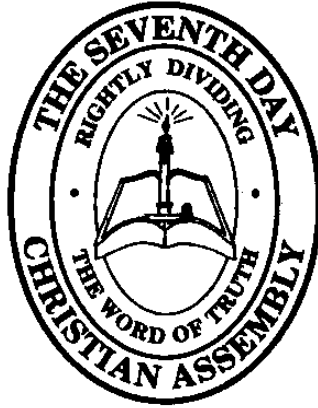


Rightly Dividing

THE
WORD OF TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Test Two:
Lessons 5-8



Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart. (Psalm 26:2)

Do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you can prove what is God's good, acceptable, and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

Do not believe every spirit, but put them to the test in order to prove whether or not they are of God. (1 John 4:1)

Testing God

While there is considerable emphasis on the fact that God will put *you* to the test in order to see if there is a heart in you to obey Him (Deuteronomy 8:2), there is also a considerable emphasis that you do some testing of your own. This, of course, provokes the question about why God would require such a thing of you. The answer gives us the idea that God does not want you to be the victim of “blind faith” – that He wants you to have a *more trustworthy knowledge* of His thoughts and ways than is commonly had by most supposedly “religious” people. So, what exactly does God expect of you while you are putting Him and His thoughts and ways to the test? Let’s examine the four scriptures above in order to understand the idea.

Why Test God?

Psalm 26:2 is an interesting request by David. In the first verse, he asks for God’s *judgment*. Why? He is convinced that he has shown his integrity by trusting and walking unwaveringly in God’s thoughts and ways. He is emphatic in his claim that he has *not* wavered. How would God go about rendering His judgment? Simple: examine him and put his heart and mind to the test. Again: why ask God to do such a thing? He desires *divine recognition and acceptance* of all that he has done as part of his spiritual life.

When this psalm is linked to Psalm 3, you get the idea that David is beset with accusers who want nothing less than his execution for his so-called “sins.” These people are godless and unscrupulous. David’s defense is that he has not even so much as *associated* with deceptive people or *fellowshipped* with hypocritical pretenders. These are people whose minds are set on vain, empty things – as well as those who use their religious professions as a cover for their wickedness. Neither has he associated with those who are bold in their disdain for the principles and practices of religion. He asks God to not even have a thought of lumping him in with these types of people.

Some translations translate v. 1 to read “*Vindicate me...*” (*RSV; Modern Translation*; emphasis added). The *Living Bible* says: “*Dismiss all charges against me...*” (emphasis added). The idea is that David is requesting exoneration from God because He is the only one who can determine David’s guilt or innocence. If God examines David’s heart and motives, can He find anything further that David needs to correct in order for him to be totally just-

fied in his walk of life with God? This would be like a person affirming before a court of law that he has told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth – with the help of God. As strange as it might seem, David here is *testing God* as much as he is requesting God to examine him! How so?

He must know that God has the power to penetrate all of the pretensions of men – all of the veils we try to set up to diffuse the intents of our hearts and to hide the secret things that we do not want to meet the light of day. Yet, he puts God to the test by asking Him to *examine* him and *prove* him. The Hebrew word for *prove* is *nacah*. It would probably be more correct to render this in English with the term *assay*, which means to do an analysis of something to determine the presence of one or more ingredients. David lists the ingredients that he can present as his “proofs” of his righteousness. Can God find them in him and confirm that they are there in quantity and quality in order to substantiate David’s claim? How willing would you be to ask God to perform such an assay on you? How willing would you be to put God to this kind of test?

Let’s make sure that we understand this concept correctly because someone might have Matthew 4:7 rattling around in the back of his mind: “You shall not tempt the Lord your God” (quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16). He might contend that it is not acceptable to put God to the test. And, in the sense that Jesus Christ used the term here, he would be correct. You are not to do foolish things – like jumping over some dangerous precipice – in order to get God to bail you out. If you deliberately put yourself into a threatening situation in which things go badly...then cry out to God to bail you out, you might have to suffer the terrible consequences of your actions.

William Barclay gives the proper sense of this: “God expects a man to take risks *in order to be true to Him*, but He does not expect him to take risks *to enhance his own prestige*” (*The Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of Matthew*; p. 63; emphasis added).

God does not mind you putting Him to the test by taking the risk that what He has revealed is *truth* – you know, to live “...by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:3). Malachi 3:8-12 is just such a challenge from God Himself. If you want to know if God will bless you in numerous ways for tithing, then put Him to the test by tithing. **Test Him!** The sense of Leviticus 18:4 is that a man who obeys the rules and regulations of God – as opposed to those of the present, evil world – will enjoy the remarkable benefits that come as a natural subsequence. In the context of John 10:10, why else would Jesus Christ have encouraged His followers to enter by the correct path in order to have life and to have it *more abundantly*?

Reorienting One’s Perspective

In Romans 12:2, Paul’s clarion call for true believers to reorient their minds is a challenge to them to *test God*. This reorientation is part of a transformation process by which our minds receive new life and power. Unless and until that reorientation takes place, it will be impossible to have a trustworthy knowledge of God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will. But...how does this *test God*?

The Greek word Paul uses for the English term *prove* is *dokimazo*. The term has a different meaning here than it does in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 and 1 John 4:1. Here, it means “to know surely” and “to have trustworthy knowledge of.” *How can you come to such a sure, trustworthy knowledge if you have not put God to the test?* But...there is more to this idea than that.

We see on a day-to-day basis how the world around us insidiously intrudes into our thoughts and tries to bring us into conformity. This is a gradual process by which we can be very easily spiritually disarmed and imperceptibly caused to conform to the traditions and practices of the world. You can look back over the past, say, 50 years and understand how we have moved from things that were unacceptable and uncommon to the point today where they are more acceptable and common parts of our lives. Abortion. Drug usage. Pornography. Sexual perversions. Divorce and remarriage. Evolution. Et cetera ad nauseum. All of these are common themes in television programs and movies.

