

Worshipping God in

Spirit and Truth

A Magazine for Understanding God's Word of Truth

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A New Day Dawns

[from the desk of:](#)
the Pastor

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A new day is dawning in The Seventh Day Christian Assembly! With this edition, we are launching a *new* quarterly publication in order to bring you more insight into the truth of God's word. We are naming it *Spirit and Truth* for some very good reasons. I need to explain the reasons in more detail, but let me say at this point that the primary reason is because of what Jesus Christ says in John 4:23, 24:

...The hour is coming, and is now present, when the *true worshipers* shall worship the Father in *spirit* and in *truth* because those are the type of worshipers that the Father seeks to worship Him. *God* is a Spirit, and they that worship Him *must* worship Him in *spirit* and in *truth*. (emphases added)

If that is what the Father *wills*, then it must be very important for you to understand what such worship *requires* of you.

You can see in Matthew 7:21-23 that *many* will be excluded from the tremendous spiritual relationship that God has in store for *true worshipers* if their words and deeds are not in alignment with the Father's *will*. For that reason, I and others in The Seventh Day Christian Assembly will explain in various upcoming articles how you can align your worship with the *will* of God.

Words That Are *Spirit*

John 6:63 reveals part of the meaning of worshipping God in *spirit*. This account in John 6 begins in v. 22 and leads us through an interesting account of a question born out of confusion to an answer that the interrogators were not prepared to receive. The question involved how Jesus got from one side of the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum (v. 25) – they knew that He did not get there in the boat that the disciples took because He had departed alone into a mountain before they had set to sea (vv. 15-17). After the disciples launched their boat and had made reasonable progress toward the other shore, a “great wind” arose and threatened their safety. These people seem to have been aware of these things when they asked the question. And... Jesus proceeded to answer their question in a most unexpected manner.

Read the account from v. 26 to v. 63 in order to get the gist of what I am saying. All of the conversation about manna from heaven, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, resurrection from the dead, coming from heaven, and going back to heaven were a bit too much for them.

When many of them complained that His comments were *hard*, it was *not* because they did not *understand them*; it was because they thought they were *intolerable* and *unacceptable*! Such is the meaning of the Greek term *skleros* (v. 60).

They had *understood* what He had said. They had *understood* the claims He was making about being the very life of *God* come down from heaven – and that no one had a chance of surviving this present life into eternity without submitting to Him. It was not the lack of *intellectual understanding*; it was their *refusal* to comply with His high moral demands. Those demands include the absolute necessity of men to be *spiritually* drawn to Jesus Christ by God the Father (vv. 44, 65) and to take in God's *spiritual nature* to the point of becoming like Jesus Christ Himself (read Isaiah 55:6-13; Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 2:16; and Philippians 2:5-13).

Let's consider the implications of Jesus' comment about His words being *spirit* and *life*. What did He *mean*? He used the same word (*spirit*) in John 4:23, 24 as He did in John 6:63. The Greek term is *pneuma*. This word has a variety of contextual meanings – meanings determined by the context in which they are used. *Pneuma*, in both contexts above, differentiates *God* from all that is *not God*. This *divine power* is that which produces what we might call the *divine nature*. That is the point of Romans 12:1, 2. All who fully submit to God through Jesus Christ are given a portion of this *divine power* to enable them to make the change from *human thoughts and ways* to *God's thoughts and ways* (see Isaiah 55:8, 9; Acts 2:38; 2 Corinthians 5:5 and Ephesians 1:13, 14).

We find in 1 Corinthians 2:7-16 an explanation of how this works. Paul explains that there are things in the *spirit realm* that are not immediately *intellectually* available to mere mortal man – they are “...a mystery...hidden wisdom...” (v. 7). While an individual might be very intelligent by human standards, that intelligence is not on the same plane with God's thoughts and ways (see 1 Corinthians 1:17-31). By comparison, it is *foolishness*. Chapter 2:9 says that there are things which God has prepared for those who love Him, but the knowledge and understanding of those things are not readily available to the human mind because in and of itself, it is not “wired” to comprehend them (v. 14). It must have *revelation* from God (v. 10). How does that work?

God uses His *spirit* – that is, His *divine power* – to *reveal* it to the human who is receptive to its communication.

(Continued on p. 30)



Worshipping God

What does God *require* of us?

When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness after His baptism (Matthew 4:1-11), one of the temptations involved *falling down* and *worshipping* Satan (vv. 8-10). In warding off this temptation, Jesus used two scriptures to draw a reply for the temptation: Deuteronomy 6:13 and 1 Samuel 7:3. Based on those two scriptures, Jesus repudiated Satan's temptation by saying: "It is written, 'You shall *worship* the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'" With that reprimand, Satan left Him. In point of fact, it is written in many ways throughout the scriptures that Jesus had available during His time that our only allowable *worship* is to be toward the God revealed in them (see Exodus 20:1-7). But there is more.

In John 4:23, 24, Jesus told the Samaritan woman that God requires those who *worship* Him to *worship* Him in *spirit* and in *truth*. How are we to know what that *requirement* entails? Is there some kind of *ritual* that God has imposed upon us – you know: processions, holy smoke, recitation of creeds, obligatory prayers, songs, offerings, homilies, more songs and prayers, and recessions – endless repetitions of ritualistic mannerisms? Must we approach Him with genuflections and prostrations? How much *freedom* are we allowed in expressing that which is called *worship*? There are many questions that we could ask, but we must rely on God's word to give us direction in what God *requires* of us. Let's do the search and see what *true worship God* of entails.

Scriptural Definitions

It is sound methodology to establish the bases of conclusions upon reasonable definitions. There are *contexts* in which words are understood because there are words that

have a variety of meanings that are dependent upon the *contexts* in which they are used. Different words in a language outside of English might be translated into English as the same English word. For example: There are two words in German that are

translated into English as *history*. They are *Geschichte* and *Historie*. The term *Geschichte* is used when speaking of the total reality of the past as a stream of life that has visible and invisible levels. The term *Historie* is used when speaking of a recon-

struction of the past produced by historical science – a branch of knowledge that deals *systematically* with the past. If we translate them into English with the mere word *history*, we might not understand in what *context* we are to understand that single word. Let’s consider a reasonable example of this methodology.

Norman H. Snaith, in his article in *The Interpreter’s Bible* titled “The Language of the Old Testament,” discusses the fallacy of translating *Hebrew* thought with a *Greek* meaning. This discussion centers upon the Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek word *psuche* – both of which are translated into English as the word *soul*. Genesis 2:7 says in the *KJV* that man was created to be “...a living soul...” (Hebrew = *nephesh*; Greek = *psuche*; emphases added).

Here’s the problem: The *Hebrew* term means “a living, breathing being” – which some translations like the *RSV* and *The Jerusalem Bible* follow. The *Greek* term means “a breath-soul – that part of an individual that leaves the body upon death – that is, the immortal soul” – which some translations like *KJV* and *Modern Language* follow.

Here is the point of Snaith’s discussion and the difference the *contextual definition* can make in understanding the situation as it ought to be rightly understood:

Since the word “soul” in the English translation stands for the Hebrew *nephesh*, there is not one single instance in the Old Testament where the word “soul” should be thought of as that which survives death. When the Bible writer says... that God “breathed into [man’s] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,”...he does not mean that God thereby gave to man an *immortal soul*. He means that God...breathed into him his own life-giving breath, so that this shape of dust became alive

...If, therefore, the belief in *the immortality of the human soul is held to be a Christian doctrine*, then it should be realized that *it is not a biblical doctrine*. The biblical doctrine is of a resurrection life for those who “have the Spirit” and are “in Christ” (New York: Abingdon Press, vol. 1, 1952; p. 230; emphases added).

