. Someone once said that “cursing is a sign of a limited vocabulary.”

The modern dance will be covered by others in this lectureship, but I remember as a young Christian, I asked my junior high Bible class teacher, brother Hubert Smith of Jal, NM, why dancing was a sin. I will remember his answer always: “Dancing is a sin because it is lasciviousness.” That settled the matter in my young impressionable mind.

### SINS OF ATHEISM

The work of the flesh and a “sin of atheism” known as *idolatry* or “the worship of false gods” (Thayer 174) was common in the Gentile world of Paul’s day. “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16).

What really is idolatry? In my mind I see the many brightly painted images of the Hindu god Krishna with his devoted worshippers bowing down and burning incense before those images. However, the supposed images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and religious relics also come to mind. They are no less idolatry (Isa. 42:7). Idolatry can also include any philosophy or concept on which the mind has fixed its affections. Paul writes of “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). As an evangelist, I wonder about anything that takes precedence over the worship and service of Jehovah: the bass boat, television, card games, sports, leisure activities, hunting, etc. When we deny the Lord His due and allow something or someone to take His place in our

devotion, we are committing the sin of idolatry. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21).

Another work of the flesh categorized as one of the sins of atheism is **witchcraft** (sorcery—NKJV), which refers in the Bible to “the use or the administering of drugs...poisoning...sorcery, magical arts, often found in connection with idolatry and fostered by it” (Thayer 694). Practitioners often used drugs to control their subjects or to reach altered states of consciousness to connect to an “exalted master.” Sound familiar? Today millions of people in our country use drugs to “expand their minds” but end up debasing their minds and bodies (cf. Rom. 12:1).

### SINS OF ATTITUDE

*Hatred* has been defined as “the attitude or feelings of an enemy; hostility” (Meredith 204). Paul uses it in Galatians 5:20 in the plural Greek form (enmities—ASV). A seething hatred is the seed of murder: Cain for Abel, Saul for David (1 John 3:15). As in all the works of the flesh it is diametrically opposed to Biblical love. Hatred of others is a failure of love. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20).

What do you and I hate? Do we hate sin? Do we despise the devil? Do we hate false doctrine enough to oppose it? Do we hate and despise false religion? Do we hate what God hates? As Christians we learn what to love and what to hate through the Holy Bible. “Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104).

*Variance* as a work of the flesh is defined as “contention, strife, wrangling” (Thayer 249). Adam Clarke defines it as “*hatred* proceeds to open acts.” The striving to attain goals and their rewards can be a wonderful thing, as long as the attaining does not become bitter rivalry. In the church it should always be the “first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first” (Mat. 19:30). I have seen churches almost split asunder over the question of who was to have a key to the pantry! I should realize that within the body of Christ, peace begins with me

and my peace with God (Rom. 5:1). “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men” (12:18).

Another sinful attitude is *emulations*, which has been defined as “an envious or contentious rivalry; jealousy” (Thayer 271) or unholy zeal. Zeal is a good thing if it is tempered by the Word of God (Rom. 10:2). Saul the Pharisee had an unholy zeal. He was jealous for the Law and his emulations would take the form of persecution of Christians (Phi. 3:6). Emulations can be in the form of quarreling and strife. Some brethren in their zeal to obey the Bible become hobbyists, quarrelling over things that intrude on the freedom of opinion (Rom. 14) and have nothing to do with our salvation.

The sinful attitude of *wraths* refers to “impulses and outbursts of anger” (Thayer 293). In Paul’s second epistle to the Corinthian church he warned the brethren that he would not put up with this sin (and others) and would correct it when he visited them (2 Cor. 12:20-21). Many Christians (including this writer) strive to keep their anger on a leash. “*He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city*” (Pro. 16:32).

*Strife* is defined as “a desire to put oneself forward; a partisan and factious spirit” (Thayer 249) or “selfish ambition” (NKJV). There should be no place for selfish personal ambition in the church. We should all be servants of one another (Mat. 20:26). Unfortunately some brethren see the office of elder as a way to dominate others and will step over anyone to get there, like Diotrephes “who loveth to have the preeminence among them” (3 John 9).

*Seditious*, another one of the sins of attitude, in Galatians 5:20 refers to “a dissension, a division” (Thayer 158). Religious division is a horrid thing and associated with carnality (1 Cor. 3:3). We are to “mark” those who cause division and avoid them (Rom. 16:17). Such an attitude sounds like the denominational world, in which each follows some tradition, doctrine, practice, or leader, but claim they are *united*.

Seditious or dissensions have also been the offspring of liberalism and compromise in the church of Christ. Many want to loose what God has not loosed. Others introduce false doctrine and man-made

practices into the church causing havoc. If they finally are disfellowshipped or voluntarily depart with their followers, they often leave behind a numerically devastated but spiritually purified congregation—the true church of Christ.

*Heresies* or “dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims” (Thayer 139) is a strong word in the English language. The Galatian Judaizers were causing problems in the church by teaching that a Christian must obey the Law of Moses as well as the Law of Christ (cf. Acts 15:5). Liberal heresies (often just denominational doctrine in disguise) have infected many congregations today, bringing upheaval and unscriptural changes. However, if there is a bright side to this plague, it is that these heresies have caused sin to be exposed and faithfulness to shine. “For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19).

*Envyings* has been defined as “feelings of discontent and ill will because of another’s advantage” (Meredith 206). Was Paul envious of Peter? Was Peter envious of Paul? They certainly had motives to be envious: differences in education, differences in experience, etc. However, there is no indication of any envy. Yet, envy is sometimes found among Christians today, even among preachers. If we find ourselves envious of others, we should recall that envy helped crucify the Lord. “For he knew that for envy they had delivered him” (Mat. 27:18).

### SINS OF EXCESS

**Murders** are the result of hating one’s brother(s), and murder is the second sin mentioned in the Bible (Gen. 4:8). The first-century world was filled with sinful excess: infanticide (especially of females), assassinations, and wholesale extermination of groups of people. Why is murder considered a sin? It is unlawfully taking the life of one created in God’s image. Today, men mass murder the unborn by abortion (Psa. 139:13) and slaughter others in the name of a false religion—Islam. God said, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6).

**Drunkenness** is a sin of excess which has decimated our country. The drug ethyl alcohol has ruined many societies, homes, and indi-

viduals. New Testament Christianity demands abstinence from such things (cf. Rom. 12:9; 1 The. 5:22).

*Revellings* has been described as “feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry” (Thayer 367). It was usually associated in the ancient world with the worship of the god Bacchus as well as other gods (Meredith 208). Does this sound familiar? Today, “party hearty” is the mantra of many. “A night out with the boys (or girls)” is accepted. Mardi Gras is no longer confined to New Orleans. Binge drinking is common on many college campuses. Beer and wine drinking festivals are popping up everywhere. This sin of excess is alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!

### CONCLUSION

“And such like” (Gal. 5:21) shows us that Paul did not intend for his list of the works of the flesh to be the complete list. But he concludes that those who continue to “practice such things” (NKJV) cannot look forward to Heaven, only the Judgment and eternal punishment. Likewise, dear Christian, you and I must avoid our hedonistic age in which the works of the flesh dominates the lives of billions and where selfishness reigns in many hearts. Rather we should look to the words of the Spirit and seek the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23). The Christian who exhibits such fruit indicates that he has “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (5:25). This transformation begins at baptism when “our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed” (Rom. 6:6); then and only then may a person begin to live as a spiritually free man or woman and no longer a slave to sin.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE TONGUE

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## INTRODUCTION

**W**e have the obligation to only speak what the Bible says about a subject.

If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

To say what the Bible says automatically excludes what man says or any other standard one may use. In fact, the true Bible believer will abide by what God says even in this. “Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Pro. 30:6). Throughout the Bible stern warnings are given for adding to or detracting from God’s Word.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19; Deu. 4:2).

Even when we limit our discussion to only the Bible, we need to be able to define our terms as there are many things in the world today that claim to be *Bible* yet are far more “per-versions” than “ver-

sions” of the Word of God. This can be said of most of the so-called “modern versions.” For this reason I will be using one of the most tried and true of translations in discussing “what the Bible says,” the King James Version. I will not seek to add to what the Bible says nor take away from it. “Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deu. 4:2). This passage, along with the previously mentioned verses on this subject, is one of the three “guard posts” of God’s Word; strategically placed near the beginning, middle, and very end of the prophetic Word.

As to how words are used and translated, men often get spiritual matters wrong because of how the words have been translated. Even as simple a word as *faith* has become convoluted because of the human wisdom that is being used in those definitions. Men believe that faith is belief in something for which there is no proof. In fact, the Bible defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). Bible faith, the faith that pleases God (11:6), is faith based on substance and evidence; thus it is **not** blind.

Too many today use a variety of other standards as their pattern for life or even no standard at all. Some will try to say they do not believe in following patterns, but even **that** is a pattern. Some think that by using a different term (such as *paradigm*) they are avoiding what they call “pattern theology,” even though the Bible clearly teaches that there **is** a pattern that we must follow. The Old Testament “pattern” is expressed in passages like Exodus 25:9: “According to all that I shew thee, *after* the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make *it*.” The New Testament teaches several different patterns: One for good works, “In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine *shewing* uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Tit. 2:7), and one for God’s mercy:

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:16).

The Greek word for *form* (*typos*) can also be translated "pattern" (Strong) and is used in various ways in the New Testament. "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). There is a pattern of sound words in the Bible. There is also a pattern of godliness in the Bible. "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (3:5). There is a pattern of doctrine in the Bible. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). No matter how much certain elements seek to deride what they call "pattern theology," it is obvious that such exists and is taught in God's Word. As we consider what the Bible says about the tongue, we must also have an idea of how *tongue* is used, both in Scriptures and in common usage.

### THE TONGUE

When we say "the tongue," God is using it as a literary device to identify how the tongue is used. Included in the idea of the tongue are the lips, the mouth, the voice, and the words that are said. One of the more comprehensive discussions of the tongue is given in James 3. Starting in verse 5, we read:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (3:5-8).

### SMALL BUT CONSEQUENTIAL

The Scriptures here tell us that, though small, the tongue can be very consequential. The tongue, like a small match, can kindle a great fire if used without restraint, though even restraint is difficult. In making these comparisons, the divinely inspired James compares the tongue to both a bridle in the horse's mouth and the rudder of a ship.

Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth (3:3-4)

Small things have been used throughout time to great result. Consider the rod that was carried by Moses. It was nothing more than a big stick, yet, when used with the power of God, proved to have tremendous results.

And the LORD said unto him, What *is* that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand (Exo. 4:2-4).

In a similar way, the smooth pebble cast from David's sling brought down the heavily armed giant, Goliath (1 Sam. 17:45-49).

The concern of people over small things prompted the prophet Zechariah to proclaim:

For who hath despised the day of small things? For they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with* those seven; They *are* the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth (Zec. 4:10)

This was in response to the tears of the older men over the smaller size of the foundation of the new temple. Many today cry over "small things" yet have forgotten that God has worked wonders with small things in the past. Since God can use small things in His glory, the tongue can be used to bless, but also to curse.

Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be (Jam. 3:9-10).

Only blessings ensue when the Gospel is preached, which we see in Acts 2 when Peter preached on Pentecost and 3000 souls were saved (2:41). We can also see this idea in the world when the speeches of men have had great results. When Ronald Reagan stood before the

Berlin Wall and said, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" it had lasting positive effects. When Lincoln gave the Gettysburg address, it also had great and positive effects.

The tongue can also have strongly negative effects. When Adolph Hitler spoke, he raised a cheering crowd which, ultimately, led to the holocaust and World War II. Many such negative examples can be demonstrated from the Scriptures, but probably the most prevalent problem stems from false teachers who destroy men's souls.

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Such problems have fostered many warnings.

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29-30).

## BOASTING

Usually boasting is associated with a character flaw of many, but biblically boasting can be both good and bad. A boast that is negative is one that does not "boast in God." From a Bible standpoint, there are many things about which it is acceptable for man to boast, but boasting about oneself is not one of them. The same James who wrote concerning the tongue also said regarding the shortness of life: "But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil" (Jam. 4:16). *Boasting*, or vaunting, is a product of pride, and pride is a deadly thing for man. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: But with the lowly *is* wisdom" (Pro. 11:2). Notice how pride has a bearing on how the tongue is used: "In the mouth of the foolish *is* a rod of pride: But the lips of the wise shall preserve them" (14:3). Pride is one of the three bases for sin given in 1 John 2:16: "For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Pride of life was one of the reasons for the first sin that brought death into the world.

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (Gen. 3:5-6).

The desire to be wise was one of Eve's downfalls, and Satan knew it would affect her exactly that way.

On the other hand, the Bible demonstrates quite a number of things about which we can be proud while still being selfless. Paul, for instance, boasted about the good works being done by others. "For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many" (2 Cor. 9:2). Boasting about others is not exhibiting self-pride, and thus is acceptable before God. We should boast for individuals who labor in God's kingdom as well as churches that are continuing in the old paths. Pride in the Gospel, godly pride, is accepted by God. In a similar way, it is not uncommon for us to be proud of our children, as I am of mine. We even boast of them to others when they do well. Boasting about those who do good works in the sight of God is acceptable boasting.

### **KINDLING GREAT FIRES**

One thing that we have witnessed so many times in the affairs of men is how great oratory has made great strides in the advancement of human kind. We remember certain phrases and events being centered on great words. Who has grown up in modern times and not heard the famous words of John Kennedy when he said, "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" ("Inaugural"). Those of us privileged to be around on July 20, 1969 will remember the following words that were spoken on those days—first, "The Eagle has landed." Later, we heard the words, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind" (Armstrong). Few do not know the origin of those words or the era that this endeavor began. Man's first walk on the moon began with words expressed by President Kennedy when he said, at a speech from Rice

University concerning the various things that man can choose to do, "We choose to go to the moon." He then added concerning such things, "not because they are easy, but because they are hard." The desire to go to the moon culminated with the words of Neil Armstrong. We can see how such words can inspire men and kindle a great fire.

### DEFILING

What does it mean to *defile*? The definition of this word is to "spot, stain," and the Bible says what is "defiled" is the "whole body," and the tongue being the cause. I had a personal issue regarding the tongue that illustrates the point. I became a Christian shortly after I completed my first hitch in the military. To that point I had participated in a number of sinful practices. I found that most of them could simply be avoided. No one is required to purchase alcohol or tobacco. He can just stop being around it so it will not tempt. The same is true with many other such sins which simply can be avoided. The one problem I had back then which was far more difficult to break stems from the frequent use of profanity and being around such all day long (a common problem with the military). I could not avoid my own tongue. It took considerable effort over a period of years to purge this problem from my life. What I found out during this time was that it did not matter how much my life changed, how much good I attempted to do, how many people I preached the Word of God to, or what kind of example I set in many other ways, I could undo it all by uttering a single word from my mouth. Then people would respond, "I thought you were a Christian. Why then do you use profanity?"

The tongue is here described as the kindling of a fire that sets ablaze the very course of nature (Jam. 3:6). Such refers to what was known as the "wheel of life," the very course that takes men's lives from cradle to grave. The fact is that words are hard to take back. It was said that it is impossible to un-ring a bell. In the same way, words spoken without thinking can cause irreparable harm even when such was not the intent of the speaker. Our words can even bring such harm to ourselves in that we often find ourselves in the position of having to defend what we have said even if it was not what we meant

to say or truly believed. I believe this is how some come to false doctrine. They say something in such a way that does not truly reflect their original meaning, then dig their verbal hole even deeper in trying to explain themselves. Pride frequently takes over, and they jump on their own bandwagon by assuming a doctrine that they otherwise would not have defended. Such shows how pride and the tongue become intertwined into a twisted and turned mess that is hard to unravel, even if one desires to do so.