We are now at the point where the idea of same-sex marriage is widely accepted – even in “Christian” circles. Now, looming on the horizon is the push by the *polyamory* advocates that “marriage” of any kind not be limited to just two people of any gender. Their essential belief is that mankind has the potential for loving more than one person at a time. They do not want the “marriage” relationship to be limited to two people – they want the right to form “marriages” with three, four, five, six or more people. This is not a push for *polygamy* where one man marries several wives; these “marriages” would consist of a group of people of both genders who “love” one another. In such a “marriage,” it would be permissible for there to be homosexual relationships, as well as heterosexual relationships.

Society at large has been prepped for this move to take place in the very near future by decades of pornography, “wife swapping,” and “free love” philosophy. You have to understand that *it is presently being practiced*, but the adherents are now pushing for *legal recognition*. Once you have accepted one part of this world’s philosophy, it is not long before it will begin to make sense to you that accepting other parts is just as valid. With that “proof” looming before you, you will be moved along very easily in conformity with the world. The next step would be a push to legalize polygamy. Watch the arguments that are presently circulating about legalizing the sale and consumption of marijuana so that various government agencies can take advantage of the *billions in taxes* it would generate. What then – legalize prostitution for the taxes? Methamphetamines? Crack? Heroin? Just how far will the government go for the taxes? If it becomes *legal* in the government’s sight, will that make it *right in God’s sight*? How far will man go just to have his own way without regard to God’s will?

The sad part of this is that certain elements of “Christianity” are at the forefront lending their support to these *secular* arguments! And...in the process, they are **abandoning** the will of God! Why? Because their conformity *inhibits* their ability to properly discern God’s will. This is the problem addressed by Paul in Romans 1:18-32 – note especially v. 18 where he says that they *suppress the truth by their wickedness*. That means that they are no more able to discern God’s will than any other wicked person.

Why *transform* your mind so that it can be *reoriented* toward God’s thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9)? You do so to put God to the test – to demonstrate to you why His thoughts and ways are higher than the carnal-minded human being’s. You do it to

hold God to His promises that His way of life *is* far more beneficial for mankind – greater physical and spiritual blessings. Greater peace, joy, and love. Greater possibilities beyond this present evil world. Greater potential for the human being now and in the eternity ahead. An avenue into what Jesus Christ called *the more abundant life* (John 10:10). We must not allow ourselves to be gradually modified and conformed to a way of life that *cannot last* (1 John 2:17).

What is the practical effect of this transformation? Simple: *It enables you to develop the ability to discern God's true will as you go through the various experiences of your life.* God's word is the *bulwark* for your understanding (see John 8:31, 32 and Psalm 119:97-104). The world might refer to you as a "Bible thumper," but you will have put God to the test to enable you to be *certain* of the knowledge you have received from His word (see 2 Timothy 1:12). You will have more trustworthy knowledge; you will know for sure.

Proving All Things

There is the opinion that "faith" does not have to "prove" anything. It is possible to have "faith" – confidence and trust – in something without having "proof" of its validity. It is also possible to have "faith" in something for the wrong reason. You can get "proof" that is not valid – that is an outright lie – and base your "faith" on it. This is where a proper understanding of 1 Thessalonians 5:21 is required.

Let's take a present-day example of a specific situation in which "proving" something is vitally necessary. In July 2003, George F. Will, a columnist for *The Washington Post*, wrote an article about the "gay issue" with regard to same-sex marriages and ordaining gay ministers. A New Hampshire Episcopal minister was elevated to the office of Bishop. He had been having a homosexual affair for 13 years and finally divorced his wife (with whom he had two children) in order to be with his homosexual partner. There are several problems here: (a) he was sexually active outside of marriage; (b) he was having *homosexual* relations; (c) and he divorced his wife in order to pursue his homosexual relationship. The Episcopal bishop of San Diego, Gethin B. Hughes, said that any disciplinary action against this minister was premature because "...there is not *sufficiently settled theology* about such things." Now, do you accept Hughes's statement at face value and accept the "gay issue" as something that God sup-

ports? Or, do you do some research to find out how *settled* the *theology* is?

Your first question has to be in relationship to *whose theology* is unsettled about the issue. Can you find what *God's theology* says about it? What is *theology* anyway? Generally speaking, *theology* is the study of religion, religious ideas, and religious beliefs. This includes the religious systems built around pagan gods. One would assume that, for the "Christian," it is based on the relationship of the God of the Bible with mankind. The term is a compound word: *theo* (God) and *logy* (logic), rational reason – "the rational interpretation of religious faith, practice, and experience." If you resort only to *man's theology*, even if it is laced with references from scripture, you have not really confronted *the revelation of the thoughts and ways* of the God of the Bible. In order to *know for sure* and live by *His truth*, you have to go to the Bible.

There is a slippery slope here. The conclusions you draw from a study of God's word will be determined by what you believe about it. If you believe that large portions of the Old Testament are no longer valid for the Christian (which is a major tenet of *Covenant Theology*), then you significantly reduce the influence of God's revelation of Himself to humanity. If you believe that Jesus Christ substantially changed the way God deals with mankind, then you significantly reduce the influence of God's revelation of Himself to humanity. If you believe that the Bible is only one of many paths to know and understand God, then.... You get the picture, right?