Can you understand, now, how much difference can be made by not understanding a word’s *meaning* within the *context* in which it is used?

Nevertheless, men have used the *Greek* term to insist that the Bible teaches that the *real man* is an immortal soul housed in a temporary human body. Others, in order to demonstrate man’s *innate divinity*, say that man was given an immortal soul as a “spark of divinity.” Both, according to Snaith, are wrong.

John Short, in his commentary in *The Interpreter’s Bible* on 1 Corinthians 15:51-58, writes this:

The Christian doctrine [regarding man’s life and death] is not one of *immortality* but of *resurrection*. We shall do well to get this point clear. As expounded by the apostle Paul... man’s hope of survival [beyond his death] depends not on the *inherent immortality* of his soul, but on the act of God. His immortality is involved in his resurrection [from the dead], not his resurrection in his immortality. *There is nothing in Paul’s writing nor in the N.T. to suggest that the soul is inherently immortal*. (Ibid.; vol. 10; p. 253; emphases added)

Remember that the New Testament was translated from the *Greek*, and Short was discussing this scripture from the proper biblical *context* of the Hebrew meaning.

From this discussion, you should be able to understand more correctly the *contextual meaning* of Genesis 2:15-17; 3:19-24; Job 14:1-15; Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; 9:4-10; and Ezekiel 18:4, 20. (We know that there are other questions that you might ask about this, so we ask that you download the Bible Study Course Lesson Three and the book *There’s More to Salvation Than Meets the Eye*. If you have questions beyond that, please contact us.) As stated above, establishing *definitions* is important for establishing the *meaning* that is intended.

Rudimentary Givens

A *rudimentary given* is a first principle of a subject to be learned that must be accepted as *fact*. Without that *rudimentary given*, the subject to be discussed exists merely as an opinion without factual basis. For example, we must learn the alphabet and the sounds represented by the letters to prepare ourselves for learning to read and write. We must learn about numbers and their positive and negative values before we can venture into arithmetic – and, subsequently into mathematics. Galatians 3:23-25 and Hebrews 5:11-6:3 are examples of the importance of *rudimentary givens*.



If we are to begin our conversation about *worshipping* God in *spirit* and in *truth*, then there must be a *factual* basis upon which we can build the argument about what constitutes *true worship*. Otherwise, we are left with as many opinions as there are people. We believe that God’s revelation in the Bible (2 Timothy

3:16, 17) serves as the source for such *givens*.

Deuteronomy 4 sets out some of these *givens*: (a) God has revealed *laws* by which His people are to live – laws that enable those who claim to be His people to maintain a *righteous* relationship with God, as well as *righteous* relationships among themselves (v. 1; *righteous*, in this case, meaning “acting in a just, upright, virtuous, and moral manner that is free from blame and guilt”; see Ephesians 1:4); (b) the 10 Commandments of Exodus 20 are the specific *laws* that spell out what constitutes a *righteous* relationship between God and man and man and man (v. 13; also see Matthew 22:36-40 and Exodus 34:28; read all of Psalm 119); (c) we are not allowed to add to or take from God’s revealed law (v. 2; see also Proverbs 30:5, 6); and (d) God does not forget this *covenant* with His people (Deuteronomy 4:31-40).

Deuteronomy 5:29-33 is another place where a *rudimentary given* can be found: There must be the kind of *heart* in man that will show appropriate awe and reverence for God and always keep His commandments – the bases for the “covenant” relationship (see Matthew 5:17-19; John 14:15; 15:9-14; Romans 13:8-10; and 1 John 2:3-5; 3:4). The fault of the first covenant was not the covenant itself, but the *people* – who, evidently, did not have the *heart* in them to obey God’s commandments (Hebrews 8:6-13).

The *new* covenant (Greek = *kainos*: “new in quality” as opposed to *neos*: “new in point of time”) will put the laws of God into the *mind* and write them in the *heart* (see also Jeremiah 31:31-34). By the gift of the Holy Spirit, man will become *holy* and *righteous* like God is *holy* and *righteous* (see Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; Leviticus 19:2; Matthew 5:48; and Ephesians 1:4).

Jeremiah 17:9, 10 describes the human *heart* as being “deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” For that reason, God will “search” the [human] *heart* with His

own Holy Spirit to find out if it does, in fact, show the appropriate awe and reverence for Him to allow His laws to be put into man’s mind and innermost being (see also 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 and Philippians 2:5). This is the idea presented by Paul in Romans 8:9-16 – the *witnessing* of the Holy Spirit will reveal as much to God about *you* as it reveals to you about *God*. How so? As God reveals more and more of His truth to you, it will put you to the test. He will discover if there is a *heart* in you to obey the truth He reveals.

These *rudimentary givens* will suffice for making the point to which I am leading. I could pursue many more such *givens*, but it might brink on being redundant. These will suffice for helping you to understand what *worshipping God* entails. It is a *given* that definitions give us a basis for common understanding.

What Does *Worship* Mean?



The typical dictionary definition of *worship* involves: (a) showing religious reverence, (b) having intense love or admiration, and (c) feeling and offering great devotion or respect. Notice that the dictionary definition does not define the various *methods* by which those things can be delivered. It would stand to reason, then, that God would have to reveal to us how we should carry out the *worship* He desires for us to express toward Him. In this case, we have to look at each time the term *worship* is used in scripture and determine from which term in Hebrew and Greek that word is translated.

The most frequently used term in the Old Testament *Hebrew* is *shachah*. It is used about 55 times in its translated form of *worship*. It is used about 39 times in its translated form *worshipped*. It is used three times as *worshippeth* (worships) and three times as *worshipping*. The overarching definition is rather simple: “to bow down, prostrate oneself before a monarch or superior, in homage, etc.” (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*; #7812; p. 1005b). *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* adds: “...crouch, fall down (flat), humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance, do reverence, make to stoop, worship” (#7812; p. 114 of the “Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary”).

Rather than cite where *shachah* is used, it would be easier to cite where other words are translated as *worship*, but with different meanings. The Chaldean term *cegid* (*seg-eed*) is used exclusively in Daniel 2:46 and Daniel 3. It means “to do homage by prostration.” In other words, you show your reverence and respect for deity, man, or beast by stretching out and lying face-down as though you are a *conquered* being. The idea is that you will have *surrendered* yourself to someone/something that is superior.

In 2 Kings, the term *abad* is used to show the *enslavement* of Baal worshippers. It is descriptive of those who are made slaves/vassals in exchange for the protection and/or shelter derived from strange gods.

In Jeremiah 44:19, the term *worship* (Hebrew = *atsab*) is used relative to the *Queen of Heaven*. This is the only place in the Old Testament where that term is used to mean *worship*. In all other contexts, it means “to (cause) pain; to vex.” In Jeremiah 44:19, it has to do with *fashioning cake images* of the *Queen of Heaven* as an act of *worship*. It was gross idolatry – very similar in nature to making hot cross buns (a raisin bun marked with a cross made of sugar frosting that is traditionally served in some “Christian” circles on good Friday).

Alexander Hislop, in his work *The Two Babylons*, discusses the pagan roots of *Easter* (one of the several ancient pagan names of the Queen of Heaven) – which was adopted into “Christianity” and made to apply in some odd way to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Note this comment by Hislop:

The popular observances that still attend the period of [Easter’s] celebration amply confirm the testimony of history as to its Babylonian character. The hot cross buns of Good Friday, and the dyed eggs of Pasch or Easter Sunday, figured in the Chaldean rites just as they do now. The “buns”... were used in the worship of the queen of heaven...1500 years before the Christian era. (p. 108)

So, this Hebrew term *atsab*, when applied to *worship*, has to do with the action of fabricating, carving, and/or fashioning *idols* of various sorts. It is the devotion to the “god” behind the *worship* that drives the action.