### A BEAST

The divinely-inspired James puts the tongue in the same category as a beast—one that is the most difficult to tame. In the mind of men there are many beasts that are difficult to tame, and they often are depicted in our literature. Men seek to slay dragons or to capture a sea serpent, and these become a very difficult foe. James tells us that the tongue is a greater and stronger beast even than these. There has been a lot of conjecture in modern times about the great terrible lizards that roamed the earth in times past, yet there is archaeological evidence that such were indeed tamed by men. The depictions of such on Incan burial stones from Ica, Peru, show men riding on such great beasts as the Triceratops (Taylor). The words in James tell us that **all** such beasts have been tamed, yet the tongue stands as a greater foe of man.

### A CONFLICT?

James implies first that one can tame the tongue (3:2), then tells us we cannot tame the tongue (3:8). Is this an actual error or conflict in the word of God? In verse 2 the implication involves stumbling rather than a purposeful action. It states that the one who does not offend in word is a “perfect” man. This is a time when we must set aside how man understands a word and look to the original meaning of that word. With current understanding, to say that man is *perfect* in a spiritual sense is to imply that he is “sinless,” yet such is not the case here. *Perfect* (from the Greek *teleios*) means “complete, wanting nothing necessary to completeness” (Strong), but it never carries the idea of sinless. One can be “complete” in the spiritual sense while still

not being sinless. It is the same idea as presented by John when he speaks of one who is "walk[ing] in the light." He writes, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). Further, the impossibility of bridling the tongue suggests that we can keep it under control, but there will be slips of the tongue nonetheless. This is not a conflict, rather it suggests that we can control the tongue. When we learn to control the tongue, we can control every aspect of our life and thus be complete. However, there will still be slips of the tongue (it cannot be tamed) because it is "an unruly evil." What can help us to keep the tongue under control is to change our habit away from focusing on worldly things to a more spiritual center.

### CONCLUSION

When we make use of our tongues in proper ways, it becomes harder to slip and stumble. That is why the tongue can either be used to bless or to curse, to speak of worldly things or to preach the Gospel, to focus on truth rather than on error. Were all to spend more time doing right, we would not have time left to do what is wrong. Remember, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: DRINKING ALCOHOL

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**A**lcoholic drinks come in many forms, such as beer, whiskey, or wine, and the varied forms of these drinks. There are various approaches we can take in making a study of the values or the evils of any or all of these drinks, and we could spend hours or days in making such a study. I have chosen something different for this study at this hour. I would like to concentrate on **wine**, as alluded to in the New Testament, and look at some of the arguments people make to justify the use of wine. We will not have time to look at every passage that might be considered, but shall examine a few passages from Matthew to Revelation for what it might be worth. Some passages will be used to illustrate that there are **different** kinds of wine discussed in Scripture—wine that is **not** intoxicated, and wine that **is** intoxicated. We should always keep these differences in mind.

We shall begin with the miracle of Jesus in Cana of Galilee, where He turned water into wine. We shall begin by considering two thought-provoking questions. First, did Jesus' soul go to hell at death? Yes or No. Second, did Jesus turn water into wine? Yes or No. The correct answer depends on a definition of words. The first question is answered in Scripture. David of old foretold that Jesus' soul would go to hell, according to the King James Version. In Psalm 16:10, we read, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; Neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Other

translations render *hell* as “Sheol” in this passage and as “Hades” in the fulfillment of this passage in Acts 2:27. The explanation is two-fold. The KJV translators used **one** English word, *hell*, for three original Greek words—*gehenna*, *hades*, and *tartarus*. So, Jesus **did** go to “hell” (*hades*, the realm of departed spirits), but did **not** go to “hell” (*gehenna*, the eternal abode for the wicked). Jesus was in “paradise” **in** *hades* according to Luke 23:43.

Now, the second question: Did Jesus turn water into wine? John records that He **did** (John 2:10). What kind of wine **was** this? Is there more than one kind? If not, what **was** that one kind? If so, what **are** those kinds? We shall establish that there **were** indeed different kinds of wine—sweet wine and intoxicated wine. Let us read the entire text of John 2:1-11.

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do *it*. And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare *it*. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: *but* thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

The context of this miracle is important. John had just testified about Jesus in John 1:29-36. Six disciples were then selected in verses 37-45 (cf. Mat. 4:18-22). Three days later they arrive in Cana, just four miles from Nazareth. Now we come to the events in Cana. Jesus attends a wedding, showing He was well-rounded

socially (Luke 2:52). He lived among men (John 1:14). He wants us to sorrow and to rejoice, as **He** did. The occasion here is a wedding, which was surely an honorable occasion (Heb. 13:4; Gen. 2:18-24). Mary was there, whether as a friend, relative, or hostess. Jesus and the disciples were also invited. A problem arose, as they ran out of wine. We have Mary's words to Jesus, His answer, and the presence of the empty waterpots. Now the problem is about to be resolved. The first command Jesus gave was to fill the pots with water "to the brim"—leaving no room for expansion. Fermentation would cause an **increase**. Jesus once said, "Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved" (Mat. 9:17). This text illustrates that there is *new* (fresh) wine when the juice of grapes has not yet fermented, implying that there is *old* wine when it **has** changed its make-up. **Here**, Jesus would simply speed up the process of nature and bring *new* wine into existence **instantly**—saving several months of time. Then the second command was, to take the "water that was made wine" to "the governor of the feast" (John 2:9).

The ruler tasted the wine, and recalled the usual custom that men normally served "good" wine first, and after they have filled, the "worse" wine is provided. However, in this case, the new wine Jesus provided was truly better. The people were "well drunk" (not intoxicated, but filled). If they were intoxicated, how could they have determined that the last wine was "good"? Also, if they were intoxicated, was Jesus contributing to their condition by giving them **more** alcohol? We think not, for He knew that God has placed a woe upon anyone who gave his neighbor drink (Hab. 2:15), and Jesus always did those things that pleased the Father (John 6:38; 8:29).

What was this "good wine"? *Good* comes from the Greek word *kalos*, which means "beautiful, pleasing, intrinsically good" (Unger 274). It is the word that modifies fruit, trees, ground, fish, law, creatures for food, faithful ministers, and that which is morally good. It is not the kind of word that would modify a corrupt liquid. All

wine is not the same. Even in the Old Testament there was a Hebrew word, *yayan*, which was a generic word for unfermented or fermented grape juice, while *tiros*h was the specific word for new or fresh grape juice. So it is in the New Testament. The generic word for unfermented or fermented grape juice is *oinos*, which is “a general word” (Unger 677) for unfermented or fermented juice of the grape. *Gleukos* is another specific word for “new wine” (Acts 2:13). Regarding *gleukos*, Dr. Smith, in *Greek and Roman Antiquities*, says:

The sweet, unfermented juice of the grape, was termed *gleukos* by the Greeks and *mustum* by the Romans—the latter word being properly an adjective signifying new or fresh.... A portion of the must was used at once, being drunk fresh.... When it was desired to preserve a quantity in the sweet state, an amphora was taken and coated with pitch within and without, it was filled with mustum livivium, and corked so as to be perfectly air-tight. It was then immersed in a tank of cold fresh water, or buried in wet sand, and allowed to remain for six weeks or two months. The contents, after this process, was found to remain unchanged for a year, and hence the name aeigleukos—tht is, “semper mustum,” always sweet” (qtd by Patton 41).

Which wine (alcoholic or non-alcoholic) fits the character of Jesus? The following quote shows the usual custom of Jews regarding wine at wedding feasts.

Dr. S. M. Isaacs, an eminent Jewish rabbi of this city, says, “In the Holy Land they do not commonly use fermented wines. The best wines are preserved sweet and unfermented.” In reference to their customs at their religious festivals, he repeatedly and emphatically said: “The Jews do not, in their feasts for sacred purposes, *including the marriage feast*, ever use any kind of fermented drinks, in their oblations and libations, both private and public, they employ the fruit of the vine—that is, fresh grapes—unfermented grape-juice, and raisins, as the symbol of benediction. Fermentation is to them always a symbol of corruption, as in nature and science it is itself decay, rottenness” (Patton 73-4)

Why give so much attention to this miracle of Jesus turning water into wine? The reason is, because so many people in the world use this account to justify the drinking of wine or other alcoholic

beverages, stating that it must be okay to drink alcohol, because Jesus turned water into wine. The evidence is against them, as it is certain that the kind of wine in this miracle was equivalent to fresh juice of the grape. In my home area, there is a brother who has argued with nearly every preacher in driving distance, trying to get someone to agree with him that the wine of John 2 was alcoholic in nature. For some reason, he is determined to prove his case. I am a little suspicious about his motive.

Now let us consider *wine* in connection with the Lord's Supper. There are some in this land who believe that the drink of the Supper **must** be intoxicating wine, while some say it does not make any difference, for both come from the vine. We know of one native preacher in the Bible land who maintained that it **has** to be alcoholic wine, "because there were no refrigerators in the first century to keep grape juice from becoming alcoholic." We have already shown in this lesson how such is not necessary, for the ancients had a way of preserving grape juice to keep it unfermented. Also, it should be noted that alcoholic wine is the fruit of fruit of the vine, and not exactly classified as fruit of the vine. We should consider also that **all** wine is not in any way related to a "vine," for some alcoholic wine comes from other types of plants. When we say that *wine* (of any kind) is suitable for the Lord's Supper, we are implying that it need not be from the "vine."

In Ghana in recent years, the liberal theology has maintained that even "tomato juice" is acceptable, because it is juice and comes from a plant, and we suppose because it is *red* would be an incentive for such. This kind of reasoning would certainly be incentive to use the juice from watermelons, for at least it comes from a vine. In instituting the Supper, Jesus **specified** "fruit of the vine." He did **not** use *oinos*, which could be an allowance for alcoholic wine, but a more specific *fruit of the vine*, which honestly cannot be interpreted as alcoholic. Not only did Jesus use *fruit of the vine* in Matthew 26:29, but Paul used *cup* in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26, in his inspired account of the Supper, after Jesus Himself had stated that the "cup"

was His blood, which was holding “fruit of the vine.” The “fruit of the vine” in Bible days was indeed the juice of the grape.

The elements of the Passover (bread and drink) had just been used by Jesus in His last Passover with the disciples, and He used those elements in the institution of the communion of His body and blood. Absolutely **no** part of the Passover celebration contained “leaven,” meaning that the bread and the drink were not corrupted with yeast. In Exodus 34:25, God commanded that the blood offerings to God be free from any leaven. Then, in Mark 15:23 when the soldiers offered wine (Gr. *oinos*) mixed with “myrrh,” He “received it not”—He refused it. His physical body was not corrupted—neither was His blood. Even consistency would show that **both** bread and drink of the Supper should be free from leaven, as both are symbolic and should have the same quality of being “lifeless.”

If we are going to use alcoholic wine in communion because it has some connection with a vine, then what about the bread? Can we use any kind of bread (even leavened) because it still has connection with some kind of flour? The flour of the bread of the Passover was **wheat** flour, and that was to be used. We recently saw a picture of some students from Abilene Christian University on a mission trip, and they were using leavened hot-dog buns as they took *communion* while on the trip. Once the door of compromise is opened, it allows more and more departures from God’s Word.

Now we come to Pentecost day, when the apostles were accused of being “full of new wine” because they were able to speak in tongues (foreign languages, without having studied and learned those languages previously). “Wine” here is not from *oinos* (which could be either alcoholic or not, depending on the context), but *gleukos*, being modified by *new* (Gr. *neos*), meaning “of recent origin.” This is the only time in the New Testament that *gleukos* is used. This was not the kind of wine that would intoxicate. Peter understood the mockers to **suggest** that the apostles were “drunken,” for he said they were not drunken, and gave the reason—it was but the third hour of the day, and drinking anything intoxicating was not ordinarily done among the Jews in those days. Note that they

were “mocking” the apostles, as if to say that what the apostles were doing was so ridiculous, that they had too much grape juice, and were intoxicated on such. They were mocking, or making fun, and **not** seriously suggesting they were really drunk. Besides, how could real alcohol cause anybody to converse in **real languages that they had never learned before?** The only noise intoxicated men could make would likely be gibberish and not understandable. So, it appears that “new wine” shows that wine here is non-alcoholic. So, once again the efforts of men to make **all** wine “intoxicating” as an alcoholic drink have failed.

In connection with the Lord’s Supper, some have maintained that real intoxicating wine was used by the disciples in Corinth. A few years back, a “youth minister” came to north Texas to explain the Lord’s Supper to about 100 young people and a few adults. He maintained that the *real* problem in 1 Corinthians 11 was the fact that there just was not enough wine to go around and some were getting intoxicated by drinking all the wine and not leaving enough for the rest to drink to similar intoxication. He based this on the statement that in connection with their celebration of the Lord’s death that some were drunken and some were not, so the wine they were using **had** to be intoxicating. *Drunken* in 1 Corinthians 11:21 is from *methuo* and usually does refer to a state of intoxication when people are filled “with wine.” However, it does not mean “intoxicating” in every instance.

Paul, the writer in 1 Corinthians 11, is also the writer of Ephesians 5:18: “be not drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit.” He compared being filled with two difference things—either wine or the Spirit. Now, back to 1 Corinthians 11:21, Paul wrote, “For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.” Usually, when *drunken* is used in the Scripture it is in a context of being intoxicated or “filled with wine.” However, in 1 Corinthians 11 it is used in the sense of being filled with food and drink—the kind of things that they could and would be doing in their houses, for Paul said, “have ye not houses to eat and drink in?” (11:22). Certainly, they were not

to go home to get *intoxicated*, but go home to get their meals, or eat elsewhere, rather than mixing it in with the Lord's Supper, for evidently, some were bringing their own meals and had very little while other brought an abundance and were filled. Paul was concerned about the hurt brought upon those who "have not" (11:22) sufficient food, and their love feast was divisive. So, the contrast is between *hungry* and *drunken*—not between being sober and intoxicated. Some were **filled** and some were **hungry**. The substance was their "own supper," while some were able to be filled (with food and drink), and some were not. This was creating a problem of being able to commune together in the Lord's supper. They should not have been mixing their own meals (love feasts) in with the Lord's Supper (a sacred feast). Also, if *methuo* by itself has to mean "intoxication," why would Paul have to name *wine*, for alcoholic drink would be implied in the word itself? "Wine" is named in the passage in Ephesians 5:18, while food and drink are discussed in 1 Corinthians 11:21-22. So, to get to the full meaning of *drunken*, we have to look at the context, to see what one is full of. Thus, in John 2:10 when "drunk" (where those who had "well drunk") is under consideration, the product was fresh juice as from the grape, as we have already ascertained. So, even the use of *drunk* from John 2 cannot be honestly use to describe a state of intoxication, for there it means "well filled."