Frame your search on this premise: *true theology* is the study of the God of the Bible, the revelation of Himself to humanity, and His relationship to the world through laws, covenants, and promises – and you have a totally different conclusion. This is where 1 Thessalonians 5:21 challenges you to put God to the test. The Greek term referred to above, *dokimazo*, in this context means "to put it to the test; to examine." This is in full agreement with Isaiah 28:9, 10 – that is, follow God's word line upon line and precept upon precept in order to understand His thoughts, ways, and truth. Do not be afraid to do so!

When Jesus Christ admonished His disciples to *continue* in His word in order to be His true disciples and know the truth, it was more than instruction to continue to follow His teachings. He came to do the will of God the Father, not His own will (see John 5:30, 31 and 17:8). When He said that God's word is *truth* (John 17:17), He was speaking of the Old Testament because that was the only scripture He had at that time. When Paul wrote that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," (2 Timothy

3:16), he was referring to the Old Testament because that was the only scripture he had at that time. The entirety of the New Testament is predicated on the revelation of God's plan, laws, covenants, and promises in the Old Testament. If you don't remember this, go back to Lessons 4 and 5 and review them.

The Bereans set the standard for proving all things. Luke describes them like this: "[The Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, *in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures* [the Old Testament] *daily, to prove whether or not [the things they were being taught] were true*" (Acts 17:11; emphases added; author's paraphrase). It is your responsibility to make sure you are being taught *God's truth*.

Upon your confession of faith in Jesus Christ, repentance, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit, you are given the essentials necessary for coming to greater understanding of God's thoughts and ways. The Holy Spirit is the key ingredient (John 14:26; 16:13, 14). You must maintain a proper spiritual relationship with God so you can *know for sure* what His truth is. You must grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and produce spiritual fruit. You must put God to the test by *living* what He has revealed about Himself in His word! Do not take anyone's teachings for granted; do not accept their teachings as God's truth just because they come to you in the name of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:4, 5; 7:21-23). There are many pretenders out there (2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15).

What would my conclusion about the "gay issue" be if I took one scripture from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament? Let's see. Leviticus 18:22, 23 warns about two things: (a) having homosexual relationships and (b) having sexual relationships with animals. What does God reveal about His attitude toward these two things? Why is He driving out the inhabitants of the land so that Israel can possess it? Now look at 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. In the *KJV*, there are four types of sexual offenders who will not inherit the Kingdom of God: (a) fornicators, (b) adulterers, (c) the effeminate, and (d) abusers of themselves with mankind. Now – what do these words mean? Let's see.

Fornicators (pornos) are differentiated from *adulterers (moichos)* in this sense: *pornos* is from the word *porneia* (from which we get our word *pornography*), which is descriptive of people who engage in every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse imaginable (Leviticus 18 is a good place to start that search). This includes *male prostitutes*. *Abusers (arsenokoites)* describes a male homosexual whose

perversion involves engaging in anal intercourse with *boys*. Such a person is a *pederast* and a *sodomite*. The *effeminate (malakos)* are soft and weak effeminate men and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually – including such things as sadism, masochism, bondage, et cetera. They are called *catamites* – boys kept for perverse sexual purposes.

Some might think that this addresses only *men* who do such things. Well, yes – only men have the ability to perform such sexual deeds. But, does that eliminate *female homosexuals*? Can they inherit the Kingdom of God? No. Romans 1:26 says that God has brought them into judgment for their "vile affections...chang[ing their natural sexual roles] into that which is against nature" – that is, *lesbianism*. Why should God punish *men* for such uncleanness and let *women* go free? He doesn't. He didn't create them male and female and allow for *homosexuality*. Governments can yield to the demands of the world's way of thinking, but that does not obligate God to change His mind.

Now, I have done a few things to *prove* this situation as Paul admonishes: (a) I have looked up scriptures relating to the subject – not an exhaustive number of scriptures, however; (b) I have checked on the specific words used in 1 Corinthians 6, and I have used a Greek-English lexicon to get the exact definitions; (c) I have checked the context and historical issues as addressed in various commentaries; and (d) I have compared the results to the world's way of thinking about such things. In my conclusion, I admit that God's word speaks strongly against such practices – even to the point of saying that people who engage in such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. I also admit that those who teach contrary to what is found in scripture cannot be trusted as representing God in any way whatsoever. Therefore, I conclude that there is ***sufficiently settled theology*** concerning the "gay issue." I have to have the courage and faith to abide by what God reveals.

The governments of this world can *legalize* whatever they want to, but that does not automatically obligate God to recognize it as being acceptable. The governments, in the guise of "political correctness," may persecute me for my faith, but that does not give me warrant to abandon God's truth just to save my own neck. Nor am I allowed to hide my light under a tub (Matthew 5:14-16) so that God's truth cannot confront the errors of the world's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:17-31). ***Know and understand God's word. Put it to the test by living it without apology or regret. Watch God give to you a more trustworthy understanding of His truth!***

Testing the Spirits

John poses an extraordinary challenge with regard to putting God to the test. He instructs us to not believe every *spirit*, but to test them in order to prove whether or not they are of God. What does he mean by this challenge? To what kind of *spirit* is he referring? You might well remember that Paul warned the Corinthians about those who preach *another spirit* (2 Corinthians 11:4). Let's understand God's truth about this.

We need to couple this instruction with the last part of 1 John 3:24: "We know that He lives in us by the *Spirit* He has given us" (emphasis added). Paul says that it is by God's Holy Spirit that we are able to belong to Christ, call God "Father," and become joint heirs with Christ to all of God's promises (Romans 8:9-17). Jesus described it as the Spirit of *truth* in John 15:26 and 16:13. Surely, we must settle for just any kind of *spirit* that claims to be from God! This would presuppose that we could be excluded from God's blessings and salvation if we are led astray by the wrong spirit.