The Easter egg has, historically, symbolized the “tomb” out of which Jesus Christ was resurrected. Hislop shows that the Roman Catholic Church adopted the “mystic egg” from paganism and consecrated it to represent just such a thing. Pope Paul V appointed a form prayer to be used with the “mystic egg” as part of the Easter celebration – presumably in the *worship* service. Note how this prayer ties Jesus Christ to the *egg* – then read 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

where Paul addresses the reason for observing *Passover* with the symbols Jesus Christ instituted (compare to Matthew 26:26-29):

Bless, O Lord, we beseech thee, this thy creature of *eggs*, that it may become a wholesome sustenance unto thy servants, eating it in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ.... (p. 110)



All the rest of the Old Testament uses the Hebrew term *shachah* to express the meaning of the word *worship*. We will focus our attention only on the meaning of the term *shachah*.

Now, how does the meaning of *shachah* compare to the *Greek* term translated as *worship* in the New Testament? The *Greek* term *proskuneo* is the most-used in the New Testament (*Strong’s* #4352). It is used about 34 times in the present tense, 24 times in the past tense, and one time as *worshipping*. It is used in all of *Matthew*; *Luke* 4:7, 8; all of *John*; *Acts* 7:43; 8:27; *Hebrews* 1:6; and all of *Revelation*. Its noun form (*proskunetes*) is used in *John* 4:23. There is very little difference between the *Greek* term *proskuneo* and the *Hebrew* term *shachah*.

In the New Testament, there are five other *Greek* words translated into English as *worship* (*KJV*). We do not need to explore them because the term we are discussing is found in *John* 4:23, 24: *proskuneo* (and *proskunetes*). Thus, we have the basis for further discussion of what God expects of us when we *worship* Him.

Other articles in this issue discuss the *spirit* and *truth* aspects of that worship.

Is There a *Worship* Ritual?

It is quite interesting that God does *not* prescribe a specific *ritual* for worshipping Him. If He has done so, you would think that you would find it somewhere in scripture. It is true, however, that the Lord God gave specific instruction in the Old Testament about how to conduct religious services for His holy days (see *Leviticus* 16 and 23) in a way that acted out the rituals involved. It is true that certain *rituals* were involved with carrying out the various sacrifices He required of ancient Israel. *Ritual* is merely a set form or system by which a ceremonial act is performed.

But, there was *spiritual meaning* that was supposed to have been derived from such enactments. Each sacrifice was a *type* or *foreshadow* of some “good thing to come” (compare *Colossians* 2:16, 17 and *Hebrews* 9:1-10:1 to 1 *Corinthians* 10:1-11). It is important to understand that these holy day and sacrificial *rituals* were not the totality of what is intended by the term *worship*. A weekly meeting with people of like faith in a building called a *church* – with whatever *ritual* is involved (processionals, holy smoke, recitation of creeds, obligatory form prayers, song services, offerings, homilies, more songs and prayers, and recessionals – endless repetitions of ritualistic mannerisms, genuflections, and prostrations) – is not all that is involved with or required by the term *worship*. In fact, God has not *required* any of those *outward mannerisms* of those who are supposed to *worship* Him in spirit and in truth. Those mentioned above, in fact, amount to the traditions of men (see *Matthew* 15:1-9).

In *Hebrews* 10:5, 6, Paul cites *Psalm* 40:6-8 to demonstrate that the sacrifices of the Old Testament were not what God *really* wanted. Notice what *Psalm* 40:6-8 says:

You did not desire sacrifice and offering; you opened my ears [so I could understand this]: you have not required burnt offering and sin offering. Then I said: “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, ‘I delight to do your will, O my God: indeed, your law is within my heart.’”

David was speaking prophetically. The *dead animal sacrifices* were not what He *really* required for the forgiveness and erasure of sins. This is very instructive relative to worshipping God...even though Paul seems to have used a text different from the one above.



(The sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22:1-18 foreshadowed the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.)

In Hebrews 10:5, he renders it “...but you have prepared a *body* for me...” (literally: “...you *fitted* me with a body...”; emphasis added). *The Anchor Bible* says that some versions of the Greek translation of the Old Testament use *oita* (“ear”) like it is written in the Jewish *Massoretic Text*, while others use *soma* (“body”). *The Anchor Bible* suggests that the writer of Hebrews used *soma* because it suited his purpose – if he knew of the variant Greek text (vol. 36; p. 164). Paul was emphasizing the importance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ – a sacrifice that was once-and-for-all (read Hebrews 9:24-28; 10:8-14).

It is important to note that the Psalmist claims that God is not *ultimately* interested in the trappings of offering various types of *carnal* sacrifices. Why? It is evident that they have only a *superficial, temporary* effect (see Hebrews 10:1-4). *God is not interested in or impressed by the superficial and temporary.*

If *sacrifice* and *offering* are to be pleasing in God’s sight, then they must be of some *eternal* value. David obviously had a keener *spiritual* insight than many of his contemporaries. Why? It was because God had *made* his ears receptive – by divine inspiration (refer to Isaiah 6:9-12 and Matthew 13:9-17) – to His thoughts and ways (see 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Read Psalm 51:15-19. What kind of *sacrifices* does God desire? There are two that are most pleasing to Him: a *broken spirit* and a *contrite heart*. Read the entire Psalm after reading 2 Samuel 11-12 – paying special attention to Psalm 51:10. No mere *animal* sacrifice could have achieved the same results as a *broken spirit* and a *contrite heart*.

This is in keeping with Paul’s statement in Romans 12:1 about presenting to God “...your bodies as a *living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*, which is your *reasonable service*” (emphasis added). Transferring your sins to an animal that serves merely as a *type* of some “good thing to come” falls far short of *personally* becoming the *living* sacrifice. Why? God’s original intention – aeons before man was ever created – was that mankind would be “...*holy and without blame* before Him in *love*” (Ephesians 1:3, 4; emphasis added). So, God does require *sacrifices*, but only those sacrifices that achieve the *spiritual goals* He originally willed for mankind.

This concept is akin to the ritual of circumcision that the Lord God imposed upon Abraham and his male descendants as a sign of His covenant with Abraham (see Genesis 17:9-14). If there was no *right spirit* within the heart and mind of the circumcised de-

scendant to maintain “covenant” with the Lord God, then the circumcision really will have served no useful purpose.

Esau, for example, sold his birthright (to be the covenant recipient) to Jacob for a bowl of thick stew (Genesis 25:29-34 and Hebrews 12:16). His circumcision was no more than a physical surgery that served no purpose in reminding him of the great blessings enjoined by the Lord God’s covenant with Abraham. He felt no serious, personal attachment to it at that point in his life.

Paul discusses this in Romans 2:25-29 relative to the *circumcision of the heart*. The only way that the *fleshly circumcision* serves any useful purpose is if the one circumcised keeps “...the righteousness of the Law...” (v. 26; see also Romans 8:1-14; Colossians 2:11). What do you suppose Stephen meant when he accused the high priest and the high council of being “...stiffnecked and *uncircumcised in heart and ears... always resist[ing] the Holy Spirit...*” (Acts 7:51; emphases added)?