Consider these additional thoughts on Ephesians 5:18: "And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit." Does this mean one can drink with divine approval? Paul first says "not drunk with wine"—does this mean one **can** get drunk with wine but not **excessively** drunk? How drunk or intoxicated can one get before he goes to excess? Should he stop just before he passes out? *Excess* is not the word we may use in saying "don't go to excess in something." It is from the Greek word *asotoa*, which means "wasteful, unsavable." It shows general bad conduct. It is used in Matthew 23:25, where Jesus said the hypocrites do not clean the inside of a cup or platter, which is "full of extortion and excess." So, "excess" is something **corrupt**—not just practicing moderation

in something ordinarily right within itself. Moderation is in things that are not corrupt, but abstinence should be practiced when something is corrupt or evil.

*Excess* is used in 1 Peter 4:4 in the expression “excess of riot.” Does this mean we can riot as long as we do it in moderation and not in excess? In verse 3, Peter uses “excess of wine,” which along with Ephesians 5:18 is translated “winebibblings” in the ASV. *Asotia* is used in Titus 1:6 and is rendered “riot” in the KJV. A form of the word is used in Luke 15:13, where the prodigal son “wasted his substance in riotous living.” In Romans 13:13 a synonymous word is used for *riot*, and it is used along with *drunkenness*, showing that rioting is not the word for moderate drinking, but evil conduct that may well be associated with drinking. A *wine-bibber* was a drunkard. Jesus was *accused* of being a winebibber, but He was not such. If we used the false accusation that He was a *winebibber* to justify social drinking, we could justify drunkenness on the same basis.

Now, we come to a discussion of “not given to wine” and “given to wine.” Regarding elders, Paul wrote, “Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous” (1 Tim. 3:3). Then to deacons, Paul wrote, “Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre” (3:8). Then, regarding aged women, he wrote, “The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things” (Tit. 2:3). So, the elders are not given to wine, while deacons and aged women are not to be given to much wine. Does this mean that elders cannot be given to **any** wine, while deacons and aged women can be given to much wine? Some argue such. There is the assumption that is usually made by those who look at these passages in this manner. It is assumed that the use of wine in these verses is **fermented** wine, and is therefore acceptable. However, elders are not to be given to wine at all (total abstinence), while not given to “much wine” (social drinking) is acceptable to some, namely deacons and aged women. We agree that *wine* in these passages refers to fermented juice of the grape. The generic word *oinos*

is used by Paul in all three references. The context shows that the kind of wine to be avoided would be fermented, for when would it be necessary to forbid one to drink pure juice of the grape, unless he was under a Nazarite vow of the Old Testament?

It appears that Paul is guarding against a vice of the day—**drunkenness**. *Much* is an adjective making the term “much wine” equivalent to drunkenness—suggesting that *wine* (*oinos*) in this context does refer to fermented wine. If the use of wine is acceptable as long as one is “not given to much wine,” but can use “a little wine,” then the term in Titus 1:7 where the elders (bishops) are not to be “given to filthy lucre” would mean that they simply can be involved in filthy lucre as long as they are not “given” (enslaved) to it. **Who can believe it?**

Hebrews 13:7 speaks of imitating the faith of those who have the rule over them. Possibly this refers to the apostles, though many make the application of it being the eldership. At least, in verse 17 the disciples are to submit to those elders who have the rule over them. Now, if the elders are to practice “total abstinence,” and disciples are to follow their example, how can they practice “social drinking” while following the example of “abstinence”?

“Much wine” simply means “intoxication with wine,” and deacons should not be given to or disposed to it in any amount. It appears that Paul is saying the elders should not use wine at all, while deacons and aged women are exhorted to avoid drunkenness. **Neither statement shows any tolerance to the use of alcoholic wine.** If elders use no wine, they will never be guilty of drunkenness. If deacons and aged women are to avoid drunkenness, they will not be using alcohol at all. What person who has **ever** drunk intoxicants socially has **not** been really intoxicated to some degree? Who would deny such? Even the use of alcohol to a small degree would make one slightly impaired or intoxicated, whether it is 1%, 5%, or 10%?

Now, to 1 Timothy 5:23: “Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” This verse implies water **only**, to be found just before or after *water*, as such *only* is implied in John 6:27, that one is to “labor not for the meat

that perisheth” can work for meat, but not primarily for it, or not *only* for it, but must give time and effort to that which endureth to eternal life. Even the NKJV renders it: “No longer drink only water.” If we take the passage from the KJV literally, Timothy (or anyone today make a personal application of the passage to himself) would also have to avoid drinking **any** water. We might also point out that if taken literally, one could not apply this to the drinking of beer or whiskey, but only to wine. Additionally, it would have to be certain that the wine under consideration was indeed alcoholic in nature. It probably was intoxicating in Timothy’s case, unless he was practicing asceticism, or the abstaining of any use of the product of grapes. The impurities in the water where Timothy could have been such that a “little” wine might have purified it for drinking, or else he had a stomach ailment that could be helped with a “little” (not “much”) use of wine—whatever it was. Note that Timothy was urged to use only a “little,” and it was to be for health reasons.

The use of *wine* is found several times in Revelation, and each time it is associated with “fornication” and/or the winepress of God’s wrath, as it was to be poured out on ancient Jerusalem for its unfaithfulness to God, as was shown in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

The wine industry works long and hard to promote the use of its product other than in drinking, for it is a matter of money to their trade. If you will notice, along about March or April every year, the news media will carry a heralded announcement, as if it new and has not been announced before—that **wine is healthy**. The story is virtually the same every year, but the way it is put, it suggests a very dramatic and recent discovery as to why one should drink wine. Check your computer if you have missed some of these great declarations. Here is one such report: “What Makes Wine Healthy.”

The health benefits of drinking wine come from the chemical makeup of the wine, not necessarily the alcohol. Alcohol is the by product of fermentation.... The real benefits in red wine are the ingredients derived from the grapes themselves.... However, the problem with wine consumption is the alcohol itself. Too much alcohol and you will have negated the benefits of drinking wine.

The study proved people who had more than 1 drink per day of alcohol had an increased risk of cancer...it is now believed that 5% of all cancers in women are being linked to alcohol use.... The ill effects of alcohol can outweigh the benefits.... The American Heart Association cautions people not to start drinking alcohol at all.... Peanuts, supplements...and even teas are great ways to get all the health benefits of drinking without the alcohol (“Health Benefits”).

To hear the above announcement may cause some to drink wine for health reasons, but the honest bottom line is, that it does more harm than good. One can get the benefits of wine by eating grapes or drinking the juice of grapes, or following the other recommendations in the article by the American Heart Association.

I have before me a news story from the *Herald-Democrat* of Sherman, Texas for October 28, 2011, and was taken from the Associated Press. The headline reads, “Coroner: Amy Winehouse Died from Too Much Alcohol.” Let me share it with you.

Amy Winehouse drank herself to death. That was the ruling of a coroner’s inquest into the death of the Grammy-winning soul singer who died with empty vodka bottles in her room and lethal amounts of alcohol in her blood—more than five times the British drunk driving limit.

“The unintended consequence of such potentially fatal levels (of alcohol) was her sudden and unexpected death,” Greenaway said.

The 27-year-old Winehouse had fought a very public battle with drug and alcohol abuse for years...“She’s made tremendous efforts over the years,” said Dr. Christina Romete.... “she had her own way and was very determined to do everything her way.”

Winehouse gave up illicit drugs in 2008, but had swerved between heavy alcohol use and abstinence for a long time.... Romete said she warned Winehouse of the dangers of alcoholism. “The advice I had given to Amy over a long period of time was verbal and in written form about all the effects alcohol can have on the system, including respiratory depression and death, heart problems, fertility problems and liver problems,” she said.

Winehouse joins a long list of celebrities who died after fighting alcohol problems, including Billie Holiday, AC/DC lead singer Bon Scott, film legend Richard Burton...and country music pioneer Hank Williams (Hui).

No further comment is needed. Let us learn to avoid the pitfalls of alcohol. Give attention to the Word of the God of heaven through the Scripture.

- “Do not drink wine nor strong drink” (Lev. 10:9).
- “Wine *is* a mocker, strong drink *is* raging: And whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Pro. 20:1).
- “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, When it giveth his colour in the cup [“sparkleth in the cup”—ASV], *When* it moveth itself aright” (Pro. 23:31).
- “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, *that* they may follow strong drink; That continue until night, *till* wine inflame them!” (Isa. 5:11).
- “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, That puttest thy bottle to *him*, and makest *him* drunken also, That thou mayest look on their nakedness!” (Hab. 2:15).
- “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11).
- “Abstain from all appearance of evil” (1 The. 5:22).
- “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: CONFLICT

*Gene Hill*

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**Gene and Jerry obeyed the Gospel in 1975, at the old Andrews Avenue Church of Christ in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He began studying at the Florida School of Preaching beginning in 1976, and graduated in 1978. This was during the tenure of the late B. C. Carr as the school's Director. Gene began full-time preaching in 1982, serving congregations in Florida, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. He is currently working with the congregation in Indianola, Mississippi.**

*C*onflict is "a state of open fighting; of warfare. It is a state of disagreement and disharmony; a clash. Conflict is to be in or come into opposition; differ, to engage in warfare" (*American* 309).

Conflict can be nothing more than a friendly dispute over some minor issue, or it can be as disastrous as a world-wide nuclear conflict between nations. It seems that some of the most destructive conflicts ride on the back of either religion or world view and the differences between those who hold to various positions in regards to each. Almost all of us are aware of the Hatfield/McCoy feud, two mountain families in the Kentucky/West Virginia area along the Tug Fork River dating back to the Civil War. Many family members on both sides were brutally murdered.

Conflict can arise from not being able to clearly hear what someone has said. It may even be something as simple as misinterpreting body language. The causes of conflict are many and varied, and we need to be mature in our demeanor and careful in actions to reduce the occasions for conflict or to resolve them when they do occur.

The ability to not have occasions for conflict or, failing that, to be able to successfully resolve an issue is dependent on our very attitude in the first place. Paul provides us a basis for what our outlook should be when he states, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault,

ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). It must be pointed out of what true spirituality consists. Once again hear the apostle, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37).

Real and honest conflict resolution demands some standard to which all parties can equally appeal to resolve public or personal issues. As noted above, avoidance of conflict in the first place or resolution of conflict if not avoided begins and ends with a knowledge and application of principles of conduct contained in God’s Word, the Bible.

In this lesson, we will consider the basis for at least some areas in which conflict can arise and how resolution may be achieved. The order of consideration was given some thought. It seemed most appropriate to discuss conflict with self first simply because sin begins with self (Jam. 1:5-15; Col. 3:5ff). When I am enticed by my fleshly selfish desires instead of avoiding them in the first place (1 Cor. 9:25-27), I am drawn away and enticed, and sin is conceived, as James tells us.

The basic premise for this lesson is that God exists, that the Bible is His Word, and His mind is revealed in a form understandable to man (2:1-16). If there is no standard of authority to which we can appeal, then any discussion of issues will have no real expectation of resolution.

### **CONFLICT WITH SELF**

When we consider the account of Eve, being tempted by the serpent in the garden, we are able to determine what the underlying cause of conflict ultimately is. God instructed the couple that they were strictly forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17; 3:3). There was no question about what God wanted.

Notice how the serpent beguiled Eve. He tells her that eating it would not cause her death; rather, it would in some fashion enhance her life. Satan assured her that partaking of the forbidden fruit would put them on an equal footing with God (3:4-5). In other words,

the serpent implied that God had somehow shortchanged or cheated them out of some perceived benefit. Their lives were not as full as they had been led to believe by their existence in the paradise God has provided for them. What follows this exchange is that Eve thinks about it and then acts:

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat (3:6).

There may not have been anything about this particular tree that would have set it apart from any other fruit-bearing tree other than God's proscription about its use. It may be that the only visual issue was merely God's direction not to eat of it, much less touch it. Its appearance as undesirable then was only in their perception. At the serpents urging, it now takes on an aspect as something to be sought after for a benefit of which they had been unaware, it would give them wisdom that God had somehow overlooked and did not give them or withheld it for some reason or another.

The apostle John gives us the breakdown on Eve's reasoning in 1 John 2:15-17. She had stopped loving God and began to desire things of the world. Her faith was compromised and her trust in God was forsaken. Consequently, she devalued God and His will, replacing His commands with her own wants. When you turn from the only source of light, to what do you turn? Darkness! Also idolatry when you desire some other light source than that of God. Paul calls such covetousness idolatry in Colossians 3:5. She gave into "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16) when she separated herself from God (Isa. 59:1-2). What is interesting in this is that she and her husband had some form of fairly direct and firsthand contact with God (Gen. 3:8).

The sin of Achan likewise fits into this mold, as can be seen in the events recorded in Joshua 6:15-7:26, the destruction of Jericho. The city and its entire contents were accursed. The city itself was to be destroyed and burnt and with the exception of Rahab and her household, the city's inhabitants were to be put to death. All of the

spoils were to be dedicated to the Lord. Achan however, took items he coveted from among the spoils that were accursed (7:1, 21). Achan turned his back on the specific commandments of God, stealing treasure from among those things dedicated solely for the treasury of the Lord (6:19).

King David was a “a man after mine own heart” (1 Sam. 16:13; Acts 13:22), yet a man who engaged in activities so egregious and out of phase with such testimony from God that it is most difficult to understand how he could go so far astray. What we are discussing are the events surrounding Uriah the Hittite, his wife Bathsheba, and King David (2 Sam. 11-12).

David arises in the evening and walks out onto a roof. From that vantage point he observes a woman washing herself, apparently purifying herself after her uncleanness (11:2-4; Lev. 15:19-24; 18:19). He desires information on her (2 Sam. 11:3), seeks her out, and commits adultery with her (11:4). When Bathsheba determines she is carrying David's child, the king hatches a plot to cover up their sin which fails (11:6-13). The king progresses from adultery to conspiracy to commit murder and then to being a murderer (11:14-21). We see again how the desires of the flesh overrule our understanding of God's instructions leading us to sin and the just consequences of our sin (12:7-14).

### **CONFLICT WITH GOD**

Possibly no greater example of conflict with God can be given than that which existed between Israel and Jehovah. Consider the events leading up to Moses leading Israel out of Egyptian bondage. From the calling of Moses in Exodus 3 to the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, the issue of Israel's faith and trust in God is always in play. The elders of Israel (4:29), upon seeing Moses' miracles, believed (4:31). However, when the first suffering occurs, Israel folds (6:9). Following this, the nation experiences and views the plagues visited by God on Pharaoh and Egypt (Exo. 9-10). God directs them to camp by the sea to await Pharaoh's armies (14:1-4) and Israel leaves Egypt with a high hand (14:8; Num. 33:3). Interestingly, Israel gets weak in the knees yet once again (Exo. 14:10-12). God would once

again save Israel by a very graphic display of His omnipotent hand (14:15-31). Note that verse 31 says, "And Israel saw that great work which the LORD did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD, and his servant Moses." The people are able to possess a granite faith in God one moment, but in the face of adversity turn into a quivering whining mass of doubt. Not three days after seeing God destroy a mighty army under crashing walls of Red Sea water, the people are clamoring for water at Marah's bitter banks, and the Lord once again provides for them (15:20-26). The roll call of Israel's murmurings against the Lord is a long tedious one and listing its details would not further our objective.

Why would a nation whose history was rich and full of God's care, whose call the people were expecting (2:3; 3:7-9), when their prayers were heard and answered, continually reject God's open and gracious hand? How could they personally experience His power and open triumph over Egypt and her false pagan deities and still not be whole hearted enthusiastic followers of God? The answer is given quite explicitly in Psalms 78:1-22, 32-37.