Whether you are dealing with respected religious leaders or what you might consider a personal revelation from God, you are obligated to *test them!* I have heard countless times people who claim to have been told by God Himself to do one thing or another. One famous television evangelist told his television audience that God told him to raise eight million dollars for a particular cause – or be "taken home" (presumably, heaven). His appeal presupposed that dying and going to heaven would be *punishment for not getting the job done – actually denying the audience his leadership!* So, he *and* his audience would be punished if the job did not get done. As a result of this claim, the eight million dollars was rather quickly raised. The *proof* that God Himself had, indeed, spoken to this man was not given. His claim was accepted at face value because of his standing in the religious organization of which he was the founder and leader.

A religious organization of which I was a member for 16+ years had a similar mind-set. The founder and pastor was widely considered to be *God's Apostle*. Therefore, all *truth* supposedly came into the doctrinal structure of the Church through him by revelation from God. To question that article of faith was to put your eternal life in jeopardy. Although there were constant encouragements to put his teachings to the test by comparing them to God's word, no one really stood a chance if they wanted to challenge something they found to be contrary to

what the Bible actually says. Lower levels of the ministry would effectively "weed out" such challenges by simply dismissing them outright or telling the inquirer that you can't "fight city hall." Many were "disfellowshipped" for pushing their questions and arguments too vigorously – some justifiably; some not.

I'll give you an example of how to test the spirits to see if they are of God. I don't have to resort to the argument about how "Christianity" has adopted pagan practices into its doctrinal structure. I have quoted God's scripture about His attitude toward paganism. I have provided you with examples of teachings, historical references, word studies, and an abundance of scriptures – comparing the teachings with God's word. If you have not figured that out by now, then you are missing a key ingredient in the battle being waged against the various "spirits" that are coming at you in the name of Jesus Christ in the guise of 32,000 so-called "Christian" denominations.

Let's briefly examine a teaching that was supposedly revealed to this leader by God. I am not attacking the man; I am *testing* his teaching. The problem centers around the reason God decided to create mankind. Here is the "bare-bones" outline of his teaching: (a) the earth *originally* was intended to be the abode of one-third of the angel population; (b) the archangel Lucifer was set upon a throne on the earth to be its ruler over the angels given to him to populate the earth and "finish" it (the earth was described as being like a piece of *unfinished* furniture); (c) this was to be a *proving ground* of their obedience to God so He could determine their fitness to "finish" the rest of the universe; (d) God gave the angels the creative abilities they needed to do the job; (e) God was offering the angels the incredible potential of becoming members of the God family if they were successful at achieving the task God had assigned them to do; and (f) it was only when Lucifer led the "earth" angels to rebel that God decided to create mankind – basically because He could not destroy the immortal angels (only "imprison" them), but He would be able to destroy a rebellious, mortal being like man. In order to buttress this teaching with "truth" from God's word, there was exhaustive discussion from Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:12-18a – as well as other parts of scripture.

How do you go about unraveling this "revelation" so that you get the correct "spirit" from God's word? Although the teaching is couched in scripture from top to bottom, it does not mean that the scriptures have been properly used. Here is what I did.

I asked two questions: (a) When did God decide to create man? and (b) Did God, indeed, *originally* offer the angels rulership and sonship in the God family? Why did I ask those questions? Because the answer to either or both could either support the truth of the teaching or tear its foundation out from under it and destroy the so-called “truth” it was supposed to carry. Was I wrong to put the teachings of this highly regarded man of God to the test? The Apostle John says **NO**.

We have already discussed in one way or another Ephesians 1:4-14, but let’s revisit it to remind ourselves of its content. Notice in particular v. 4 where Paul says that God “...chose us in Christ *before the foundation of the world...*” (emphasis added). This man’s teaching said that Genesis 3:22-24 marked *the foundation of the world*. Being inquisitive, I looked up the term *world* in a reputable concordance and found that it comes from the Greek term *kosmos*. I then looked up *kosmos* in a reputable Greek-English lexicon. The lexicon I used gave eight possible definitions – some having various nuances of meaning within the main meaning. In order to find out which definition applied to Ephesians 1:4, I looked for scriptural citations within each definition. Here is the one that applies to Ephesians 1:4: “*the world* as the sum total of everything here and now, *the (orderly) universe*” (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*; The University of Chicago Press: Chicago; 1957; p. 446). Notice that this verse refers to our being chosen by God in Christ *before the* [creation of the] *orderly universe*. That precedes Genesis 1:1! It is almost 14 billion years ago, if you accept the “Big Bang” as the correct calculation of the age of the universe. Genesis 3:22-24 occurred almost 6,000 years ago. That’s quite a difference.

BAG cites two other scriptures that have the same meaning. This is instructive in your gathering *proof* from God’s word. In John 17:24, Jesus was in prayer to God the Father and said: “...you loved me *before the foundation of the world*” (emphasis added). Jesus is expressing a great length of time. Peter says that it was “...foreordained *before the foundation of the world...*” that Christ would be a sacrifice for sinful mankind. Now, apply the definition from the lexicon to these three scriptures. What picture do you get? Sure, you could say that Jesus Christ was loved by God and foreordained *before* God closed off the Tree of Life to mankind. Sure, you could say that the *choosing of mankind in Christ* took place *after* the angels sinned, but *before* God closed off the Tree of Life. *But if you also claim*

that the earth was desolated because of the angels’ rebellion, then you have the existence of the orderly universe before the choosing of mankind. Mankind was chosen before the existence of the orderly universe (read Job 38:4-7 to see that the angels were created *before* the orderly universe). This doesn’t even begin to question whether or not God *originally* created the heavens and earth like “unfinished furniture” (refer to Isaiah 45:18 to see that He did not create it in chaos and confusion, but in an inhabitable state). What else can you find to disprove this teaching?