So, there is such a thing as *circumcision of the heart and ears*? Read Acts 28:17-31. It should be evident that God *closes* the minds, hearts, eyes, and ears of those who refuse to listen to His truth. In effect, He treats them as though there is no “covenant” with them because they have refused to be *spiritually circumcised* – the real nature of the “covenant” He desires between Himself and His people. The *physical foreskin* serves as a *type* of that which prevents the proper *spiritual* understanding of God’s thoughts and ways.

It should also be evident, therefore, that *worship* involves much more of a person’s life than mere *ritual*. It involves a *way of life*. It involves an *intimately personal relationship* between the individual and God. It is the kind of experience in which the Spirit of God and the human spirit communicate with one another. It is, in its basic nature, a personal, *spiritual* experience.



The Worship Relationship

Paul touches upon this relationship in Romans 8:16 when he speaks of God's Spirit *bearing witness* with our spirit. This statement should not be taken out of the context in which it is written. The context has to do with the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit and how it enables the believer to come out of carnal mindedness – a frame of mind that "...is not submissive to God's Law, in fact it cannot be" (v. 6-8; *Modern Language*).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit make it possible for the believer to have fulfilled in his heart and mind the *righteous intent* of God's Law (v. 1-5). Unless that Spirit indwells the believer, there is no relationship between him and God (v. 9). Once indwelt by that Spirit, the believer has to go about ridding himself of his old carnal thoughts and ways (vv. 10-13; see also Matthew 5:48; Romans 6; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; and Galatians 5:22-26). In vv. 14, 15, Paul calls that experience *receiving the Spirit of adoption* – which he reveals in v. 23 as being the "...redemption of our bodies."

In the early 1980s, I delivered a sermon on a particular subject that included various Pauline references to *adoption* – the main text being Ephesians 1:1-14 (note especially v. 5). It was recommended that I deliver the tape to a department of the Church organization with which I was associ-

ated so that it could be sent out in the worldwide tape program they sponsored.

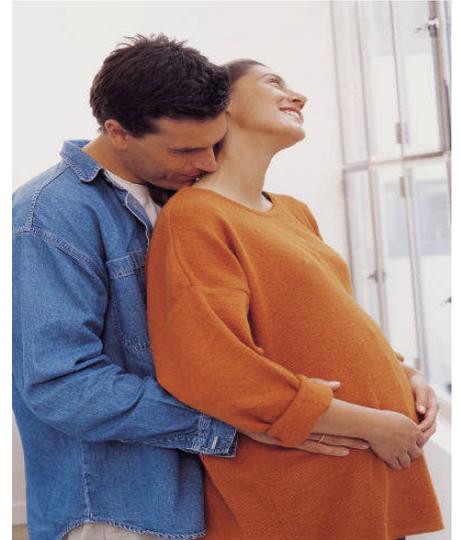
I worked at the world headquarters of that Church in Pasadena, California, so it was not a long walk to that office. A few days later, I received a call from that office telling me to come by and pick up the tape. When I did so, the man in charge told me that it could not be sent out because I spoke of believers being *adopted* – which, he said, *contradicted* the Church leader's teaching that believers are *spiritually begotten*, not *adopted*. I wondered why God had inspired Paul to spend the effort to use words to describe the relationship as an *adoption*.

Let me explain this to you so you can clearly understand Paul's idea. Being *begotten* by God is *not* a *begettal* in the same manner that a man impregnates a woman with his sperm. God does not "become a father" by having spiritual sexual intercourse with a "Mother God." If it were that way, we would have been the *natural* children of God. The Church leader, in his explanation, used *human reproduction* as a *type* of how God *begets* children. I understand the meaning of the term *type*. Note these comments in his book *The Incredible Human Potential*:

Now to become human, each of us had to be *begotten* by his human father. Likewise, to be born *again* – of THE SPIRIT which is of God the Father, one must first be *begotten* of the SPIRITUAL FATHER – of GOD. (New York: Everest House; 1978; pp. 78, 79)

This explanation makes it seem as though the human is *impregnated* with Holy Spirit. He goes on to say: "When newly converted, one is now a spiritual "EMBRYO." It makes it seem as though "Holy Spirit" is some kind of divine *sperm* and the human "spirit" is some kind of recipient fertile "egg"!

The newly converted person is *imbued* with Holy Spirit, not *impregnated* with it. Each newly converted person receives his own personal allotment of that Spirit (see Acts 2:38). While the Church and "Jerusalem above" are called our "Mother," God does not *impregnate them* so that we are delivered in birth through such like impregnation. That is not how Paul explains it.



In Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5; and Ephesians 1:5, Paul is explaining the believer's *adoption* into the *God family*. The Greek term is *huiiothesia*, which means "the *placing* as a son." It does not mean or imply any type of *impregnation* of the believer or otherwise. In order to explain that action properly, Paul used the Roman adoption custom as a *metaphor* – a simple comparison.

In the Roman world, adoption was taken very seriously and made more difficult because of something called the *patria potestas* – the father's absolute power of disposal and control over the family (even the power of life and death). As long as the father was alive, the Roman son was under the *patria potestas* as his *absolute possession* and under his *absolute control*. So, in the adoption process, the adoptee had to pass from one *patria potestas* to another.

There were two steps to the adoption. The first step was the *mancipa-*

to. Loosely translated, it means “to be set free.” Using copper weights and scales, the son was “sold” by his natural father two times – and bought back two times. The third time, he was not bought back – a move by which the original *patria potestas* was broken. After the sale came the ceremony called *vindicato*. Loosely translated, it means “to clear from criticism and/or blame; to justify.” In this, the adopting father went to a Roman magistrate called a *praetor* and gave legal arguments for the person to be adopted into his *patria potestas*. Granted that appeal, the adoption was complete.

The *consequences* – the essence of the *vindicato* part of the adoption – are what is so significant to the point Paul was making by using this metaphor. First, the adopted son *lost* all rights and privileges in his old family, but he *gained* all of the rights and privileges of his new family as though he were a *natural-born* son. The point is simple: He was *not* natural-born, but was *treated as though he was*. Second, it became his right to be an *heir* in his new father’s estate – even if there were other natural-born sons. His inheritance rights were *inalienable*. Third, by Roman law, all of the son’s past life was completely wiped out – including any and all legal debts he might have incurred. It was as if he was a completely new person and had never been part of the old life – as if he had been *born a second time*. Finally, in the eyes of the *law*, the adopted person was *literally* and *absolutely* the son of his new father. There were seven witnesses to the adoption process who could be witnesses if there ever arose any inheritance disputes after the father’s death. In effect, the adopted son entered a new *relationship* with his adoptive father. In the eyes of the law, the relationship was treated as if the adoptive father had actually *engendered* the adopted son. *That is the sense of true adoption.*

Let’s continue Paul’s thought about adoption in Romans 8:15-17.

He says in v. 14 that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the “...Spirit of *adoption*...” (emphasis added) that enables us to address God as “Father.” He says in v. 15 that the Holy Spirit – not seven human witnesses – is *our* witness that we are, indeed, God’s children (read again v. 9). In v. 17, he says that if we are God’s children, then we have the same *rights of inheritance* that *Jesus Christ* has! What does he *mean*?

Galatians 3:26-29 makes three things very clear in that regard: (a) we become the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ (also read Ephesians 1:3-14); (b) our baptism is the ritual by which we *die* to our old life and are *symbolically resurrected* to live a new life (read Romans 6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17); and (c) through Jesus Christ, we become Abraham’s seed and are reckoned *with Jesus Christ* to be *heirs* of what God promised Abraham (see Genesis 15 and Romans 4:13).