The Israelites were just as guilty of idolatry as were Adam and Eve. When people turn from truth, they turn towards a lie (2 Tim. 4:1-4)! Israel refused to trust God to do what He said, thus losing their birthright to the land of Canaan (Psa. 78:22; Heb. 3:18-19). They apparently never did give up their idols nor their desire for them as they could not remain faithful for just a matter of months from Egypt. During Moses' forty-day sojourn on the mountain, the people crafted golden calves to worship and to lead them back to captivity (Exo. 32:15-35). This attitude afflicted them for the rest of their history, bringing about the total destruction of the northern tribes as a functioning entity and the subsequent Babylonian captivity for Judah.

What is the allure of idolatry, not just for Israel, but for all people, in whatever forms it takes? This has been a puzzle for this writer for years. How could a people with such a rich heritage and promised blessings beyond compare refuse to heed the promises of blessings and cursing (Deu. 27-34)? In spite of the over whelming evidence

provided them of God's power and consistent behavior, how could they still refuse to accept Him? It is as simple as the words found in Psalms 81:11-12: "But my people would not hearken to my voice; And Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *And* they walked in their own counsels." These folks made a choice as to what they would do and God gave them up. The idols they adopted along with those they made themselves, merely gave them cover to do as they pleased.

People think that idolatry is over with in modern society. I deny that and insist that we still have that same conflict with God today. It is exactly as Paul describes it in Romans 1:18-32. When we restrain or hinder or suppress the truth in unrighteousness (1:18) and change the truth of God into a lie (1:24) we have fashioned our own deity into the likeness of whatever we want (1:21-23). Corruption ensues (1:26-32). Human sacrifice is even more prevalent today in the form of abortion. The fires of Molech take on a different form. The only worldview that allows such an abomination is paganism. How polluted with innocent blood is our land today? I wonder when the modern-day iniquity of the Amorites will be filled and God will cleanse our land (Gen. 15:16)?

### **CONFLICT WITH OTHERS**

For the purposes of this discussion, mere disagreement over a particular thing is not under consideration in this material. While disagreements are in the definition previously given, the point of this effort is that which gives occasion for sin. Whether we think a particular brand of car is the only one to own or we prefer one sport over another, unless we allow it to become bitter, it does not meet our concerns right here.

Conflict that is sinful (1 John 3:4) is that which would cause us to be guilty of attitudes of the heart as described by Jesus in Matthew 12:34-37, 15:18-20, or Mark 7:20-23. Jesus also discussed various issues of the heart in Matthew 5:21-32, which if avoided would do away with sinful conflict. The source of personal conflict with others is still rooted in the love of the world, as John discusses in 1 John 2:15-17.

What would be the result of one having the right attitude towards this material plane of existence? If we truly accepted the premise of those of old that we are mere pilgrims here and that we are merely passing through this temporary place, our attitude towards the affairs of this existence would be completely changed (Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 2:11). How would we behave towards worldly possessions if we knew that at any moment, all our works and all that we have gathered would be done away with in the blink of an eye (2 Pet. 3:10)?

If we truly accept the premise that all mankind will stand before a perfectly righteous Judge (Rev. 20:12) to give an account of the things done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), when compared to a fair and just standard (John 12:48), and that we may well be the only ones to have the opportunity to teach a particular soul (Est. 4:14), what will our attitude towards the petty conflicts of this life will be?

We solve human conflict by becoming Christians in the first place, then by studying and applying God's Word to our lives to become mature Christians in the next place (2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:12-14; 1 Tim. 3:1-8). Our neighbors will then see our good works and glorify the Father (Mat. 5:13-14).

It is the case that such Godly living will bring persecution (2 Tim. 3:12). That prospect should not deter us from living as we ought to (Tit. 2:11-12). Godly living will give us opportunities we would not have otherwise had to minister to the needs of others (Rom. 12:17-21).

Conflict with God can be resolved in becoming and living as a faithful Christian (1 Cor. 12:13). Conflict with self is an ongoing process (9:27), handled by mortifying the deeds of the flesh (Col. 3:5) and putting off the old man of sin (Rom. 6:6, 15-18). Conflict with others is also resolved when we, and others, become Christians (Eph. 2:8-17).

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: FALSE TEACHERS

*John West*

**John was born in Aberdeen, Mississippi. His father, brother, and father-in-law are all Gospel preachers. He has preached full-time in Mississippi and Alabama and has conducted Gospel meetings and lectureships in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas. He has participated in mission trips to the island of Grenada and England. He graduated from Memphis School of Preaching (1989), Faulkner University (1991) with a B.A. in Bible, and Freed Hardeman University (2000) with a M.Min. degree. Faculty member for Truth Bible Institute.**

**He currently is in secular work as well as preaches for the Dayton Church of Christ, Dayton, Texas.**

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## INTRODUCTION

**A**fter the establishment of the church, Christians experienced persecutions from those without. It was not long, however, until problems developed from within. False teachers began to creep in and draw away people from the Truth. Jesus had warned of the coming of these false teachers in His sermon on the mount when He said: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15). The writings of Paul, Peter, Luke, John, et al., also warned the church of the reality of false teachers (Rom. 16:18; 2 Pet. 2:10; Acts 20:30; 2 John 9-11).

Today, there is no excuse for not knowing about false teachers. The Bible is full of warnings against these intruders. It also gives us ample material on how to deal with them. In this chapter, we will cover the facts about false teachers, the dangers they pose, and our responsibility to expose and rebuke them.

## FACTS ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS

False teachers will not stand up and say, “Look at me, I’m a false teacher.” Most, if not all, will deny teaching error; however, when

compared to the Bible, they are proven to be false teachers. Therefore, we must turn to the Bible to find the Truth about their error.

Some of the clearest teaching in the Bible concerning false teachers is found in 2 Peter 2. Peter teaches that we can know about false teachers by their nature and how they operate. Peter begins by writing:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction (2:1).

There is no doubt as to the existence of false teachers. They were around during the days of the Old Testament, and Peter is warning of their presence during his day. Peter describes these false teachers as those who “walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities” (2:10). Their depravity is seen as they are shown to be:

natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption... Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness... For when they speak great swelling *words* of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, *through much* wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (2:12, 14-15, 18-19).

These words not only describe the false teachers of Peter’s day but also those of our day. A cursory look around at denominations and liberal churches proves the words of Peter to be true.

False teachers are enemies of the cross who want to **be** served rather than **to** serve God.

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ:

Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phi. 3:18-19).

They gather great followings and revel in the praise and adoration given to them by their flock. They fit the description given by Paul to the Ephesian elders that some would “draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). They are interested in numbers, power, fame, and fortune. False teachers seek personal and financial gain, which they call godliness (1 Tim. 6:5).

### THE DANGER OF FALSE TEACHERS

There has always been danger associated with false teachers. If we are to overcome and defeat them, we must be aware of the dangers and how to deal with them. Jesus gave a warning in Matthew 7:15, when He said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.”

False teachers come disguised as sheep when they are actually wolves. They appear to be harmless and friendly, but they bring about destruction. How do we know that a person is a false teacher? Jesus said, “Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (7:20). Fruit is always produced, whether good or bad. The evil fruit of the false teachers can be seen by comparing their teachings with the Bible. How then can we determine if someone is teaching false doctrine?

**First, a false teacher will misuse passages to fit his own doctrine.** People are led off course by the smooth words of a false teacher. Paul wrote to Timothy and told him that some “shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:4). False teachers have a way of wording things to make them popular and to make them sound good to others. Paul told the Romans that false teachers “serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple” (Rom. 16:18). The Corinthians were warned:

For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore *it is* no great thing if

his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

A false teacher is not going to stand before a crowd and yell, “I’m a false teacher.” He is going to make himself as pure, true, and innocent as possible. He has an agenda in mind but will not say that to the crowd. His job is to convince people that he is trying to help them understand God’s Word. Just like Satan, he will transform himself “into an angel of light” (11:14). Many do not realize this deception because the false teacher is so *dynamic*; therefore, they believe anything he says. I remember, years ago, attending a meeting where a preacher was teaching false doctrine on the subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. He had the crowd so hyped-up with the way he was speaking that most did not realize what he was preaching was false doctrine. This is a normal tactic of a false teacher. If he can shout and stomp at certain times, people will fall for his false message because it *sounds good*.

**Second, he will cause himself and others to be lost.** Peter said false teachers “shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). These “damnable heresies” will affect those who follow the false teacher and the false teacher himself. There are consequences for perverting God’s Word, but some think that God will overlook it as long as it is done sincerely. John, however, taught the importance of following the doctrine of Christ without wavering.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (2 John 9-11).

Those who transgress God’s law are out of fellowship with Him, as well as those who accept the transgressor into fellowship. Brethren are often accepting into fellowship teachings and practices that violate the Word of God. The old “unity in diversity” practice is ever prevalent and false teachers are being used more and more by

once-faithful brethren. False teachers are no longer challenged, but are now being used without question. Many souls will be lost as a result of this inconsistent practice. There are clear warnings in the New Testament concerning false teachers, who bring destruction to themselves, to the ones who follow them, and to the ones who accept into fellowship the false teacher or those fellowshipping the false teacher.

**Third, the false doctrine will spread.** Paul wrote to Timothy and said, “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2 Tim. 2:17-18). The New King James Version translates the first part of verse 17 as: “And their message will spread like cancer.” Cancer is a disease which spreads and destroys everything in its path. False teachers, like cancer, spread their false doctrine anywhere they can find an audience. More and more people like having their itching ears scratched and will listen to anything that will make them feel good in their sins. The Galatians were warned, “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9). It only takes a little leaven to spread to the whole loaf. Leaven has a tendency to naturally affect the whole loaf. If false doctrine is not stopped, it affects the whole body. A small seed produces a large tree. A drop of poison contaminates water. It only takes a small amount of false doctrine to destroy the church.

### EXPOSING FALSE TEACHERS

As long as there is truth, there will also be error. False teachers are ever present and will wreak havoc if they are not stopped. We have an obligation toward God and man to expose a false teacher to keep him from taking people away from the Truth. The Psalmist said, “Through thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104). How shall we deal with false teachers?

**First, we must test them.** John wrote, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). It is dangerous to believe what someone says without first checking it out.

Paul gave an example of this in Acts 17:11: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” We should have the mindset to test what is being said by comparing it to the Word of God. Paul told the Thessalonians, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21).

Years ago I heard a preacher say that no one had the right to question anything he preached. This was said after he had been exposed for teaching false doctrine. He lambasted anyone who dared to question him. When we are questioned, we should stand by our preaching and give a “thus saith the Lord.” We should “*be* ready always to *give* an answer to every man that asketh” us “a reason of the hope that is in” us “with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15).

I preached in a Gospel meeting at a congregation, and at the end there was a question and answer period. Before I was given the floor, the local preacher said, “This man just preached to us and he should be ready and able to defend what he just preached. If there are any questions for him, he will come up and give you a Bible answer.” If we had more “questioning” today, there would be fewer who would stand up and preach false doctrine. Jesus said:

I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars (Rev. 2:2).

More people need to be “tried” for their teaching and preaching to prove them to be liars. False teachers do not like being “questioned” because it exposes them as liars.

**Second, we must rebuke them.** “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). *Reprove* carries the idea of refuting or convicting them. This reproof (rebuke) should come sharply. “This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:13). Because of the serious nature of false teachers, they cannot be

handled with “kid gloves.” In our politically correct society today, rebuking is not popular, but the Bible demands that it be done.

The purpose of a sharp rebuke is “that they may be sound in the faith.” It is to cause them to see the error of their ways and bring about changes to make them spiritually healthy. If it does not change them, at least others will see their error and remain sound in the faith. Timothy was told: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). The Truth must be preached when it is popular and when it is unpopular. Those not adhering to the Word of God must be reproved, rebuked, and exhorted to bring them back to the Truth.

**Third, we must avoid them.** Paul told the Romans, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (16:17). False teachers are not to be invited to speak or encouraged in their efforts, but they must be avoided. They cause divisions because they teach doctrines which are “contrary to the doctrine which you have learned.”

Avoiding them also carries the idea of withdrawing fellowship from them. We cannot fellowship error and be in fellowship with God. 2 John 9-11 clearly indicates that we cannot accept a false teacher in without partaking in his “evil deeds.” It has already been noted in Ephesians 5:11 that we are not to have fellowship with the “unfruitful works of darkness.” The principle taught in Romans 16:17 is not unique, but is taught throughout the New Testament. The Thessalonians were admonished to withdraw from the disorderly.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 The. 3:6).

Later in this chapter, Paul deals with how to treat a brother or sister caught in a trespass. “And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may

be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother (3:14-15). We are to “avoid him” and not to have “company with him” so he will be ashamed. However, we are not to treat him as an enemy, “but admonish *him* as a brother.” The admonishing is trying to cause him to repent of his error. False teachers should be admonished to stop teaching false doctrine. If they do not, they are considered a heretic. “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject” (Tit. 3:10).

### STANDING FOR THE TRUTH

We know that false teachers are not standing for the Truth and must be rebuked. If we stand against error, we must stand for the Truth. If we opposed false teachers, we must be defenders of the Truth. We can never be neutral and be pleasing to God. Jesus said “to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). Truth makes us free, but error enslaves us to sin. We can never over-emphasize the importance of Truth. It is the difference between right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty, and life and death. Truth is more important because the welfare of our souls is involved. Solomon said, “Buy the truth, and sell *it* not; *Also* wisdom, and instruction, and understanding” (Pro. 23:23). The Truth must be obtained at all costs. Once we have it, we must never give it up for any price.

James wrote, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (3:17). Wisdom is seen in the person following the Truth. True wisdom is “first pure, then peaceable.” Before we can have peace with God and man, we must first be pure. This is true of the doctrine we preach and practice. When someone is not pure in doctrine, then there is no peace. Even though peace is important, purity of doctrine and practice is even more important.

Jude understood the importance of standing for the Truth and opposing false doctrine. He wrote:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that *ye* should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

When Jude wanted to write about their common salvation, he knew it was more important to encourage them to contend for the faith. Jude uses the rest of this letter to describe and expose false teachers. As much as people today like to talk about non-controversial issues, it is needful to discuss what false doctrine is doing to the church. False doctrine contradicts the faith, opposes truth, and destroys souls.

False teachers contradict the Truth and lead God's people away from His will. We must heed the words of Paul: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

### CONCLUSION

It is of utmost importance that we hold to "pure and undefiled religion before God" and keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (Jam. 1:27). In doing that, we must maintain God's Truth in our lives in both faith and practice (Col. 3:17). If we love the Truth and are dedicated to it, then we will have the strength to fight against error. We must continue to study God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and rightly divide it to determine Truth from error. We must be honest in our examination of God's Word and search the Word daily to see whether those things being preached are Truth (Acts 17:11).

### WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

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There will forever be disagreement among various religious bodies as well as between liberal and conservative thinkers, and also between brethren who are basically conservative and sound in the faith. It behooves us to continue to study and come to a better understanding of the will of God on these matters. To study “Divorce and Remarriage” assumes that marriage itself is basic, which we understand to be that institution that God Himself established in the Garden of Eden in the long ago. Different nations and cultures have their own laws and regulations defining marriage. We are thus interested in what **God** says through the Scripture about His will on the subject of getting a divorce, and what He authorizes regarding a marriage involving one who has been divorced. What we learn on this subject is that which is found in Matthew, Mark, Luke, Romans and 1 Corinthians. I know of no other New Testament books that address these matters.