Hebrews 1, in and of itself, is sufficient to disprove the teaching – but, when combined with the three previous scriptures, it puts the last “nail in the coffin.” There are three most important revelations in this chapter: (a) v. 4 – Jesus Christ (and any subsequent son of God) has, by inheritance, a more excellent composition and name than the angels; (b) v. 5 – read this carefully: “For unto *which of the angels* did God say *at any time* ‘**You are my Son, I have begotten you today**’? And again, ‘**I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son**’?” (emphases added). The implied answer is simple: **No angel at any time!** This is also an answer to those who claim that Jesus Christ was Michael the Archangel before being made flesh as Jesus of Nazareth; and (c) v. 13 – “But to *which of the angels* did God ever say at *any time* “**Sit on my right hand** [co-rulership] **until I make your enemies your footstool**’?” The implied answer is simple: **No angel at any time!**

Now, I have *tested the spirit* of the teaching and found it to be in error. What do I do next? If I cannot get an audience with the author of the teaching, and it is not subsequently changed, then I have to make a decision about associating with those who make God a liar and teach doctrines that are contrary to His revealed truth. My wife and I subsequently withdrew our membership from this organization – which, over a 10-year period following our withdrawal, fell into doctrinal disarray and lost a majority of its worldwide membership. The “Apostle’s” successor dismantled all of his teachings and destroyed everything he had worked so hard to build for God.

It is as important for you to put God to the test as it is for Him to put you to the test. This should not put us into a wrestling match with God to quibble over jots and tittles. It should put us into a loving spiritual relationship with Him to live by every word of truth that proceeds from His mouth (Matthew 4:4). Realizing that there are adversarial spirits at work in this world that desire our destruction and scheme to derail our journey to God’s salvation (1

Peter 5:8, 9; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15), we must be ready and able to put them to the test so we can know God's truth more surely (2 Timothy 1:12).

Test Directions

This test is rather straightforward. There is nothing in it to "trick" you; however, there might be situations presented that will call for some intuitive thought and critical thinking skills. It is designed to help you assess how well you have understood the concepts taught. Relax. Take your time.

You may use your Bible, but answer as many as you can without the aid of your study notes. Once you have done that, you may go back and use your notes and Bible to answer the more difficult questions. The objective is to do it as much from memory as possible.

Before you begin, make sure that you are free from distractions. Make sure you are comfortable and have plenty of light. You might even want to keep something to drink nearby. If you would rather take it in sections, as opposed to going straight through, that's fine. You set the goals and complete them accordingly.

For the most part, the test is true/false and multiple choice – but don't let that lull you into a false sense of confidence. In cases where you might have two answers that, in one way or another, are correct, choose the *better* answer of the two. With regard to the true/false situations, if a statement is not *completely* true, then you must mark it *false*.

There are 100 questions. The answer key is at the back of the booklet. Subtract the number you miss from 100 in order to get your grade. You should strive to score at least 70%.

Have fun! I hope it is a challenge to you.

Directions: *It is always a good idea to read through a test before you begin to answer it. Next, read each problem carefully and completely before deciding upon an answer. Then, mark the letter that represents the correct answer.*

1. God's covenant with Israel was metaphorically called a "marriage" covenant. (a) True (b) False
2. God's covenant with Israel effectively "cut off" all other nations from God's plan of salvation. (a) True (b) False

3. Abraham was a *Jew*. (a) True (b) False
4. The "gospel" was actually preached to Abraham when God told him that all nations would be blessed *in Abraham*. (a) True (b) False
5. Israelites were not the only nation involved in the exodus from Egypt. (a) True (b) False
6. "Before the foundation of the world" means:
 - (a) Before the heavens and earth were created;
 - (b) Before God closed off access to the Tree of Life;
 - (c) Before the creation of human societies;
 - (d) Before mankind sinned.
7. Why did God create man?
 - (a) Because He was lonely;
 - (b) To have someone to worship Him;
 - (c) To expand the God-kind;
 - (d) Because Lucifer and one-third of God's angels rebelled against Him.
8. Which of the following scriptures supports the correct answer in #7?
 - (a) Genesis 1:26, 27
 - (b) Ephesians 1:4, 5
 - (c) 1 John 3:2
 - (d) all of the above
 - (e) none of the above
9. Why did God warn Adam about eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?
 - (a) That tree was to be used only by God.
 - (b) Doing so would cause eternal death for mankind.
 - (c) The fruit of the tree was poisonous.
 - (d) He had not yet created woman.
 - (e) It was simply a meaningless rule to see if Adam was dumb enough to obey.
10. The Hebrew word for *die* in Genesis 2:17 means:
 - (a) to break fellowship between two individuals;
 - (b) to die of natural causes;
 - (c) to die as the result of being smitten;
 - (d) to die as the result of a penalty imposed by some human authority;
 - (e) none of the above.
11. *Faith* consists merely of a belief in the existence of God. (a) True (b) False