Paul covers God’s promises to Abraham in Hebrews 6:13-20 and 11:8-16. If you read these passages very carefully, then you should see that *going to heaven* when you die was not a *promise* that God made to Abraham. How can you, therefore, go before God and thank Him for the hope of going to *heaven* when you die and express your great desire to be given that kind of *inheritance*? How can you *worship* Him with the hope of *going to heaven* as a central article of your *faith*? Think about this very carefully.

Paul says in Hebrews 6:16-19 that God confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath (read Genesis

15:7-21) in order to confirm the *unchangeable nature* of His promise that Abraham will *inherit the earth!* That’s why it is called the *Promised Land*. Paul makes it clear that God *cannot* change His mind at a later date and do something *totally contrary* to what He promised. He says that God’s *promise* and *oath* make it *impossible* for God to lie. He says that this is a strong consolation for true believers – a *hope* set before us and an *anchor* for our lives in Jesus Christ. If God’s Spirit *witnesses* with our spirit, then surely it also confirms for us what our true inheritance is.

Paul also addresses this issue in Colossians 1. In vv. 9-19, he expresses his desire that we “...might be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding...increasing in the knowledge of God...Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us capable of being *partakers of the inheritance of the saints*...” (emphases added). By the adoption process, *we have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness* and *moved into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ*. Notice in v. 16 what Jesus Christ has inherited by virtue of being the *firstborn* of all creation. That is far more than the mere earth; it is *all things in heaven and on earth*. When our adoption is completed, we, too, will inherit *all things* with Jesus Christ. Why would you want to go to *heaven* instead of inheriting all things with Jesus Christ?

Paul says in Romans 8:23 that the *adoption* is the *redemption of our fleshly bodies*. In Ephesians 1:13, 14, Paul explains that God’s called out followers have been given an initial portion of His Holy Spirit as a *guarantee* that we will experience that *redemption*. What does that mean?

He uses the Greek term *apolutrosis* to explain the process. It means that we will be *eternally freed from sin* and *finiteness* (that is, from death), which Luke 21:28 uses to mean “to be free from all *earthly limitations* of the human body” (see also Romans 6:23, and 1 Corinthians

15:46-58). In other words, you *must* be “born *again*”!

Do you have to be *begotten* by the Spirit? It would be foolish to deny the meaning of John 3:3-8: Only those who are *begotten* by God’s Holy Spirit will qualify to be *re-born* into this *spirit* composition. What does the term *begotten* mean in this context? Let’s consider the use of the word *born* (*KJV*) in vv. 3-7.

Spiritual Begettal

The Greek term used here (*gennaō*) literally means “to become the father of” when it describes the “father’s” part of the process. When it describes the “mother’s” process, it means “to bear; to deliver in birth.” So, in John 3:3, Jesus says that a person has to be “delivered in birth” a *second* time in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus understood the meaning of Jesus’ statement because he asks Him whether or not a man could “...enter his mother’s womb a *second time*...” in order to be delivered in birth a second time (v. 4). Jesus then gives him the intended meaning of His statement.

In v. 5, He explains the process of being *begotten* in order to be “delivered in birth” a second time. He has to be *begotten* through *baptism* *and* the gift of the Holy Spirit – not just by the Holy Spirit. *Figuratively* speaking, this can mean “the *influence* exerted by one person on another” (see 1 Corinthians 4:15 and Philemon 10). Here, *gennaō* is indicative of God’s *spiritual influence* on the individual (see John 6:44, 65). Remember this: man is a *created being*, not a *natural-born child*. Not all created beings will ultimately enter the Family of God (see Ezekiel 18:4, 20 and Revelation 20:15). Read John 8:31-47 to see that Satan also has children through *spiritual influence*.

In vv. 6, 7, He summarizes His point: “That which is *delivered in birth* by the flesh is flesh (and, therefore, cannot enter into the Kingdom of God); that which is *delivered in*

birth by the Spirit is spirit (and, therefore, can enter the Kingdom of God). You must be “*delivered in birth* a second time” through baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 that being changed from flesh to spirit is the culmination of the *adoption process* by which you are “delivered” into that “second birth” (see Romans 8:1). God understood before He even created mankind that placement into the “God” Family would require this. How could we be counted as full members of His Family if we could not live forever (Romans 6:23; Colossians 1:12, 13)?

The gift of His Holy Spirit is His *guarantee* that He is serious about His proposal to *influence* us with His Holy Spirit to be holy as He is holy (see Ephesians 1:13, 14). When we are ultimately “delivered in birth a second time” through the redemption of our bodies, our past life will absolutely be remembered no more (see Psalm 103:8-18 and Isaiah 65:17). It is through this process that God becomes our “Father.”

In Ephesians 2:1-9, Paul explains a piece of spiritual understanding that is not fully understood or appreciated – in the sense of full or sensitive awareness. When God changes His adopted children from flesh to spirit, that is far more amazing than merely making them *immortal*. In fact, it is by God’s *grace*, not by man’s *works*, that such a change in composition is *given* to man. In order for the *human* to be capable of receiving an *eternal inheritance*, he must be capable of living for eternity! We have no such capability! So, this gracious God, whom we must worship in spirit and in truth, *gives* us that ability. We cannot earn it, buy it, or pay it back. It is a *gift* of *self-sustaining life*, not mere immortality (see John 5:26). Once given, no other being can take away that life because it is not dependent upon any other source for its continued existence.

This is where we must understand the significance of the *worship rela-*

tionship. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 that the Christian convert is not his own person and has been *bought with a price*. His task, from the moment that he has been “bought” out of his absolute possession by sin, is to learn the thoughts and ways of his new Father. Paul says here that we are to “...glorify God in your *body*, and in your *spirit*, which now belong to God” (emphasis added). Read Paul’s discussion of this in Galatians 3:26-4:7.

This is the idea behind Jesus’ quotation of Deuteronomy 6:5: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your *soul* [Hebrew = *nepheš*: “emotions and passions”], and with all your might [“great force or power”]” (see also Matthew 22:36-40). It is not a *casual* relationship. It is a relationship in which the Spirit of God increasingly *influences* the thoughts and ways of the true Christian (compare Isaiah 55:8, 9 with John 14:6,7, 15-17, 26; 15:8-17; 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Philippians 2:5-8; and 2 Peter 3:18). It is a true *spiritual* relationship that goes far beyond any kind of outward ceremony or ritual. It is a *family relationship*.

Conclusion

Go back to the discussion above about the Hebrew term *shachah* and make the *spiritual* connection to a *worship relationship*. How do you, in your heart, mind, emotions, passions, and great force, bow down, prostrate yourself, pay homage to, crouch before, fall down (flat) before, humbly beseech, do (make) obeisance to, show reverence for, stoop before, and/or worship this great superior Being who calls Himself our *Father*? We have seen that *form* and *outward appearance* serve no purpose at all if there is no *spiritual connection* made with God (1 Samuel 16:7; 2 Corinthians 5:12). How do you do this with *all* of your heart, mind, and power?

Such a relationship is impossible to achieve through mere ritual that is

offered in “church” services. It must be accomplished in what is typically called one’s *daily walk with God*. *Walk* is not a casual stroll through a garden or the like. It is the entire sphere of your daily activity and the entire occupation of your time and effort. If your *life* is to be a living sacrifice, then your *life* has to be an act of *worship in spirit and in truth*.



This, I think, is the heart and core of Jesus’ point in John 4:23, 24. God expects those who *worship* Him to do so in the posture of a *total surrender* of your heart, mind, and power to

Him. And you must accept the *training* and *discipline* He offers to make it possible for you to be a *partaker of His divine nature* both now and in the eternity ahead (read Hebrews 12). Micah 6:6-8 adds more useful information for us about God’s *requirements*: “...do justly...love mercy...walk humbly with your God.”