The background of these writings is from the Old Testament, namely Deuteronomy 24. A good understanding of this passage is essential to understanding New Testament teaching on the subject. Moses is the writer of this passage as he reveals God’s will for the Mosaic age. God instituted marriage in the Garden of Eden when there was a perfect environment before sin entered the scene. As time progressed, there were issues that developed, and new revela-

tion had to be given to further reveal the will of God on these matters that related to the putting away of a companion and marrying another. We know very little about what took place in the area of divorce and remarriage prior to the revelation of Moses in Deuteronomy 24. So, we begin here.

Let us get before us the first four verses of Deuteronomy 24.

When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's *wife*, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, *then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.

There are five major views regarding the teaching of Deuteronomy 24. **First**, there are those who maintain that the reference to “uncleanness” refers to sexual immorality, making Deuteronomy 24 equivalent to Matthew 19:9 where Jesus taught that “fornication” is the only authorized basis for divorce and remarriage. However, the Hebrew word for “uncleanness” is *ervah*, which is found some 70 times in the Old Testament, and simply means “nakedness or uncleanness.” It is the word used when Noah’s sons saw his nakedness (**not** his fornication). The word **never** refers directly to fornication, though nakedness is usually associated **with** fornication.

**Second**, some say Deuteronomy 24 refers to the betrothal period before one actually takes a wife and lies with her, and it is argued that is the action of Joseph in Matthew 1 when he was minded to put Mary away privily **before** they came together—when he learned that she was with child. Deuteronomy 24 deals with a man “taking a wife,” “marrying her,” and **then** “sending her out of his house” **afterward**. If Mary had been guilty of fornication, she would have

been subject to **death** itself (17:5-6). As a matter of fact, nothing is stated in Matthew 1 about a bill of divorcement.

**Third**, there are those who believe that Jesus was actually explaining the original plan of God and was trying to correct the present teaching of the rabbis, such as Shammai and Hillel, and thus get people **back** to the original teaching and understanding of Deuteronomy 24. **This** is going to be the center of our study at this time. Before we engage in this study, allow me to set forth the **fourth** view regarding Deuteronomy 24, which is that Deuteronomy 24 was God's law for the Mosaic period of time when men's hearts were hardened and their wives were being abused, and Jesus is setting forth **His** teaching based upon the teaching of God's will from the **beginning**—but with the added “exception” of fornication being the **only** justification for divorce and remarriage. I believe **this** is the correct approach to Deuteronomy 24.

However, there is a **fifth** view that we need to examine that is advocated by Rubel Shelly in his late book on marriage and divorce, and also held by others. In this book Shelly states that Deuteronomy is the background for New Testament teaching, and consequently is setting forth a **principle** that was to become **higher** than law (43, 40), and Jesus' teaching is to be understood in view of the principle of this passage. He states: “He did not replace the Old Testament divorce and remarriage statute with a more restrictive New Testament edict” (86-87). Note here that he refers to the “principle” of Moses' teaching as a **statute**—which pretty much sounds like a law, does it not? Shelly also states, “The law of Deuteronomy 24 meant that a man could not simply reclaim his wife” (60). There is that word *law* again, in this Old Testament “principle.” In view of this text, Shelly further states, “Anyone who was legally divorced had the right to marry again” (71). Further, he states: “Both Old and New Testaments assume that divorced people will remarry and there is no prohibition against doing so” (106). He also argues that adultery is “covenant breaking” (much as John Edwards has argued through the years) and has nothing to do with sex or remarriage—in spite of

the fact that **Jesus** said adultery follows “divorce **and** remarriage”—and not “divorce” alone (Mat. 19:9).

A side note here of interest is that Jesus does **not** say one **has** to get a divorce when fornication has been committed, for it **may** be possible for the unfaithful mate to repent and a reconciliation take place. However, such will be about the hardest thing both parties ever did. In the event a divorce does occur, and the innocent party chooses to remarry—**that** marriage is acceptable to God. Such has severed his relationship with the fornicating mate, and is free to marry another—and has done so. **Now**, what if after five years with the new mate, the first mate returns and asks for forgiveness, and the first partner grants it. Now, one **could** forgive an unfaithful mate, and **still** get a divorce, if there is the conviction that such a marriage will **not** work out. Even if the first mate does not **want** forgiveness, the innocent should stand ready to forgive when repentance occurs. Now, if after five years the unfaithful mate **wants** forgiveness, and the innocent is ready to extend it—does that mean a return of the original marriage **has** to take place? Certainly not, for the innocent has contracted a new and proper marriage with another and God has joined them together (Mat. 19:6). It would then be wrong to end the second marriage in the interest of *forgiveness*. Forgiveness and staying **in** a marriage shattered by unfaithfulness are two different things.

Now let us start our analysis of Deuteronomy 24. It is very clear that Jesus equated Deuteronomy 24 as part of the **past**, and not part of the **present**. He said such things as “you have heard that it was said to those of old” (Mat. 5:21), “you have heard that it was said to those of old” (5:27), “it has been said” (5:31), “again you have heard that it was said to those of old” (5:33), “you have heard that it was said” (5:38), and “you have heard that it was said” (5:43). In these six references *said* (past tense) is the only word common among them. Each is contrasted with what Jesus was about to say in setting forth **His** New Testament teaching. In the KJV, Jesus speaks of “old time.” *Said* is modified by “was” (past tense) or “hath been said” (past tense) in **every** passage—**all** signifying a time prior to

this sermon and is **not** something being said at present—their present time. Six times Jesus refers to what they had “heard” (either “by” someone, or “to” someone—depending on the translation) in the **old time**. The “old time” would clearly refer to the past and not the present. In Hebrews 1:1-2, Paul refers to “time past” in contrast with “these days”—just as it is in Matthew 5. When we refer to the “good old days,” we are **not** referring to the present days (whether good or bad), but to things of the past. **Why** did Jesus **not** say, “it is being said” (**now**, by their religious leaders) instead of speaking of the past? What Jesus taught were **His sayings**, for they were **then** being presented and not His *said*s (past tense), unless reference was made to something that **He** had said previously. **His** sayings were “doctrine” and spoken with authority (7:28-29). **If** Jesus was merely trying to correct the errors of false teachers, as He always does in the New Testament, why did He not say so (cf. 16:6, 12; 23:13-17; et al.)? Was Jesus comparing His teaching on these five points when He actually **quoted** “Moses,” and not one time did He compare it to the rabbis or even make reference to them.

One may say, “Well, Jesus spoke of the danger of the judgment,” where is **that** in the Old Testament? Try Numbers 35:12, 24, and you will find it. Many times we document a teaching of the Scripture by *summarizing* the passage, without them being quoted verbatim, as is done in Matthew 5:21.

Then another objection comes from some regarding Matthew 5:43, where Jesus said they had heard they were to “hate their enemies,” and some **declare** God would not have said that, so it **had** to be the rabbis’ false teaching He was opposing. A good reference Bible will give Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 23:3-6 as references. The latter passage is explosive. It refers to some “enemies” of the Jews (Ammonites and Moabites) who were **not** to be allowed into the assembly of the Lord (23:3) because they did not meet them with bread and water when they came out of Egypt and hired Balaam to attempt to curse them. Thus, the Jews were **not** to seek their peace. Then, they were told **not** to “abhor” (hate) the Edomites or the Egyptians, so they **could** seek peace with them,

and **not** “abhor” them—implying that they **were** to “abhor” the Ammonites and Moabites. They were to “abhor” by **not** seeking peace with them, and not letting them into the assembly with them. In the New Testament, Jesus said that one must “hate” father, mother, wife, and children or he could **not** be His disciple (Luke 14:26). We understand that in this New Testament passage, Jesus was saying they were to love their family members **less** (though using the word “hate”) than Him. This is explained in Matthew 10:37, where Jesus said we cannot love family members **more** than we do Him—meaning we are to love *less*, or to *hate*, if you please.

Shelly and others argue that what Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 24 was **not** a command from God, but merely something Moses himself as the lawgiver merely **allowed** or **suffered** them to do—since they were putting away their wives anyhow. If that be the case, why did he have to **say** anything—why not just let them go ahead and put them away? I believe that what Moses wrote was God’s **law**, as set forth for that period. In Matthew 19:8, Jesus said, “Moses... **permitted** you to divorce your wives”—which was in **contrast** with what **He** was going to say. The KJV uses *suffered* in this passage.

The Pharisees **understood** that Moses *commanded* certain things that **Jesus** called “suffered” or “permitted” (19:7-8). **Yet**, even Jesus called Moses’ so-called allowance a **command**, when He asked, “What did Moses **command** you?” (Mark 10:3). Then they answered, using *suffered* (or “permitted”—all meaning that Moses allowed, suffered or permitted in what he **commanded**).

Jesus asked, “What did Moses **command** you?” After the response about *suffering*, Jesus went on to say, “For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this **precept**” (10:5). Notice that Jesus referred to something that was put in writing—the written law of Moses. **Then**, He concluded by saying this was a **precept**. *Precept means* “commandment,” and comes from the Greek word *entole*, which is used one other time in the New Testament, and is translated “commandment” in that passage (Heb. 9:19), where Paul refers to that which Moses spoke “according to the law” (Unger 482).

If suffering or permitting something is not authoritative or a command, what about 1 Timothy 2:12: “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence”? The KJV uses *suffer*. Does not this take on the form of a **command**? Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss his wife. **Who authorized it? Moses did!** So, was it just being practiced and Moses went along with it, **or** did he authorize it? Whatever the Jewish men were doing in getting rid of their wives, Moses informed them that they must give them a “writing of divorcement.” In their hardness of hearts, and apart from Moses’ instructions, it is very doubtful that **they** had previously **given** the women a bill of divorcement. Certainly, their actions were such that God through Moses gave a regulation for the benefit of women—just as a fornicators’ action brought on a regulation from God to protect the innocent spouse in Matthew 19:9. In the beginning, God did not put divorce, a bill of divorcement, or fornication into His revelation, but when misconduct presented itself, **God** presented the proper legislation.

In summation, let us look again at Deuteronomy 24. Here we have a “when—then” or “if—then” situation. **When** a man took a wife (24:1), and ultimately found something about her he did not like, and put her away, he was to **give** her a bill of divorcement. Then, **when** she departed and became another man’s wife, and **he** detested her also, she again could receive a bill of divorcement, **or** if that husband died, **then** the first husband could **not** take her back to be his wife, for she was defiled, and it was an abomination for her to return to the first husband. Even though a return to the first husband **might** be considered a “restoring of the original marriage,” such a return was prohibited.

What we have in Deuteronomy 24 is that which applied under the law of Moses. We today are under the law of Christ—the New Testament. In Judaism, civil and religious law were united, and what was legal was considered morally proper. Today, civil and religious law are separate. What may be legal may not be right in the sight of God. Shelly says, “And anyone with a legal divorce has both

the civil and divine right to marry again” (112). Shelly argues from 1 Corinthians 7:11 that in that instance the “unmarried” describes one who has departed from (or divorced from) her husband, and therefore the reference in verses 7 and 8 that the “unmarried” **can** marry, would apply to a divorced woman. The problem is, however, that Paul appears to be using “unmarried” in another sense in verse 11. In verses 7 and 8, Paul joins some “unmarried” with the “widows” (those who clearly had no husband), but in verse 11 he clearly states that **this** “unmarried” (divorced) woman should be reconciled to **her husband**, or, she is to remain unmarried. It may be a legal separation, but that does not mean she has the right to another man. Jesus even taught that if a woman marries another man after a divorce, that both **she** and the **man** she marries are guilty of adultery (Mat. 5:32). So, a woman **may** get a legal divorce, and have no husband according to some civil law, but that does not mean she has the divine right to enter another union. Paul said she is an adulteress, according to Romans 7:2-3. Paul there wrote that a woman is bound to the law until death, but if the husband dies, she **then** is released from the law of her husband, or the law of marriage. If she married another **while** her husband was alive, she would be called an “adulteress,” even though she had married another man.

So, you have Paul and Jesus on one side, and Shelly and John Edwards on the other side—trying to take an ambiguous passage to make Paul teach what he did not say, which blame might as well be laid on the Holy Spirit. We wonder **why** Shelly and others avoid Romans 7 as if it were a plague. It is indeed a plague—**against their false doctrine**. The passage to which Shelly refers shows that “unmarried” clearly **does** refer to one who **has been** married but is no longer with her husband, but her obligation leaves her two choices: (1) she can remain unmarried, or (2) she can be reconciled to her husband. He did **not** say she should or could or even is permitted to marry another.

We have the Divine record in Mark 6 of Herod who had “married” his brother Phillip’s wife. Here was a man who was **not** a servant of God, but it was wrong for him to be “married” to a woman

who had been divorced, for she had been the wife of Phillip. Now, if it was wrong for Herod to be married to such a woman, it was also wrong for the woman herself to be married to Herod. Too bad Herod did not have Shelly and Edwards there to tell him that there was nothing wrong with his union with Herodias. John's life could have been spared awhile longer if only John had told Herod that all he needed to do was just stop getting divorces. John said it was wrong for Herod to "have" her as his wife. *Have* is used in 1 Corinthians 5:1, where Paul said it was immoral for a man to "have" his father's wife.

Shelly's book is written with the purpose of giving a lot of touching stories to show that one can be redeemed from sin while continuing in a forbidden situation. The same approach could be used to justify one who has stolen enough funds from a bank to build a mansion, and he is just encouraged not to do that again, but it is all right to continue to enjoy his mansion without returning what had been unjustly taken. Even Zacchaeus knew that he could not keep what he had taken wrongfully, but would "restore" it fourfold. Jesus announced that "salvation" had come to that man's house. Shelly also learned (from some place, but not the Scripture) that adultery is simply the "divorce," and **not** the result of divorce "and remarriage." Both he and John Edwards evidently learned from the same source and came to the same unscriptural opinion. It is true that those who are divorced for "any reason" **usually do** marry again, but they do not **have** to do so. The flesh is indeed weak sometimes and passions are strong, but some may well need to be unmarried "for the kingdom of heaven's sake" (Mat. 19:12). Shelly and Edwards like to wrest the Scripture to their own destruction, as many Baptists do so on baptism. Consider the following thoughts. We shall compare certain twisting with the Scripture. See if you see any difference.

**Baptism:** (1) "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

**Jesus.**

(2) "He that believeth shall be saved **then** and can be baptized later if he desires." **Baptists.**

- Adultery** (1) “Whosoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery.” **Jesus.**
- (2) “Whoever divorces commits adultery **then** and can remarry later.” **Shelly & Edwards.**

Some folks have difficulty seeing the significance of the little conjunction *and*, which is intended to connect words or phrases of equal value. Just as salvation takes both belief and baptism, just so adultery takes both divorce and remarriage. True, this may be hard to accept, but it is the Word of the Lord nevertheless. As a matter of fact, when the disciples heard what Jesus said about adultery in Matthew 19, they concluded that it would be best sometimes not to marry, and Jesus emphasized that not all men could accept His “saying” (19:10-12). One time even some of Jesus’ disciples heard the hard teachings of Jesus and walked no more with Him (John 6:60). Just so, many today reject His teachings (12:48), but His sayings are true, and they are also authoritative.