12. What kind of person *denies* the existence of God? (a) the fool (b) the idiot (c) the insane (d) those who don't go to church
13. *Wickedness* actually helps God's existence to be revealed to the world. (a) True (b) False
14. *Elohim* is a plural term that means "Mighty Ones." (a) True (b) False
15. According to Genesis 1:1, more than one God was involved in the creation of the heavens and earth. (a) True (b) False
16. Which of the following statements is correct?
 (a) Baptism is merely *ritualism*.
 (b) Sprinkling and pouring are *baptisms*.
 (c) *True baptism* is complete immersion.
 (d) God does not require baptism.
17. True Christians are required to submit to two types of baptism: water and Spirit.
 (a) True (b) False
18. Which is the correct Greek term for *baptism*?
 (a) rantidzo (b) bapto (c) cheo
19. You can do all manner of *religious* works in the name of Jesus Christ and still be His enemy.
 (a) True (b) False
20. The existence of 32,000+ "Christian" denominations proves the overwhelming success of *True Christianity*. (a) True (b) False
21. Which of the following is **not** a proof of God's existence?
 (a) Miracles incapable of human duplication;
 (b) historical witnesses
 (c) prophecy
 (d) "faith" healing and casting out demons
 (e) creation itself
22. Jesus Christ is the **Creator God**.
 (a) True (b) False
23. Evolutionary scientists attribute the various evolutionary stages from swamp slime to mankind to God's great creative genius.
 (a) True (b) False
24. Which of the following is **not** proof of God's existence?
 (a) Creation demands a creator.
 (b) Evolution demands divine creative genius.
 (c) Laws demand a lawgiver.
 (d) Design demands a designer.
 (e) Fulfilled prophecy
25. **God** is not responsible for all of the chaos and confusion that exists in the world.
 (a) True (b) False
26. Sin is the transgression of God's law.
 (a) True (b) False
27. Since *sin* existed before God gave His law to Israel at Mt. Sinai, His *law* was in effect when Adam and Eve sinned. (a) True (b) False
28. Which of the following sins is *unpardonable*?
 (a) mass murder (b) rape and mutilation
 (c) sexual abuse of small children (d) theft
 (e) blasphemy against the Holy Spirit
29. God makes allowances for sins committed when what we do *seems* right and good but is not. (a) True (b) False
30. Many people do not understand God's revealed truth because God has *blinded them* to it.
 (a) True (b) False
31. Which of the following statements about marriage is true?
 (a) God *originally* intended for the male to have more than one wife.
 (b) God *originally* allowed for the possibility of divorce.
 (c) God *originally* did not plan for a marriage to be ended by divorce.
 (d) God has no opinion about divorce and re-marriage.
 (e) You cannot receive salvation if you have been divorced.
32. The only reason by which a person may be re-married is the death of his/her spouse.
 (a) True (b) False
33. Which of the following is the only allowable reason for divorce?
 (a) porneia (b) irreconcilable differences
 (c) variety = the spice of life (d) annoying habits (e) none of the above
34. Did God find fault (a) with the *people* or (b) with the *first covenant*?

35. Why did God enter into an *exclusive* relationship with Israel?
 (a) To exclude other nations from His kingdom;
 (b) To make her a source of enlightenment for other nations;
 (c) To keep her from doing all the fun things pagans got to do;
 (d) It was a “crap shoot” – luck of the draw;
 (e) To punish her for her idolatry.
36. God’s *oracles* are _____.
 (a) Only the 10 Commandments;
 (b) Only God’s covenant;
 (c) God’s covenants, promises, laws, and divine revelations (like prophecies);
 (d) The prophets;
 (e) Fortune tellers who work for God.
37. *Shiloh* refers to Jesus Christ.
 (a) True (b) False
38. The *scepter blessing* gives the right of rulership to the person who receives the *birthright promise*. (a) True (b) False
39. The twelve tribes of Israel make up the *Jewish* nation. (a) True (b) False
40. Which statement is *true*? (Look it up.)
 (a) God commanded *Noah* to put *one pair* of every animal on the ark.
 (b) God commanded *Noah* to put *two* of every animal on the ark.
 (c) God commanded *Noah* to put *two pairs* of unclean animals and *seven pairs* of clean animals on the ark.
 (d) God commanded *Moses* to put *two pairs* of unclean animals and *seven pairs* of clean animals on the ark.
41. Why did Jesus speak in parables?
 (a) To make His teachings easier to understand;
 (b) To confuse people about His *real* intent;
 (c) So only His disciples could understand;
 (d) To blind people who are unrepentant.
42. Most of Israel was blinded by God (to His truth) because of their wickedness.
 (a) True (b) False
43. Jesus Christ said that we must repent *and* believe the gospel of the Kingdom of God in order to be granted salvation. (a) True (b) False
44. Although God cannot sin, it is possible for Him to *repent* of something. (a) True (B) False
45. Is it necessary for us to forgive others in order to receive forgiveness for ourselves?
 (a) Yes (b) No
46. The term *predestination* suggests that there was an idea and a plan before there was a creation – not that God already knows who will be saved and lost. (a) True (b) False
47. Natural laws are _____.
 (a) in nature as a result of the evolutionary process of “natural selection”;
 (b) the proof that nature did not need any help from an outside source like “God”;
 (c) used by God to sustain everything in the universe;
 (d) wrongly attributed to *God’s* power.
48. The existence of *laws* demands that there be a *lawgiver* – a being who created the laws.
 (a) True (b) False
49. *Design* in the universe is a randomly occurring phenomenon, not something that was created.
 (a) True (b) False
50. For what purpose were the “lights in the firmament of heaven” designed?
 (a) They weren’t – they are the result of the “Big Bang” explosion.
 (b) God designed them to enable mankind to calculate various types of time;
 (c) Whatever *design* they *might* have actually changes over long periods of time – right now we can calculate their positions and keep time by them.
 (d) Mankind has foolishly assumed that there is a “design” to the sun, moon, stars, and planets.
51. Part of the concept of *design* is the concept of a *pattern* that has a *purpose* and a *schedule* for its accomplishment. (a) True (b) False
52. *Prophecy* is actually a way by which God reveals His plans/design in advance.
 (a) True (b) False
53. Any minister who says that Jesus could return *tonight* is simply teaching what the Bible says.
 (a) True (b) False