Questions & Answers

Question: In John 4:9, a Samaritan woman told Jesus Christ that “...the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” *Smith’s Bible Dictionary* says that it was because they did not come to Jerusalem to worship (p. 415). Was it that simple, or was there more to it than that? Did they worship God like the Jews? If not, what was the difference?

Answer: It was not that simple. Peter told Cornelius in Acts 10:28 that “...It is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of *another nation*...” (emphasis added). So, the *Samaritans* were not being singled out for special treatment. This “law” was a *Jewish* law, not the Law of *God*. The point of Peter’s vision was not to do away with the clean/unclean meat laws in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. It was *God’s* intervention on behalf of *Gentiles* to tell the new Christian leadership that the *Jewish* law was *not* His will – He wills that *Gentiles* should also receive the gracious gift of salvation through Jesus Christ (see Acts 10:28b). This was a religious concept not readily accepted by most Jews of the time. The *Samaritans* were *Gentiles*, not *Israelites*. And, Jesus made it plain well before this event that all nations were to be included (see Matthew 28:19, 20 and Deuteronomy 4:5-9).

The crux of the *Samaritan* problem was that they were not *Israelites* as the woman claimed (John 4:12, 20). They had been placed into *Samaria* when the *Assyrians* moved the *House of Israel* out of the territory between 721-718 B.C. (read 2 Kings

17). You can read 1 Kings 12 to understand how *all Israel* became divided into the House of *Israel* and the House of *Judah* (see also Ezekiel 37). After the “*Samaritans*” had been relocated to the territory previously occupied by the House of *Israel* (see 2 Kings 17:24), the Lord God sent wild animals among them because of their pagan religions: *They had no regard for the Lord God*.

The *Assyrian King’s* solution to the problem was to learn about *Israel’s* religion. It was a matter of *superstition*, not of seeking *God’s* truth. He ordered that a *Levite* priest be brought in to teach them about *Israel’s* God. In spite of that instruction, the “*Samaritans*” *mixed* their old religions with the new instruction. They were never made the Lord’s people *by covenant* (read 2 Kings 17:24-41; pay attention to vv. 34-41).

Yet, after centuries passed, their descendants assumed that *Jacob* (*Israel*) was their ancestor. He was not. They had no “*fathers*” in the *Israelite* lineage who had worshiped the Lord God in those mountains. What *mixed* regard they developed for the Lord God was, apparently, enough for Him to quit sending the lions in among them – but not enough for Him to

accept them as His covenant people. The reason should be obvious.

The object lesson of the parable of the “*Good Samaritan*” in Luke 10:25-37 was not to say that he was part of *God’s* covenant people; it was to demonstrate that even those who are *not* covenant people can be good, compassionate people. If that is true, then *how much more* should *God’s* covenant people be good and compassionate? Two of *God’s* covenant people of the *priestly family* had passed by the wounded man and expressed no concern or compassion for him. What kind of witness was that? Is it any wonder, then, that *God* desires that those who worship Him should do so in *spirit* and in *truth*? Is it any wonder, then, that a *spiritual veneer* is not enough for *God* (see Matthew 7:21-23)?

To this present day, the descendants of those “*Samaritans*” use the things their ancestors were taught about the Lord God to continue their religious worship. They construct a holy day calendar based on Leviticus 23 – even observing *Passover* and *Unleavened Bread* as two distinct feasts (8 days; Leviticus 23:5, 6; Numbers 28:16, 17). Yet, they still are not *God’s* covenant people – no

more than anyone who mixes and mingles paganism with God's truth would be considered His people (see Deuteronomy 12:29-32; Jeremiah 10:1-16; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

The religious differences between the Samaritans and the Jews were pointed out by the Samaritan woman, not Jesus Christ. It was she who picked a *religious* argument and exhibited something that is very common among religious people today: *ignorance of the content and history of the religion they espouse*. She apparently knew only what she had been raised to believe – no more. That is the crux of Jesus' answer in John 4:22-24.

Those who read the Bible should understand that the God of the Bible

is a very specific personage, not some ubiquitous "God" that is the product of man's imagination (see Romans 1:18-25). The God of the Bible has a specific plan for humankind and is not driven to accept a multiplicity of different, conflicting "paths" to the same goal. Do your homework! Just take a survey of the after-life rewards that the different religions of the world offer – even those offered among 32,000+ "Christian" denominations.

When *Smith's* says that the people transplanted into Israel by the Assyrians "...worshipped God, but not like the Jews" (ibid.), that is tantamount to saying that they worshipped the *same God*, just in different ways. That is not possible, according to the

God of the Bible. Read very carefully Exodus 20:1-7. What does the comment in v. 5 mean when it describes Him as a *jealous* God? This *Lord God* is the one who became *Jesus Christ* (see Acts 4:10-12 and Philippians 2:5-11). What do you think? Unless you are willing to set aside salvation being possible only through Jesus Christ, there is no biblical evidence that the God of the Bible accepts any type of "different paths to the same goal" theology. That concept is part of a watering down and *homogenization* of God's revelation and truth with all of the world's various religions. It is the product of "political correctness." It doesn't fit God's revelation.

Question: Does Jesus imply in John 4:23, 24 that "the worship of the heart" is the only kind of true worship that is accepted by God? Doesn't *sincerity* play a role in one's worship?

Answer: In order to understand the answer, you must consider a few salient points revealed in scripture. The **first** one is that scripture itself is God's inspired revelation of *His* thoughts and ways – including history and examples of how that has manifested itself in the ages past (see 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 and 2 Peter 1:19-21). The **second** one is that there is a vast difference between the way *God* thinks and acts and the way *humans* think and act (see Isaiah 55:8, 9). That gap has to be closed. The **third** one is found in Jeremiah 17:9, 10, which describes a *heart* that is in dire need of special repair (see Romans 12:1, 2). Taken together, worship from even the deepest recesses of the *human heart* (the innermost core of his being) is not sufficient to bridge that gap (read Matthew 7:21-23 and Isaiah 64:6). You can be *sincerely wrong*. Such wrong-headed sincerity is not uncommon.

Consider what Jesus says in John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no [lasting] benefit; the

words I speak to you are spirit and life." It is no wonder, then, that Jesus would quote Deuteronomy 8:3 when He was tempted by Satan to change stones into bread (Matthew 4:1-4). Read Genesis 3:19 and Ecclesiastes 3:18-22; 9:4-10; 12:7. What *eternal benefit* does the flesh serve? None. It is *temporary*. Read Job 14:1-15. If the individual is to ever live again after death, when will that take place?

Will life after death be an *immediate* event in which an *immortal soul* automatically goes either to heaven or hell? Or, will it be at a time of *God's* choosing? If God promises you *in His word* that He will raise you from the *dead* – and reveals to you that you will return to *dust* when you die – can you *sincerely believe* something other than that? Yet, many people who say that they accept the infallible authority of the Bible do exactly that – and they are utterly *sincere* about their belief. But...they are also utterly *wrong*.

Now read John 17:17. How would you relate that to John 6:63? If Jesus asks the Father to set aside

believers, for His holy purpose, *through His word* – and...His word is *truth* – how can you *sincerely* believe things that are *contrary* to His word? If His words are *Spirit*, then it is that word in scripture that is part of the Spirit that is the *witness* to you that leads you into all of God's truth.