We are sometimes accused of being too “legalistic,” and should be more concerned about grace and “redemption,” but the legalistic teachings of Jesus require full repentance and turning away from sin. Shelly says that it is “Christian legalism” and a “legalistic reading” of the Scripture that creates our problems today (84-85). This reminds us of the story in the Old Testament when Ahab called Elijah a troublemaker, but Elijah correctly pointed out that Ahab was the troublemaker for forsaking the commandments of God (1 Kin. 18:17-18). So it is today.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: THE SECOND COMING

*Dub McClish*

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Dub is married to Lavonne (James) and they have three children (Bronwen, Hal, and Andy), seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

## INTRODUCTION

Someone has summarized the Bible under three great themes:

1. The Christ is coming.
2. The Christ has come.
3. The Christ is coming again.

The Second Coming is a major theme of the New Testament. It is the subject of all four Gospel accounts and most of the epistles. Jesus refers to it in various parables, and He and the New Testament writers foretell it in explicit terms. Jesus' simple declaration encapsulates the doctrine: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again" (John 14:1-3).

Two extreme reactions to this doctrine exist in the general public. The first is that of unbelief, ridicule, and denial on the part of athe-

ists, skeptics, and pagans. Denying that Deity came from Heaven the first time hardly allows for belief in a Second Coming.

Second is wild speculation as to the when, what, where, and why of the Lord's return. The series of sixteen Tim La Haye–Jerry Jenkins *Left Behind* novels (1995-2007) and related movies are representative of many of the strange theories relative to this subject. Most of these wild speculators are zealous advocates of Dispensational Premillennialism. Though often referred to as a *doctrine*, it is actually an entire **system of theology**. Perhaps 95% of Protestants are devotees of this system.

The Bible teaches not only the **fact** of Jesus' return, but also the **events** that will occur when He comes. We will study: (1) The conditions He will find in mankind when He returns, and (2) the events that will transpire when He returns.

## WHAT CONDITIONS WILL THE LORD FIND IN MANKIND WHEN HE RETURNS?

### Everyone Will Be Surprised

Men have been predicting the eminent coming of the Lord, beginning in the first century. Some of these time-guessers had misled brethren in Thessalonica, apparently even forging Paul's signature to documents that taught this error. Paul warned:

Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand (2 The. 2:1-2).

He proceeded to tell them that they had been beguiled to believe such, and while he did not know when the day of the Lord would occur, it could not occur before certain other events took place (2:3-12).

Countless predictions of the time of the Lord's return have been made through the centuries. Among the most widely publicized ones in recent centuries are the following:

- William Miller, a Baptist-turned Deist-turned Baptist, predicted the Lord's return between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. When the event failed to occur, he recalculated the date for April 18, 1844, and finally for October 22 of that year. He admitted his error (what else could he do?), but remained convinced that the "second advent" was near. He wrote the song, "We'll Work Till Jesus Comes," expecting Him to come momentarily.

- Ellen G. White, a Millerite, organized some of his followers and came up with the Seventh Day Adventist Church. She predicted the Second Coming for 1850 and in 1856 claimed that some of those present would be alive when Jesus returned (all of whom were dead by 1900).

- Charles Taze Russell, founder of what became The Jehovah's Witnesses cult in 1931, was influenced by some of Miller's second-generation disciples. Russell calculated that the Lord would (later claiming He did) return **invisibly** in 1874 (how could one question an "invisible" occurrence?). Russell and his heirs have made various other predictions concerning the "visible" coming of Christ, involving the years 1914, 1918, 1925, 1932, 1975, and others. When the 1975 prophecy failed, thousands reportedly abandoned the cult.

- Harold Camping, who operates "Family Radio," is the latest predictor to end up with egg all over his prognosticating face. He first (in 1992) predicted the "likelihood" of 1994 or "possibly" 2011 as the Lord's return date. He later became bolder, stating that the return would be on May 21, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. This failure led to a revised date of October 21, 2011. He finally admitted he did not know the time.

Premillennial *prophets* seem to be ever ready with their predictions with almost every skirmish, war, or earthquake. The likes of Hal Lindsey, Pat Robertson, Tim LaHaye, John Walvoord, Jack Van Impe, and their ilk have made fortunes sensationalizing their predictions in books, movies, and TV preaching, feeding senseless mass speculation. I find it amazing and strange that so many men over the centuries think they have calculated the right time from Daniel's

seventy weeks (Dan. 9:22-27), yet **they all come up with different dates.**

They all make another fatal mistake in applying the Lord's words about the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem to His Second Coming (Mat. 24; et al.). After giving various signs for the city's destruction (24:1-35), only then did He address the day and hour of His return. Verse 34 is the key, transitional, and pivotal statement of this abused chapter: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished." Consequently, everything that Jesus said before this verse would occur within the generation of Jesus' contemporaries.

The Lord then manifestly changed the subject in verse 36: "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." Concerning the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus referred to "those days" repeatedly (24:19, 22, 29). Beginning with verse 36, however, He speaks of a coming event marked by a single "day" or "hour" (24:36, 42, 44, 50). He identifies the event of "that day" as "the coming of the Son of man" (24:37, 39, 42, 44, 46, 50). No fewer than five times between Matthew 24:36 and 25:13, Jesus said that His return would be when men neither know, think, nor expect it will occur. Jesus, Paul, and Peter all employ the figure of a thief's unexpected coming to describe His return (24:43; 1 The. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10). The old song by Ebert Bailey in our hymnbooks has it just right in the refrain: "Watch and pray, for we know not the hour when the Lord shall come."

The Second-Coming time-guessers either cannot read or they do not believe what Jesus said about knowing the time of His return—and I think I know which it is. They obviously believe they know more about it than He said He did. Not one of them knows any more about when the Lord will come than a babe in his mother's arms. They claim, "Yes, we do." The Lord says, "No, you do not." They are all false prophets with a capital "P."

## Most Will Be Unprepared

Jesus said:

Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it (Mat. 7:13-14).

Atheists, Humanists, Deists, pagans, and all others who have denied Jesus' Deity will suddenly become believers when He returns, but to no avail. They have refused to acknowledge His Sonship on earth, but they will have no choice then: "every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess" to both the Father and the Son (Rom. 14:11; Phi. 2:10-11).

False teachers will be speechless as they and their blind followers are cast into the pit and as man-planted religious enterprises are uprooted (Mat. 15:13-14). Procrastinators who intended to obey Him and prepare will beg for one more moment, but like the five foolish virgins, they will not be allowed to enter (25:1-13). Those who obeyed Him and followed for a while, but became too busy, allowed things of the world to seduce them, or felt that His will was too confining will never be bothered by another appeal for their repentance. Mercy's door will then be closed, never to be reopened by Him Who "shutteth and no man openeth" (Rev. 3:7—KJV).

## Some Will Rejoice

A few will have entered the narrow gate and will have steadfastly traveled in the straitened way that leads to life (Mat. 7:14). They will have listened to the Lord, borne their crosses devotedly, and will be ready to greet Him joyfully. These are represented by the five wise virgins who were prepared when the bridegroom came: "the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast: and the door was shut" (25:10).

These know what awaits them, as Paul describes: "then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 The. 4:17). John typifies this expectation and longing in the closing words of inspiration. In response to the Lord's promise,

“Yea: I come quickly,” John exclaimed, “Amen: come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

As John indicates in his first letter, those who abide in the Lord will be able to greet the Lord’s return boldly: “And now, *my* little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). The eternal glory He will share with us at His coming will make all that we may have endured for Him here but a faint and distant memory. With Paul we will surely say: “For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Only the faithful can confidently sing, “One day He’s coming, O glorious day!”

## **WHAT EVENTS WILL TRANSPIRE AT HIS COMING?**

### **He Will Raise the Dead**

Paul twice stated that the Lord’s coming will precipitate the resurrection:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s, at his coming (1 Cor. 15:22-23).

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 The. 4:16).

In the first passage, the dead will be made alive at the Lord’s coming. In the second statement, the Lord descends, and the dead rise.

### **He Will Raise All the Dead**

Although Paul in the foregoing passages mentions only “they that are Christ’s” and the dead “in Christ” as being raised, the Lord taught the following concerning the resurrection:

Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29).

Paul indicated the same fact before Felix: “there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). These statements

affirm only one great resurrection, in which both good and evil will be raised at the same time.

Just here we need to consider a key element of Dispensational Premillennial theology: the “rapture” doctrine. While hints of it appear in some eighteenth-century theologians, John Nelson Darby, a nineteenth-century British preacher, is generally credited with fathering this bizarre aspect of Dispensationalism. The Scofield Reference Bible, published in the U.S. in 1909, included the rapture mumbo-jumbo in its comments (not to mention advocating the “gap theory” relative to Genesis 1). Through its wide circulation in the past century, it has corrupted practically all of United States Protestantism with this heresy.

Rapture theorists contradict Jesus and Paul, alleging two separate resurrections as well as two “Second Comings.” At His first “Second Coming” (the time of the “rapture”) the Lord will raise only the righteous. Only they and the righteous who are alive will see Him as He hovers above the earth, from which position He will call them up (i.e., “rapture” them) into the clouds to be with Him, leaving the unrighteous—living and dead—on earth. Cars will inexplicably be without drivers, airplanes without pilots, businesses without employees, and so forth (thus the bumper stickers that read: “In case of the Rapture, this car will be driverless”). Those “raptured” will remain in a holding pattern with the Lord for seven years, while those on earth experience great tribulation. The tribulation will result in a literal Battle of Armageddon between good and evil nations. Jesus will end Armageddon by His second “Second Coming” to earth (with those in the clouds), smiting the forces of evil, and beginning a 1,000-year political reign from Jerusalem. At the end of the millennium, all of the unrighteous dead from Creation onward and the righteous who have died since the resurrection of the first “Second Coming” will be raised, and the Judgment will take place, assigning everyone either to Heaven or Hell.

The rapturists presume to find a split resurrection in 1 Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God:

and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” They conclude that, if the righteous will arise first, then the unrighteous will arise separately, later on. This passage not only **does not** bolster the rapture claim; it and its context positively **refute it**.

*First* (i.e., “the dead in Christ shall rise first”) says nothing relative to the dead **not** in Christ. Rather, *first* refers to those “in Christ” who are alive at His coming, as the context, beginning with verse 13, makes evident. These brethren were concerned that their departed brethren would miss the Lord’s return and their ascension to be with Him in glory. Paul assures them that the Lord will raise those who have died in Christ (4:14), and that those alive at His coming will not precede (“prevent,” KJV) them in joining the Lord (4:15). Instead—before He calls the living to be with Him—He will **first raise their brethren** (4:16). Then the resurrected and the living saints will together arise to “meet the Lord in the air” (4:17).

Some ask, “Why does Paul mention the resurrection of only the dead saints if non-saints are going to be raised simultaneously?” (also the case in 1 Cor. 15:22-23). The Thessalonian brethren were anxious only about “them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus” (1 The. 4:14), thus his answer pertains only to “the dead in Christ” (4:16). As with the Thessalonians, the dead who were not Christians were not in the purview of Paul’s instruction to the Corinthians, so he does not mention them. However, again, by the Lord’s teaching in John 5:28-29, whenever the righteous are resurrected, so will the unrighteous be, whether or not both groups are specifically mentioned in the context. When Jesus comes **all** the dead of **all** the ages will be raised.

The Thessalonians passage presents other problems for the rapture proponents. They claim that the first “Second Coming” will be unseen and unknown to all but the righteous. They will not know why driverless cars and pilotless planes are crashing. However, the very verse (1 The. 4:16) they rely on for their split resurrection dogma speaks of the Lord’s return accompanied by His shout, the archangel’s voice, and the trumpet blast—hardly a description of a stealthy event that could go unnoticed by the masses. John declared

of the Lord's return: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and **every eye shall see him**, and they that pierced him; and **all the tribes of the earth** shall mourn over him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7).

Remember also that the "rapture" has the saints in the presence of the Lord for seven years. Paul says, however, of this meeting of the Lord and His saints, "and so shall we **ever be** with the Lord" (1 The. 4:17). My advice to the rapture promoters is to stay as far away from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 as you can. It is definitely not friendly territory. Contrary to the premise of La Haye's books and movies, when the Lord returns, no one will be left behind.

### He Will Change All the Living

Paul described the change the Lord will effect on those alive at His return:

Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Cor. 15:51-52).

He tells us why this change is necessary:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.... For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (15:50, 53).

Although we are naturally curious about this immortal state, the Bible does little to satisfy our curiosity. Three passages give us some insight:

- Paul tells us that the "natural body" that was laid in the grave will be raised a "spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). It is fair to assume that the instantaneous change wrought on those living will provide them with the same "spiritual body." It will be incorruptible and immortal (15:53), not susceptible to disease, pain, ageing, restrictions of physical law, or death.

- Paul gives us similar information in Philippians 3:20-21: The Lord will "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, *that it may be conformed to the body of his glory.*" The "body of our humiliation" is the same as the "natural body" and the body "conformed to

the body of his glory” answers to the changed, “spiritual body” of 1 Corinthians 15:44. It was in His post-resurrection body that He was able to ascend from Olivet and disappear in the clouds as He returned to the Father. We will require the same “spiritual body” to be able to meet the Lord in the air and make our final voyage to our Heavenly abode.

- John echoes Paul: “it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is” (1 John 3:2). “We shall be like him”—“conformed to the body of his glory.”

Those of us who are growing older—some of whom have many illnesses and pains, and all of whom are weary of this old wicked world and its trials—look forward with ever-increasing anticipation to hearing that universe-shattering shout of the Lord that will bring sweet release from our mortality and take us to the place He has prepared.

### **He Will Destroy/Dissolve the Material Universe**

Peter describes in graphic terms the occurrences at the Lord’s coming:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Pet. 3:10).

This description makes the Dispensationalist’s claims of an *invisible* or *secret* coming, known only by the saints, all the more absurd. No one will miss or fail to be aware of that day. Imagine the sounds and sights of galactic upheavals and collisions. Have you ever been to an immense fireworks exhibition? You just think you have! Picture heat so intense that the base elements of the universe dissolve, disintegrate, atomize. The Creator Who made all things out of nothing can just as readily make nothing out of all things.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses aver that Heaven was filled to capacity in 1935 with the 144,000 of Revelation 7:4-8, and that all who will be saved from that time forward will inherit a renovated, utopian earth after all of the unrighteous are destroyed in Armageddon.

Apart from their ridiculous wresting of the Revelation passage, a renovated earth will hardly be possible. There will be no earth remaining to renovate.

There is no time between the Lord's coming and its accompanying great conflagration for a one-year, much less a millennial kingdom on earth, and as previous, there will be no earth on which He might reign. Dispensationalism asserts that Jesus is coming to **establish** His kingdom. They refuse to accept His Word that He **would** and **did accomplish** that on His first journey from Heaven (Mat. 16:18-19; Mark 9:1; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:23, 28; et al.). The purpose of His second trip is to "deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (1 Cor. 15:24).

On that "day of the Lord," if not before, men will forget their mad lust for carnal pleasures and material baubles as they are rendered meaningless and nonexistent. Only then will they fully realize the truth of Paul's statement, "for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out" (1 Tim. 6:7). Only eternal, spiritual verities and realities will remain and survive, as the Lord sought to impress in the Sermon on the Mount: "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Mat. 6:20). Paul tells us the way we do this:

That they do good, that they be rich in good works, that they be ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the life which is *life* indeed (1 Tim. 6:18-19).