54. Does God act without making known what He is up to? (a) Yes (b) No
55. Can *false prophets* foretell future events that actually occur? (a) Yes (b) No
56. When God disciplines His children, it is intended to teach them how to bring their hearts and minds under the control of His thoughts and ways. (a) True (b) False
57. God's patience with rebellious people is eternal. (a) True (b) False
58. Did Jesus get baptized for the same reason His followers get baptized? (a) Yes (b) No
59. Salvation is achieved once you make your profession of faith in Jesus Christ. (a) True (b) False
60. The expression *continue in my word* suggests a process of *required education*. (a) True (b) False
61. Those who do not consider the required education worth pursuing _____.
 (a) will be put on probation;
 (b) will be required to take make-up classes;
 (c) cannot enter the Kingdom of God;
 (d) will be spiritual drop-outs who are assigned the minimum-wage jobs in heaven.
62. Old Testament events like the Flood and the Exodus are considered to be *figures* or *foreshadows* of New Testament baptism. (a) True (b) False
63. Baptism, in and of itself, saves you. (a) True (b) False
64. *Righteousness* is basically defined as _____.
 (a) acting or being just;
 (b) free from guilt;
 (c) free from wrong;
 (d) none of the above;
 (e) a, b, c.
65. Was Noah a *righteous* man who attempted to teach wicked pre-Flood people God's ways and thoughts? (a) Yes (b) No
66. It took Noah 200+ years to build the ark. (a) True (b) False
67. The *baptism of repentance* practiced by John the Baptist was accepted as valid by the Apostles of Christ. (a) True (b) False
68. Before ascending to the right hand of God the Father, Jesus Christ commissioned His disciples to _____.
 (a) teach all nations what He had taught them;
 (b) teach only the Jews what He had taught;
 (c) baptize into the name of God;
 (d) continue John's baptism
 (e) a and c
69. Jesus very plainly commanded *baptism* as part of the salvation process. (a) True (b) False
70. Which of the following is *not* part of the salvation process? (a) repentance (b) speaking in tongues (c) baptism (d) receipt of the Holy Spirit
71. Faith that does not include the *works of faith* is acceptable to God as *true faith*. (a) True (b) False
72. What is the difference between *living faith* and *dead faith*?
 (a) There is no such thing as *dead faith*.
 (b) *Living faith* is expressed by those who are still alive; *dead faith* is the faith dead people had when they were alive.
 (c) *Living faith* survives the death of the believer.
 (d) *Living faith* has *works*; *dead faith* doesn't.
73. God showed Peter the vision of unclean animals to reveal to him that God's laws about not eating unclean animals was finally done away with. (a) True (b) False
74. List at least three of the five ways by which we can obtain faith. (List all five if you can.)
 (a) _____
 (b) _____
 (c) _____
 (d) _____
 (e) _____
75. There is more to the salvation process than simply calling upon the name of the Lord. (a) True (b) False
76. Being *justified by faith* allows the believer to continue to willfully sin. (a) True (b) False

77. When you are *justified by faith*, does God treat you as though you have never sinned?
(a) Yes (b) No
78. Having *faith in God guarantees* you of a life of good health, joy, and peace. (a) True (b) False
79. Jesus Christ promised that those who have true faith could *actually* make real mountains move from one place to another.
(a) True – but it really has to be exceptional.
(b) True – but anyone with faith can do it.
(c) False – He was speaking only of *hills* and *mounds*.
(d) False – He was speaking metaphorically.
80. What does God expect of your faith?
(a) It is what it is, and He expects no more.
(b) The result of your faith will be an intellectual pursuit of God’s truth.
(c) God expects you to be presumptuous in your expectations of His goodness.
(d) Your faith is more important than the particular doctrines you teach or believe.
(e) God has no expectations beyond your expression of faith in Jesus Christ.
81. The objective of *true repentance* is the total eradication of sin from your life.
(a) True (b) False
82. Is God’s forgiveness of your sins dependent on whether or not you forgive others?
(a) Yes (b) No
83. What is the alternative to true repentance?
(a) a simple apology
(b) an honest effort to be good
(c) doing things in Jesus’ name
(d) death
84. God expects you to do things that demonstrate that you have actually repented – what are called *fruits meet for repentance*. (a) True (b) False
85. God has shown that He will actually forego prophesied destruction of a people if they are *truly repentant*. (a) True (b) False
86. Being redeemed from *the curse of the law* means that the individual does not have to obey God’s law any more. (a) True (b) False
87. The sinful state is a slavery from which man can escape by his own power. (a) True (b) False
88. God commands that all men everywhere should repent. (a) True (b) False
89. Jesus Christ instituted the New Covenant on the night of His last supper with His disciples.
(a) True (b) False
90. The Old *Testament* should be called the Old *Covenant* because *Testament* is only a will and *Covenant* is an agreement.
(a) True (b) False
91. Both the Old and New Testaments are inextricably tied to the establishment of God’s Kingdom on the earth. (a) True (b) False
92. God has two plans of salvation for mankind: an *earthly* inheritance for the *Jews* and a *heavenly* inheritance for the *Christians*.
(a) True (b) False
93. Did either the covenant God made with Israel or the New Covenant Jesus Christ instituted alter God’s covenant with Abraham?
(a) Yes (b) No
94. True Christians are going to inherit _____.
(a) the earth with Jesus and Abraham
(b) a mansion in heaven
(c) dual citizenship in heaven and on earth
(d) rulership with Christ over the kingdoms of the earth
(e) a and d
95. The Old Covenant/Testament was a *foreshadow* of the New Covenant/Testament.
(a) True (b) False
96. Baptizing *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* suggests that the person doing the baptizing has the *authority* from God to do so.
(a) True (b) False
97. Being baptized *in the name of* suggests that one is baptized *into* the possession and protection of the God family. (a) True (b) False
98. True Christians are not presently the *children* of God – that comes only after they go to heaven.
(a) True (b) False

99. The True Christian must also be baptized with God's Holy Spirit. (a) True (b) False
100. Does baptism with the Holy Spirit imply that the individual is put into God's True Church?