No, not even the most heartfelt worship of the *human heart* qualifies as being the worship in *spirit* and *truth* that God demands (John 4:23, 24) if it *contradicts* God's revelation of His truth. Simply stated, God's claim is that no other revelation is acceptable and no variant interpretation of His revealed interpretation is acceptable if it does not conform to His revealed *truth*. For example: you can sincerely desire, pray for, and look forward to going to *heaven* when you die; however, that is *not* the eternal reward that God has promised (see Galatians 3:26-29 and Hebrews 6:12-20). If *your* desired eternal goal is misplaced, it will not be fulfilled. *Spirit* and truth count far more than one's *sincerity*.





"There is a *Spirit* in Man"

(Job 32:8)

Scripture reveals in numerous places that there is a *spirit* in man. This *spirit* is not a separate entity that exists within the body of the individual as though it has taken up residence in him – like an *immortal soul* or *demon spirit* is commonly thought to do. The Hebrew term *ruach* and the Greek term *pneuma*, when applied to the *spirit* in man, mean the same thing: (a) man's emotional, intellectual, and decision-making faculties and (b) man's source and seat of insight, feeling, and will – the representative part of the inner life of man. In such an application, therefore, the meaning of the term *spirit* relative to God would also involve that which makes up His...let's say...*mind power*.

One of the great revelations of scripture from Isaiah 55:8, 9 is that there is a vast difference between the *mind* and *actions* of man and the *mind* and *actions* of God. In God's plan to create man in the image of God was the requirement that the gap between the two minds has to be closed – but...not by God lowering His own thoughts and ways to those of mankind, or allowing mankind to switch roles by reducing God to nothing more than the image of man. Our task, then, is to discover what God reveals about how that gap is to be closed and why He placed this *spirit* in man.

Animal -vs- Human Brain

Both man and animals are called *nephesh* – that is, living, breathing beings. Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 says that man has no advantage over the

beast because: (a) they die the same kind of death, (b) they have the same breath, and (c) they both return to *dust* when they die. Yet, the animals were not given this same *spirit* that governs emotions, intellect, decision-

making faculties, insight, and will. What, then, is the difference between man and animal? What did God give to man that He did not give to the animal? In Job 32:8, Elihu says that there is a *spirit* in man. What is *that*?

The physical brain of all of the *nephesh* that were given a backbone – called *vertebrates* – is essentially the same as the human brain – as far as the physical form, design, and component parts are concerned. While there may be some differences in the size comparisons, there is nothing in the non-human brain that allows it to appreciate art, music, creative acts, or scintillating conversation. Animals do not reason through logic and imagination. They do not construct philosophies and develop their own individual reasoned points-of-view. The creative output of the human brain is indescribably greater than that of the animal.

Generally speaking, the animal is an *instinctual* creature – that is, it is governed by an infused set of characteristics peculiar to its kind that are unalterable from one generation to another. So, the beaver never will choose to be anything other than a beaver. It never will be convinced by its own desire or by an opossum, through well-reasoned argument, to change the shape of its tail and to hang by it from trees. A barn swallow will never be converted to woodpeckerism by an evangelical, proselytizing woodpecker. God created each non-human *nephesh* to reproduce after its own kind, complete with whatever instinctual characteristics were imprinted into its brain (see Genesis 1:21, 24, 25).



The human, on the other hand, has the power of *knowing* – that is, of gaining understanding based on experience and a wide range of informa-

tion that might or might not be related, yet contributing to an increasing amount of data that is *willfully* and *coincidentally* stored in its brain.

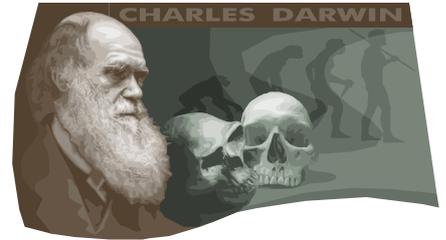
This is the essence of Ecclesiastes 1:8 when it says of the human that "...the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing." It is a revelation of the *expandable* nature of man's ability to *know* and to construct numerous "things" based on knowledge gained through sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. The beaver never will decide to watch the Do It Yourself Network on TV in order to learn how to construct a deck on its dam. The mockingbird never will decide to learn how to whistle out a concerto in D minor instead of the 20-25 different riffs it effortlessly whistles as it surveys its nesting area.



So, understand this about the *spirit* in man: ***It imparts the power of intellect to the physical, human brain.*** Animals do not have such a *spirit* in them. The *spirit* cannot see, hear, taste, smell, or feel. The *brain* does all of that. The *spirit* cannot, in and of itself, *think*. The brain does that.

Part of the problem with modern science and education is that they almost universally assume that nothing exists but *matter*. In that concept, they actually deny the existence of *spirit*. It is not a long step from that to denying, therefore, the existence of God. Even non-atheist scientists do not generally admit "God" into the creation element of existence – insisting instead on following the "theory"

of evolution. They insist that the faculty of intellect is strictly physical – even though animals do not have attitudes of judgment, wisdom, love, or kindness. They have no appreciation of music, art, and literature – no *spiritual* qualities or characteristics.



The Role of Human *Spirit*

Elihu, in Job 32:8, makes an interesting point amid the clamor surrounding Job's calamity: "But there is a *spirit* in man: and the *inspiration* of the Almighty gives them *understanding*" (KJV; emphasis added). Taking into consideration the context of his remarks, you should be able to see that Elihu points out here that he at one time thought that *wisdom* is gained primarily from one's experiences as he gets older. After this experience, he is convinced that *wisdom* is gained from an *interaction* between the mind and intellect of man and the mind and intellect of God – or, between the *spirit* in man and the *spirit* in God. Whatever the *spirit* in man does to set him apart from the rest of the *nephesh*, the *spirit* in God does to set Him apart from man (refer back to Isaiah 55:8, 9). It is important to understand this point.

Job 6:4, 7:11, and 15:13 use the term *spirit* in the sense of *man's* emotional, intellectual, and decision-making faculties – that is, in terms of the *human spirit*. Elihu said that *wisdom* comes from God through His power to move man's intellect or emotions (by *inspiration* – motivation by Spirit influence). James 1:5 says: "If any of you lack *wisdom*, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally without reproaching them; and it shall be giv-

en to him." James follows up in vv. 6-8 that such a request cannot be made by faithless, wavering, double-minded individuals. God will not honor it.

Adam Clarke says that the *spirit* in man referred to by Elihu is the source of man's existence as a physical being capable of feeling and voluntary motion. He adds that it is by God's *spiritual interaction* with this *spirit* that man becomes capable of understanding and reason, and, consequently, of being able to discern divine truth (see John 14:15-17; 16:13-15; Romans 8:14-16; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

Pay attention to Proverbs 1:20-33. Solomon personifies *Wisdom* and puts a message to the unwise on her lips. This message is for the benefit of the strictly human *spirit* that has not sought the benefit of interacting with the mind and intellect of God. Indeed, if understood correctly, her message stresses the absolute necessity of doing so if man desires to "...dwell safely and...be quiet from fear of evil" (v. 33). It would be evident, then, that *life*, *wisdom*, and *understanding* are the gifts of God through this interaction between His Spirit with man's. They are not the natural endowment of man just because he was given a brain that is different from the other *nephesh*.

What shall be said about the role of this *spirit* in man? Why did God put it there – as opposed to making man like all the other *nephesh* (note that *nephesh* literally means "life of animals" and refers only to *physical* life, not to *spirit*)? The spirit of God cannot be received by or injected into the brute animal because it has no *spirit* within itself with which the spirit of God will combine. *The spirit in man makes it possible for man to have an intellectual union with God.* Without that intellectual union, human life is merely animal existence with the human *spirit* empowering the human brain with human intellect. As such, the human death will

be in common with the animal death as discussed in Ecclesiastes 3:18-21.