### **He Will Gather All Mankind to Judgment**

Paul instructed the Romans concerning the Judgment: "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. 14:12). While God the Father is said to be the Judge, Jesus will be the Father's agent of judgment. The Lord so stated: "For neither doth the Father judge any man, but he hath given all judgment unto the Son...and he gave him authority to execute judgment" (John 5:22, 27).

Paul affirmed the same truth:

inasmuch as he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:31; cf. 2 Cor. 5:10).

Jesus paints a word-picture of the Judgment, beginning in Matthew 25:31-32:

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats.

It will be a day of monumental, eternal separations between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, and dearest friends. It will be a time of supreme joy for some, but of unutterable dread, fear, and loss for most. The unrighteous “shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (25:46).

The Lord gives another sobering preview of the Judgment in the Sermon on the Mount:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (7:21-23).

Whether or not one is ready, there is no escape from the Judgment:

For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

## CONCLUSION

At the Judgment it will be too late to call upon the Lord for mercy. Of His First Coming, He said: “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world” (John 12:47). Of His Second Coming He

warned: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (12:48).

Our only hope and plea at His return will be His perfect sinless blood that has cleansed us and kept us cleansed. Those John saw around God’s throne in Heaven were those who had “washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14). The blood of Christ alone can cleanse us of our sins (1:5).

The blood of Jesus cleanses the sinner who is baptized for the forgiveness of sins upon his confessed faith in Christ and repentance of sins (Acts 2:37-38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4).

If the Christ had come an hour ago, where would you be right now—on His left or His right hand? Would you welcome Him as your Savior or cower in dread of His condemnation as your Judge? Where or what each of us is spiritually when we die, or if alive, at His coming is where we will be forever. One of our spiritual songs asks a very perceptive and sobering question: “Are you ready for that day to come?”

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All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: HELL

*Gary W. Summers*

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If there is a God who will damn his children forever, I would rather go to hell than to go to heaven and keep the society of such an infamous tyrant. I make my choice now. I despise that doctrine. It has covered the cheeks of this world with tears. It has polluted the hearts of children, and poisoned the imaginations of men. It has been a constant pain, a perpetual terror to every good man and woman and child. It has filled the good with horror and with fear; but it has had no effect upon the infamous and base. It has wrung the hearts of the tender, it has furrowed the cheeks of the good. This doctrine never should be preached again. What right have you, sir, Mr. clergyman, you, minister of the gospel to stand at the portals of the tomb, at the vestibule of eternity, and fill the future with horror and with fear? I do not believe this doctrine, neither do you. If you did, you could not sleep one moment. Any man who believes it, and has within his breast a decent, throbbing heart, will go insane. A man who believes that doctrine and does not go insane has the heart of a snake and the conscience of a hyena.

These words were composed by Robert G. Ingersoll, the notorious orator, political leader, and atheist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1833-1899). They contain some truth. The Biblical doctrine of hell has caused many people to fear and many to sorrow over loved ones they know are lost. Many have undoubtedly also been driven to prayer on behalf of loved ones or themselves and lost sleep as well.

However, neither of these reactions proves that the teaching is false. Some have also feared financial loss, sorrowed over it, and lost hours of sleep. A loss of one's wealth, however, remains a fiscal possibility. The problem with Ingersoll's approach is that it does not take into consideration all of the facts that will result in someone being consigned to hell. He is looking at the doctrine from a human rather than a Divine perspective. However, someone who truly wants to explore the issue should look at it from all angles.

### DOES A PLACE OF TORMENT EXIST?

Does God want anyone to be lost and forever be in torment? No (2 Pet. 3:9). Do the vast majority of human beings want anyone to experience hell? No. It has become so unpopular that many who have professed Christianity have given up on the doctrine and decided that it is not true. Many denominational *clergymen* gave up on it a long time ago, and some in the Lord's church have followed suit, agreeing with Edward Fudge's book, *The Fire That Consumes*.<sup>1</sup> Because some brethren have switched from eternal torment to the theory of annihilation, denominational pastors virtually preach everyone into heaven, and since atheists abhor the idea, then who is keeping the doctrine alive—and for what purpose?

The main proponents of this largely-discarded tenet of Christianity are **truth** and **reality**. If the Bible is the inspired Word of God (and it is), then hell exists whether or not anyone believes that it is so. If Jesus is to be trusted (and He is), then there is a fire that shall never be quenched (Mark 9:43). (Why does the fire eternally burn if the souls of men are annihilated in a few seconds?) Our Lord also specified that the punishment lasts as long as the reward—they are both eternal (Mat. 25:46).

So, without question, hell does exist. The question mankind ought to concern itself with is: "Who will be there?" Revelation 20:10 declares that the devil, the sea beast, and the earth beast (the false prophet) shall all be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. "And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Probably, few people have any difficulty comprehending that the devil deserves to be there in payment for his centuries of deceiving man-

kind and bringing nothing but sorrow and misery to the earth. But the Bible also teaches that hell will be the final abode of many human beings—in fact, the majority (Mat. 7:13-14). Jesus taught that many would hear these words on the Day of Judgment: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (25:41). Did Ingersoll ever lose sleep over the fact that the devil would be in hell? Did it drive him insane that angels will be there? Or did only human beings concern him—because he is one?

### THE REALITY OF SIN

What people made in the image of God need to understand is the concept of sin. Everyone sees manifestations of it. Murder, for example, is understood to be sin by everyone. Unfortunately, it started early in man’s existence with Cain killing Abel. From 1974 to 1996, just the United States alone averaged 20,000 murders per year. Since that time, the number has averaged 16,000. This information comes from statistics on a chart titled: “United States Crime Rates 1960-2010.” It also includes statistics on robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, theft, and rape. The existence and results of evil cannot be denied.

Although we readily see sin at work in people’s lives, we must go to the Bible to find out what God’s definitions are. *Sin* is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4—KJV); it defies God’s laws of morality and ethics. *Sin* is lawlessness (1 John 3:4—NKJV). Murder is against the laws of our nation, as well as against God’s law. The one who murders disregards the law of both God and man. If man punishes a murderer by putting him in prison for life, can we therefore fault God for putting him in prison for eternity? The question, then, is not, “Should sinners be punished?” but “What is the appropriate punishment?” Many think that eternity in the lake of fire is too severe, but, to understand the situation properly, we must obtain the spiritual perspective that God has concerning sin.

## GOD'S HOLINESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

God is **holy**. Actually, God possesses many characteristics. For most people, **love** is often the first one that comes to mind. It is the one thing that Christians and atheists know about God—that He is love. Unfortunately, many people begin and end with that one quality even though a number of others are mentioned in the Bible—including His holiness, justice, and wrath. These lesser-emphasized characteristics must be understood, however, before we can understand God's grace, love, and mercy. There are five words in the Old Testament translated *holy*, most of which are related to each other. Following is a composite definition from all five words: "hallowed, dedicated, consecrated, clean ceremonially and morally, pure, pious, religiously kind, good, sacred." The New Testament words for *holy* are also related to each other, and they have the same approximate meanings.

It may be difficult for human beings to imagine that the ideal of holiness, which we fall short of, is absolute in God. He is totally untainted by any kind of corruption or immorality. Although aware of evil, He never desires to sin or to practice wickedness. How fortunate for us—since we probably could not even **imagine** a universe under the control of a malevolent, all-powerful Being, let alone **live** in one so constructed. God's character is such that He can neither practice corruption nor fellowship it.

His spiritual creation was perfect. He created the heavenly host, however, with free will; Satan took advantage of this freedom and led a rebellion against God (some of the other angels foolishly hearkening unto him and joining him). They recklessly discarded the pleasures of heaven and the safety that exists in submitting to the will of God. This transgression was repeated on earth. Mankind chose to disobey God's commandment, also, and, in so doing, lost the earthly paradise that God had granted to Adam and Eve. (More about this subject is written in the chapter: "What the Bible Says About Satan.")

A pure and holy God cannot allow evil to remain in heaven. Therefore, He could not "spare the angels who sinned, but cast *them*

down to hell” (2 Pet. 2:4). (The Greek word translated “hell” in this passage is *Tartarus*, and it refers to the place of torment for the wicked in the Hadean realm.) This is a temporary separation from God, but it will be made permanent later on when this portion of Hades is cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:13-14). Just as God had to remove the angels who sinned from the heavenly realm, so He will likewise remove to *Gehenna*, after the Judgment, all who have sinned on earth—and not repented. Goodness and evil cannot commune (2 Cor. 6:14-18). God has no choice but to bring about this separation. His very essence demands it. He cannot possibly be anything other than what He is. Whether the angels or men like or approve of this fact is irrelevant. This is the way God is; He cannot change. Nor, if we comprehended the blessings of His righteousness fully, would we want Him to even try.

### DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL

All that a person can do is just try to imagine what existence would be like without any of God’s blessings. What would it be like if He withdrew His goodness, holiness, righteousness, and all other good things from the world? Such is the essence of hell. However vivid our imaginations are, they probably cannot match this reality; we should live in such a way (faithful obedience) that we never find out. The punishment of the unjust is away from the presence of God (2 The. 1:9). God and the righteous will live in one spiritual region; the ungodly and the unsaved will be in their own region far, far away with no possibility of the inhabitants of either kingdom ever interacting. Following are some of the descriptions of the awful final abode of many.

1. The first image that usually comes to mind is that of **everlasting fire**, which Jesus used quite frequently (Mat. 5:22; 18:6-9; 25:46). All human beings are aware of the properties of fire and what happens to those who are engulfed in flames. Hell consists of eternal flames; the burning sensation never ceases (Jude 7); never does abatement or relief arrive.

2. A second notable feature of hell is its **darkness** (Mat. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). To have both fire and darkness may seem like a con-

tradiction, but perhaps the smoke of torment (Rev. 14:11) is so thick that no one can see anything. What a horrible yet appropriate punishment for those who choose to walk in darkness instead of the light! What makes this aspect of hell terrifying is the loss of sight and our fear of the unknown. All should want to avoid the “blackness of darkness” (Jude 6, 13).

3. The third horrifying feature of hell is **excruciating pain**, the response to which is described as “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51; and 25:30). No doubt Jesus intends to underscore the severity of the pain, the very things that Ingersoll and the atheists protest is incompatible with a loving God. These descriptions are intended to show, however, what life without God (totally without Him) is like. Are these intended to be literal descriptions of hell? The soul is a spiritual entity, but we can only understand and respond to the things that afflict the body. Physical pain is used to describe the suffering that the soul will experience in hell, and it will be every bit as painful as what is described in these passages.

4. Hell is a place of **no rest** (Rev. 14:11; 20:10). Heaven is the realm where the soul enjoys that blessing. In hell there will never be a time of relief or respite—no matter how brief. Many are the days on earth that people work hard and look forward to that rest in the evening. However, in this kingdom of darkness, rest never comes.

5. **No requests** will be granted (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man was tormented in the flames of Tartarus, prison where the ungodly await the final judgment. He asked for a little relief but was refused. No requests will be honored in the permanent fiery residence, either.

6. Perhaps the worst feature of hell is that it is a place of **no hope**. As it has often been stated, “While there’s life, there’s hope.” Prior to death (or the Lord’s return), all have hope, no matter how dark or grim a situation appears, but in hell nothing will ever improve. Therefore, there can be no comfort of better days ahead. No prayers for abatement will be heard; petitions will be futile. The

suffering never ceases. For that reason, when Paul was encouraging the brethren about the dead in Christ having hope and ascending to Jesus first, he mentioned that the church should not sorrow over their lost ones as others who have no hope (1 The. 4:13).

7. God promises everlasting life to the faithful, but hell is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:9 as a place of **everlasting destruction** (Mat. 10:28; 2 Pet. 2:3), which is also called **the second death** (Rev. 20:14; 21:8).

Hell is a place that no one would want to even visit for as little as one minute, let alone dwell there. Someone might ask, “Haven’t these descriptions bolstered Ingersoll’s claim that God is an ‘infamous tyrant?’” God is not cruel for revealing reality to us. In fact, the opposite is true. What human beings need to understand is that: (1) God is holy; (2) God must eradicate sin from His presence; He cannot associate with or fellowship it; and (3) hell is as horrible as it is precisely because nothing of God or His goodness resides there. Given God and His nature, along with the fact that part of man is eternal, the future cannot be any other way.

### GOD’S LOVE

Nevertheless, God is love. Most people know that fact, but they seem to have forgotten **how** and **why** this is a true statement. God’s wondrous love is seen first of all in that He has warned us to avoid hell by describing it to us. We cannot see it with our physical eyes; none of our other senses can reveal hell’s awfulness to us. The only way we could be warned about it is through God revealing it to us. Imagine driving on a winding road through hills. As soon as one rounds a corner, he sees that a bridge is out. Unable to stop in time, he begins a constant crashing descent to the rocks and trees below, thinking all the way, “Why didn’t somebody warn me?” If those who knew of the situation failed to put up a sign, “BRIDGE OUT—ONE MILE AHEAD,” they would be the most callous individuals ever! By erecting the warning sign, they show care and concern for all travelers.

God cannot change the fact that evil must forever be separated from righteousness, but He can and did give mankind abundant

warnings concerning the two alternatives. Additionally, He offers great exhortations to make the right choice. Furthermore, He undertook to do something about our sins, which would keep us out of heaven. He initiated, at great cost to Himself, a means of redeeming man. He did not create mankind with the intention of finding additional fuel for the fires of hell. He did not create the angels for such an end, either. The existence of free will is what makes sin possible; Satan chose that course, and he has since persuaded many angels and men to follow him. The angels were already in heaven when they chose to sin; thus, there could be no redemption for them. People, on the other hand, as a combination of spirit and flesh, live in a fleshly realm, during which they choose their eternal abode by either accepting God's plan of salvation from their sins—or rejecting it.

We cannot truly speak of God's grace and mercy except as it pertains to our sins. God is always love (as seen in His creation of a perfect world for us to inhabit). However, His grace and mercy only come to the forefront of our attention because of our sins and the need for their forgiveness. God wants human beings to dwell with Him in eternity, but our sins must be removed so He can fellowship us. Of course, this requires **repentance**, which includes the desire and the determination to cease from sinful ways and practices, and **baptism**, during which the blood of Jesus washes away sins (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5). With our sins washed away, we are also sanctified and justified (1 Cor. 6:11). We must remain faithful until death (Rev. 2:10), walking in the light, and confessing our sins to God as we recognize them (1 John 1:7-9).

### GOD'S JUSTICE

Most people have heard of God's love in connection with sending Jesus to die for our sins (John 3:16), but they have, through the influence of Satan, minimized God's holiness and justice. God has always made His disposition toward sin clear. He has provided us with numerous examples so we will have no doubts concerning those attributes. **Adam** and **Eve** became convinced of God's justice as they departed from Eden. **Nadab** and **Abihu** served as an object

lesson to their fellow Israelites that the profane cannot be mixed with the holy. They offered a strange fire to the Lord which had not been set apart (made holy) for that purpose, and fire came out from the Lord to destroy them (Lev. 10:1-2). These men were priests, sons of Aaron, but they were not exempt from obedience or the consequences of sin.