(a) Yes (b) No

Test Answers

Once you have completed your test and are satisfied with the answers you have selected, compare them with these answers. There will be no short explanatory notes for each answer in this test because the answers are pretty straightforward. I hope that this has been a good experience for you and that you have learned both before and during the test. Best wishes on your results!

1. A	21. D	41. C	61. C	your faith;	87. B
2. B	22. A	42. A	62. A	(d) following	88. A
3. B	23. B	43. A	63. B	the leadership	89. A
4. A	24. B	44. A	64. E	of the Holy Spirit;	90. B
5. A	25. A	45. A	65. A		91. A
6. A	26. A	46. A	66. B	(e) following	92. B
7. C	27. A	47. C	67. B	the example	93. B
8. D	28. E	48. A	68. E	of God's faithful servants	94. E
9. B	29. B	49. B	69. A		95. A
10. E	30. A	50. B	70. B	75. A	96. A
11. B	31. C	51. A	71. B	76. B	97. A
12. A	32. B	52. A	72. D	77. A	98. B
13. B	33. A	53. B	73. B	78. B	99. A
14. A	34. A	54. B	74. (a)	79. D	100. A
15. A	35. B	55. A	listening to God's True Ministers;	80. B	
16. C	36. C	56. A		81. A	
17. A	37. A	57. B		82. A	
18. B	38. B		(b) studying God's word;	83. D	
19. A		58. B		84. A	
	39. B	59. B	(c) asking God to increase	85. A	
20. B	40. C	60. A		86. B	

an open letter from

The Pastor

Let's consider some of the valuable lessons you were to have learned from Lessons Five through Eight: "Lord of the Covenants (2)," "Repentance From Dead Works," "Faith Toward God," and "Baptisms." I want to concentrate on a few ideas that are very different from what is commonly taught. I believe these ideas contain differences that are vitally important to God – giving clues to the difference between God's *True Church* and others in the 32,000+ so-called "Christian" denominations.

First, God planned from the beginning a Kingdom of God to be established among mankind on the earth for the purpose of completing His plan to create mankind in His image. He did not change His mind just because mankind sinned. The focus of both the Old and New Covenants is to bring in that Kingdom through Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the entirety of scripture – Old and New Testaments – is there any promise by God the Father or Jesus Christ to take anyone to *heaven* as a reward of salvation. As a matter of fact, Revelation 21 shows that, after the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom of God on the earth, God will create a *new* heaven and earth and place His very own throne upon the *new earth*. The *earth* is the focus of the promises of God to mankind. It is to be inherited by Abraham, Jesus Christ, and those who belong to Jesus Christ. Those who teach that *heaven* is the reward of the saved are totally at odds with God's revealed truth.

Second, *repentance* presupposes not only faith in Jesus Christ, but also faith in the coming of that Kingdom over which He and the saints shall rule. In Mark 1:14, 15, Jesus Christ is shown preaching the *gospel of the Kingdom of God*. In His preaching, He laid two fundamental burdens on those who want to follow Him: (a) they are to *repent*, and (b) they are to *believe the gospel of the Kingdom*. He did not state this as an either/or proposition. You cannot repent and then run nilly-willy after a gospel that excludes the doctrine of the 1,000-year Kingdom of God on the earth. Trading that doctrine off for one that offers *heaven* instead of God's Kingdom is changing the truth of God into a lie. *Repentance* presupposes a mandatory education in God's *revealed truth*, not in the religious whimsy of spiritually blind mankind.

Third, *faith toward God* is a *lifelong pursuit*, not something expressed in a moment of time. It is

something that must be maintained by spiritual growth and development. Being slack, spiritually careless, and turning away are not acceptable – that can very easily lead to your eternal condemnation. You can fall from grace and lose your salvation in the process – even if you have been a faithful, repentant, baptized, Spirit-led follower of Jesus Christ. Being "good" and "innocent" do not automatically indebt God to you for salvation purposes. *Faith* requires *works* that demonstrate the depth and sincerity of your faith. Neither the faith nor the works *save* you, but without them you cannot receive salvation.

Baptism is similar to that. Unless it is based on an extraordinary exception made by God Himself, you *must* be baptized in order to receive God's Holy Spirit and salvation. There is no indication how this was addressed among the Old Testament saints, but the New Testament makes it very clear that it is required for New Testament Christians. My personal conviction is that God must have had a similar requirement for the O.T. saints – even though I cannot *prove* it. Based on what is revealed, I will not second-guess His dealings with them. It's between Him and them.

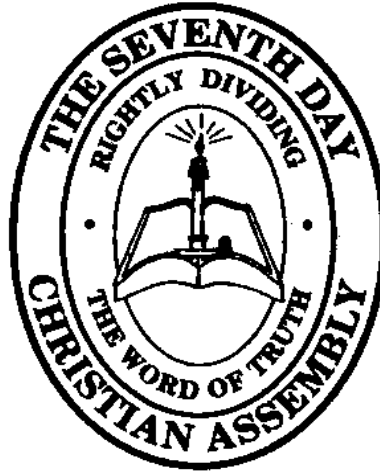
If you have any questions about the test, please contact me. If you would like to confer with me about baptism, I will be more than glad to meet with you. You may also contact me about attending Sabbath services – or anything else you might have on your mind.

I hope you are enjoying your learning experience and find it spiritually stimulating and challenging. I have four more challenging lessons and one more test for you.

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford

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Straight Talk . . . Plain Truth

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