**David** was “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22); if God were going to overlook sin in human beings, surely David would have been the one for God to exempt. Nevertheless, God held him accountable just as He does everyone. David suffered grievously because of his sins (2 Sam. 12:10-24). By His very nature, God cannot merely ignore sin.

**Uzzah** had the best of motives when he reached forth his hand to steady the ark of the covenant so it would not fall to the ground. So far as we know, it was not his fault that the ark was being transported improperly, but nevertheless he was struck dead for violating God’s commandment (1 Chr. 13:9-10). Whether Uzzah knew of the penalty for touching the holy objects is irrelevant; God had declared the death penalty for doing so, and it was recorded in the law (Num. 4:15). Uzzah did not realize that he was as profane as the ground; though sincere, he lost his life because he transgressed God’s law. What a striking reminder of the fact that **sincere motives are not enough; obedience is also necessary**. God punishes sin because He must. No man’s death brings Him pleasure (Eze. 18:32), but to let the sinner escape justice would violate His very nature. For this reason Jesus had to pay the full, horrible price for our sins. Only through a legitimate, perfect sacrifice could the demands of justice be met and the price for our sins be paid. Through the blood of Christ, prompted by God’s grace and love, He offers forgiveness for our sins. His plan of redemption is the only means of removing our sins and restoring fellowship with Him. God’s justice also validates the righteousness of His children by rewarding their obedience. Just as He promised (Heb. 5:9).

## THE INHABITANTS OF HELL

That Satan and his angels will be cast into the lake of fire is acknowledged by nearly everyone, but who else shall suffer eternal destruction? Every human being of accountable age is at risk because sin is that which separates us from God, condemns us, and places us in need of salvation. People must understand that, if God assigns us a place in torment, the reason will be for sins that are not forgiven. God has revealed to us that He cannot fellowship sin and that we must have forgiveness of them to be fit for heaven. He has further made Jesus taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9) so we never have to experience it. However, we must respond to God in the way He has specified to have forgiveness. Many choose not to obey the Gospel; they will therefore be lost. Certain categories of those who will be condemned are listed below.

1. **Unbelief** will prevent the proper response to God and leave a person in his sins. “But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*” (Heb. 11:6). Everyone has the evidence for the existence of God (Rom. 1:18-20). Those who have made no attempt to know God are among the lost (2 The. 1:8).

2. One might believe in God but **reject the evidence** for Jesus being His Divine Son and our Savior. Unless we believe that Jesus is He, we shall die in our sins (John 8:24). The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit involved a rejection of the miracles as evidence of the Deity of Jesus (Mark 3:22-30).

3. Some may come to a knowledge of God but have **chosen not to partake of God’s plan** for removing sin. A knowledge of truth is not sufficient unless one acts upon it. Would someone say, “So, the bridge is out one mile ahead. I think I’ll press on anyway”? Those “who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” shall also be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 The. 1:8-9).

4. Even those who have obeyed the Gospel can be at risk—if they become **hypocritical or self-righteous** (Mat. 23:13-33), if they adopt a sin they **refuse to repent** of (1 John 5:16; Luke 13:3), thus making something an **idol** (1 John 5:21), if they become **lazy**

or **neglectful** (Mat. 25:1-13; Heb. 2:1-4; Rev. 3:14-22), if they are ensnared or **overtaken by the world** they had previously escaped (2 Pet. 2), if they fall prey to one or more **false doctrines** (1 Tim. 4:16), or if they grow **discouraged** and quit (Heb. 12:1-3).

In other words, God expects all human beings to know, love, and serve Him. We owe Him these things because He created us and offers eternal life to us as well. His constant care and love for us demand a loving response and a willingness to obey Him in all things (Heb. 5:9). It is during this brief, unpredictable life on earth that we make the choice as to whether we want to continue to live with God throughout eternity or whether we would like life better without Him; hell is the realm where God is absent. **Now** is the only hour that we are guaranteed. The decision to obey God must be made **now** (2 Cor. 6:2). With whatever time remains, we must grow, perfect ourselves, and engage in service that will honor Christ and build up His kingdom.

### FAITH AND REST

Do preachers believe in the doctrine of hell? Ingersoll charged that we do not. For what purpose would a man devote his life to warning people if he thought there was no danger? Of course, not all who call themselves preachers do so. Some think of themselves more as a class of professional ministers and pastors and devote themselves to managing the congregation's affairs. Others preach well in public, which is not as effective as it once was (not that the Gospel lacks power, but people do not come to hear it), but spend little time evangelizing. Preachers can never be content to maintain the status quo without having a goal and a plan for saving souls.

Although Ingersoll's conclusion is wrong, neither preachers nor members have been as evangelistic in our thinking as we ought to have been. Do we have the attitude of Paul that we are **debtors** to all men (Rom. 1:14)? Do we agree with him **in practice** when he wrote: "I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22)? Perhaps Ingersoll did not perceive in the lives of the *preachers* of his day the urgency that existed in the New Testament, or he may have simply not noticed it. One thing

is certain—if we do believe that men are lost in sin and will forever suffer because of it, then we cannot relax in our efforts to save them. Many churches are small and dying—sometimes they are satisfied with the status quo, and this attitude is itself sinful. Congregations need a strategy for vitality. Inward individual, spiritual growth is both necessary and wonderful, but numerical growth is crucial for the continuance of the body of Christ and to defeat Satan by snatching souls out of the fire (Jude 23). If we were growing and maturing as Christians, would we not be growing numerically, also, as a result of our evangelistic efforts?

This admonition to ourselves is necessary because we cannot ever allow conditions in the world or in the church to cause us to settle for complacency. There is too much to do—too many lost to be rescued—to allow ourselves a measure of self-pity due to poor conditions, discouragement, or persecution. Regardless of our individual situations, we must continue marching to Zion with determination and vigor.

Can we sleep at night? We do because the physical body needs rest—and because we know that everything does not depend on us. We are but servants; we pray, work, and leave it up to God to give the increase. We also know that people have freedom of choice, and that, sadly, most are choosing to be lost. We know that because many turn down requests to study or to act on the knowledge they have. If we have taught and encouraged sinners to obey the Gospel, and they do not, we cannot bear that responsibility. We are at fault if we fail to present the good news of salvation. May God bless our efforts and grant us wisdom to do the best we can in reaching those yet lost in sin so they do not have to experience hell. Then we and those who respond properly to the Gospel may rest together in the presence of our God, Creator, and Savior.

#### ENDNOTE

<sup>1</sup>See this writer's analysis of that book in *Profiles in Apostasy #1*, published by *Contending for the Faith* in 2010, pages 51-87.

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All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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# WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT: HEAVEN

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## INTRODUCTION

Everybody is headed somewhere. If you die before Judgment Day, you will still be very much alive in either paradise or torment (Luke 16:19-31). At Judgment, you will stand before God and receive your due. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10—KJV). It is a sobering thought: you will give account of yourself (Rom. 14:10, 12). Jesus presented a picture of the Last Day where the righteous will be eternally separated from the unrighteous (Mat. 25:31ff). Your aim, then, is to be well-pleasing unto Him (2 Cor. 5:9). “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:34).

## FIRST: HEAVEN IS A PREPARED PLACE FOR PREPARED PEOPLE

You will not go to heaven by accident. You will not stumble through its gates. Entrance into that heavenly city will not be for the casual, haphazard child of God. No, heaven is a special place, and it is reserved for special people that love God supremely. “And he said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment” (22:37-38). Paul wrote, “but if any man

loveth God, the same is known by him” (1 Cor. 8:3). Prepared people endure the heartaches and trials of life. They withstand the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which *the Lord* promised to them that love him” (Jam. 1:12).

You cannot go to heaven if you do not love God, and you do not love God if you refuse to obey His commandments (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). Heaven does indeed have entrance requirements! “Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Rev. 22:14—KJV).

You are unprepared to enter heaven if you have not obeyed the Gospel of Christ. Have you been buried with Christ in baptism (Rom. 6:3-4)? If not, you are still outside of Christ, apart from His cleansing blood, and you are in a hopeless state!

That ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, **having no hope and without God in the world**. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:12-13).

Further, you are unprepared for heaven if you are an erring child of God. There is a tragedy when anybody is lost, but even more so when one has known the way of Truth but then gone back into the beggarly elements of the world.

For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them. It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:20-22).

Why would a brother give up his inheritance in heaven? Why would a sister in Christ turn her back on the Savior’s offer of hope,

peace, and pardon? Heaven is too precious to miss, salvation too gracious to spurn, and the love of God too beautiful to reject.

There are numerous reasons you should yearn for heaven. Let us study.

### HEAVEN IS OUR HOME

There is something comforting about the very term, *home*. It speaks to the heart of safety, love, and peace. The Christian is naught but a pilgrim and sojourner in this world. We are not home yet—but we are headed there.

We are of good courage, I say, and are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be at home with the Lord. Wherefore also we make it our aim, whether at home or absent, to be well-pleasing unto him (2 Cor. 5:8-9).

S.D. Burton beautifully expressed our heartfelt desire to go home with our God with the words of this song:

This world is not my home I'm just passing through  
my treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue  
the angels beckon me from Heaven's open door  
and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

They're all expecting me and that's one thing I know  
my savior pardoned me and now I onward go  
I know He'll take me through though I am weak and poor  
and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Just up in Glory Land we'll live eternally  
the Saints on every hand are shouting victory  
their song of sweetest praise drifts back from Heaven's shore  
and I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

Home is a place of love. There I will be with the Savior that “loved me, and gave himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20). Jesus loves us and He loosed us from our sins by His blood (Rev. 1:7). We yearn to be forever more with our Father in heaven (1 The. 4:18).

### HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF REST

The Christian life is the greatest, most fulfilling life any person could ever live. It is a life of hope, confidence, security, and inner peace. Still, there are challenges that every child of God must face

while here on earth. It is “through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). We must oppose false teachers, false brethren, a hostile world, disappointment, sorrow, illness, and temptation.

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as one beside himself) I more; in labors more abundantly, in prisons more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; *in* journeyings often, *in* perils of rivers, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils from *my* countrymen, *in* perils from the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; *in* labor and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for *my* power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (12:7-10).

We grow older with time and that brings its own temptations—do we remain steadfast through the years, or do we quit? Paul put it all in perspective when he wrote, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Rom. 8:18). After a life of fighting the good fight, Christians are promised rest. “There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb 4:9). Elizabeth Mills penned this poignant hymn that expressed the desire to reach our final rest:

O land of rest, for thee I sigh!  
When will the moment come

When I shall lay my armor by  
And dwell in peace at home?

The Bible teaches that hell is a place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 25:30—KJV), but heaven is where we find comfort and rest. “Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11).

### HEAVEN IS A PLACE OF ETERNAL HAPPINESS

People search for happiness in alcohol, drugs, and other substances. They vainly seek happiness in immoral conduct or the applause of men. However, sinful lives do not bring happiness. “*There is no peace, saith the LORD, unto the wicked*” (Isa. 48:22—KJV). Real, lasting happiness is found in keeping the Lord’s commandments; so heaven will be our home when this life ends. I know heaven is a happy place. It harbors no sorrows or pain.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away (Rev 21:1-4).

As I grow older, heaven becomes dearer and even more attractive. The heartaches of this life take a toll on us. It breaks our hearts to see some, that we dearly love, leave the truth and the prospect of joy in eternity to pursue lives of sin and rebellion. Emotional and physical pain comes at times, and our tears flow till sometimes it seems we can cry no more. However, in heaven, everything will be exactly right and perfectly happy.

Robert Arnold, a brother in Christ, wrote the words to his best known hymn in 1935 after hearing a preacher state in his sermon that there would be “no tears in heaven.”

### No Tears In Heaven

No tears in heaven no sorrows given  
 All will be glory in that land  
 There'll be no sadness all will be gladness  
 When we shall join that happy band.

No tears (in heaven fair) no tears (no tears up there)  
 Sorrow and pain will all have flown  
 No tears (in heaven fair) no tears (no tears up there)  
 No tears in heaven will be known.

Glory is waiting waiting up yonder  
 Where we shall spend an endless day  
 There with our Saviour we'll be forever  
 Where no more sorrow can dismay.

No tears (in heaven fair) no tears (no tears up there)  
 Sorrow and pain will all have flown  
 No tears (in heaven fair) no tears (no tears up there)  
 No tears in heaven will be known

Here then is the one place, open to any who would submit to the Savior, where happiness is guaranteed forever.

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, These that are arrayed in white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I say unto him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they that come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God; and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes (Rev 7:13-17).

Do you not want to go to heaven?

### HEAVEN IS A PLACE FOR THE VICTORIOUS

Life here is a constant battle. Because he had fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith, Paul knew that

henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day;

and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

**Make no mistake about it: you are in a very real battle!**

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand (Eph. 6:10-13—KJV).

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds), casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor 10:3-5).

If you quit before this life ends, you will forfeit your heavenly home. “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12—KJV). You must continue to fight—day by day, and year by year. Fight against complacency. Fight discouragement. Fight compromise. Fight against temptation. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7—KJV). Never quit. Overcome the difficulties of life if you really want to come over to glory. “And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14—KJV). Heavy burdens? Yes. Too much to bear? No.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it* (1 Cor. 10:13).

Remember: “the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation” (1 Pet. 2:8).

## CONCLUSION

There will be a moment when everything comes to a crashing halt. Time will be no more. Your deeds done, there will be no further opportunity to yield in submission to the King of glory, your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The faithful will be invited to spend eternity in heaven, and “the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward” (Rom. 8:18). **Do you not long to go to heaven?**

When all my labors and trials are o'er,  
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,  
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.

When, by the gift of His infinite grace,  
I am accorded in Heaven a place,  
Just to be there and to look on His face,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.

Friends will be there I have loved long ago;  
Joy like a river around me will flow;  
Yet just a smile from my Savior, I know,  
Will through the ages be glory for me.

O that will be glory for me,  
Glory for me, glory for me,  
When by His grace I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory, be glory for me (Charles Gabriel).

## WORK CITED

All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.



## **Other Bellview Lectureship Books**

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The Doctrine Of Christ Versus The Doctrines Of Men  
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God's Pattern For Christian Living  
Current Crises Challenging The Church  
The Church Triumphant  
What Does God Authorize In Worship?  
In Hope Of Eternal Life  
Are We Moving Away From The Cross Of Christ?



Man's greatest need is to know the God of the Bible (John 17:3), what He has done for man (John 3:16), and what He requires of man (Heb. 5:8-9). A failure to know God will only lead to death (Hos. 4:6; 2 The. 1:8-9). We cannot come to know God through feelings, dreams, or by the creeds and councils of man, etc. The only way to come to a knowledge of God and His will is by His revelation of Himself through His Word—the Bible.

In America today, Bibles are plenteous, yet there is a growing ignorance of God's Word. Many Americans do not want to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28). Many others believe in God, but have no concept of the one true God as revealed in His Word. The result is that the United States has become a godless, immoral nation. While righteousness (which is revealed in the Bible: Psa. 119:172; Rom. 1:16-17) exalts a nation, sin is a reproach (Pro. 14:34).

Thus, we are producing this book to help us come to an understanding of God and the things pertaining to Him. This book, if read and studied, will give us a basic understanding of the things of God and His Will for man today. It is our desire that upon learning the Truth, we will all obey it to the saving of our souls.

# **What the BIBLE Says About**

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