The Revelation of Romans 8:16

It is interesting, in an odd sort of way, how scripture reveals God's truth to us. The fact that it was *inspired* by God – that God moved various authors' intellects and emotions to record the truthful witness of God's plan and how He intends to bring it to pass (see 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) – should heighten the attention to which we give to it. Romans 8:16 is just such a scripture. What does it reveal?



Paul has entered into a discussion about the difference between being led simply by the human *spirit* and having that human *spirit* *influenced* by the *Spirit* of God. In v. 4, he shows that such an interaction makes it possible for the human to fulfill the *righteousness* of the Law of God. In vv. 5-8, he shows that the human *spirit* alone is *selfish*, an enemy of God, and unable to be subject to God's Law. Because of that, such a man will die the same death that other *nephesh* will die – that is, with no prospect of life beyond the flesh. In this way, Paul shows that human life has real meaning only insofar as the human is willing to interact with God's *spirit* and accept it as the guiding force in his life.

As a matter of fact, if this interaction does not result in the *Spirit* of God being established as an essential, permanent part of one's own *spirit*,

then there is no proof of a *family relationship* (see vv. 9, 14 and relate it to Genesis 1:26, 27). Here is where we understand a previous comment about *life* being a gift of God through that interaction (see vv. 10, 11). Then comes v. 16: "The Spirit [of God] bears witness with [the human spirit] that we are the children of God." That interaction is God's *proof* that the individual has entered into a *spiritual* relationship that will lead to life beyond the physical, chemical existence he presently experiences (see Ephesians 1:13, 14).

The Revelation of 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

How does the human become privy to *God's* thoughts and ways? Paul demonstrates in 1 Corinthians 2:10 that it is possible only through *revelation* by God. That *revelation* comes through the interaction of God's *spirit* with the human *spirit*. It is not accomplished through *man's* wisdom (v. 13). This *revelation* gives to the *human spirit* spiritual discernment on a whole nother level (I know: that's bad English). The continual interaction of these two spirits will gradually produce in the human the mind of Jesus Christ (v. 16). That kind of mind comes from a constant flow of God's holy thoughts and ways into the human *spirit* – like a glass of muddy water steadily becomes clearer as more and more clear water is poured in to purge out the impurities.

This Spirit is called the *Spirit of truth* (John 14:17; 16:13-15). It will make known to the believer not only what Jesus Christ Himself knows, but things that God the Father knows and has revealed to Jesus. John 16:12 tells us that the disciples were not comprehending all that Jesus had to tell them, but the coming of the Holy Spirit would help to span the gap and improve their comprehension far beyond the merely human ability to know and understand.

Here's another interesting revelation: Ephesians 1:14. This spirit of God – this spirit that enables man to be *holy* like God is *holy* – is a *partial payment* that does an interesting thing. Paul speaks of it *guaranteeing* the ultimate *redemption* of the individual. The term *redemption* is translated from the Greek term *apolutrosis*, which means "to be freed from sin and finiteness – freed from earthly limitations." This partial gift of God's mind and intellect is God's *guarantee* that such will be the case.



Romans 8:19-23 tells us that those who are *imbued* (permeated) with that Holy Spirit will be the true children of God when their physical bodies are thus redeemed. This is the promise of 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, and 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:5. We must continuously feed upon God's thoughts and ways in order to reach that glorious goal (John 8:31, 32; Matthew 24:13).

Acquiring the Mind of Christ

What does Paul mean in 1 Corinthians 2:16 and Philippians 2:5 that we should have the *mind of Jesus Christ*? Some take Galatians 2:20 to mean that *Jesus Christ actually lives His life in you*. That would be *spirit possession* as in "gaining control over

one's thoughts and actions." Think of what it means to be *demon* possessed, and you have the idea of what it would mean for Jesus Christ to *actually* live *His* life in you. I am not suggesting that Christ would be a demon spirit. I am suggesting that *you* would get set aside – and Christ would come in as a *substitute*. That is not what Paul has in mind here.

Paul suggests in Philippians 2:12, 13 that *your personal effort* is required. So, what does he mean when he says that "...Christ *lives* in me..."? Let's consider some ideas presented in various scriptures that are not generally thought of as being related to this question.

Galatians 4:19 speaks of "Christ" being "...*formed* in you." William Barclay translates that expression to say: "...until *you* have taken the form of Christ" (*Daily Study Bible: Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*; (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1965; p. 41; emphases added). While he uses a metaphor that is connected to childbirth, Paul is not suggesting that *he* has actually *impregnated* anything or anyone to achieve that result. He is speaking of a *spiritual influence* that he has had over them to enable them to enter the Kingdom of God.

The process is revealed in scripture if one is willing to use the method revealed in Isaiah 28:9, 10: precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little there a little. For example: Hebrews 12 is a frank discussion about how God *trains* and *disciplines* His children in order for them to be partakers of His holiness (v. 10; see also 2 Peter 1:3-11). The term *partake* means that you *participate in something*. Peter says that God – through His divine power – provides us the *knowledge* "...that pertains to life and godliness..." (v. 3). In vv. 5-8, he stresses personal attributes that we should work at developing in our minds and hearts. This is indicative of *your* participation.

Several times in scripture it is made obvious that *obedience to*

God's Law is equated with *loving God*. In John 14:15, it is tied to the receipt of the Holy Spirit. In v. 26, Jesus explains that the Holy Spirit will do two things: (a) *teach* and (b) *remind*. So, the believer is going to be *learning* the thoughts and ways of God. As s/he pursues his/her *daily walk* with Him in the activities in which s/he is involved, s/he will be *reminded* of the spiritual lessons s/he has learned by being obedient to God's commandments (read also John 15:1-17; 16:13-15; 1 John 2:3-5; 3:4; 1:5-10). *Commandments*, in this context, refers to the 10 Commandments, which are the bases for His covenant (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13; 10:4).

Before you make the jump to the popular mainstream Christian concept that the Law has been done away with, read Matthew 5:17-19; 22:35-40; Romans 3:31; 5:13; 7:7-25; 8:1-8; 13:8-10 and Galatians 5:14, 22-26. What is the point being made in all of these New Testament scriptures? It is simple: Jesus Christ did not come to abolish God's Law because all of God's Law and prophecies depend upon and are supported by the two main legal principles embedded in them: (a) Love God supremely (Commandments 1-4) and (b) love your fellowman as much as you love yourself (Commandments 6-10). They are also called the "10 Words."



Faith in God's Christ does not render that Law null and void; rather, it *permanently fixes* it as a necessary part of our faith. If there is no Law, there is no sin. The gift of God's

Holy Spirit makes it possible for the *righteousness* of the Law to be fulfilled in us (see also Psalm 19:7-14 and 119:97-106, 172). The Law, in and of itself, is *holy, just, and good* – and is the means by which we know what sin is. The ordinary human spirit is not subject to the Law of God and must be given the aid of God’s Holy Spirit in order for the human to be rid of his resistance to God’s thoughts and ways. Now, catch your breath and get ready for the next round.

Galatians 3:17-25 is a stretch of Pauline theology that is grossly misunderstood by much of mainstream Christianity because they think that Paul’s aim was to declare that God’s Law had been declared *null* and *void*. If you read it with the above understanding, you should be able to see this from a different perspective. It is true that Paul differentiates between a covenant with Abraham (that was based on *promises*) and the “marriage” covenant (with the *10 Commandments* as its legal foundation) that was concluded with Israel 430 years later. The Israelites inherited the covenant based on *promises* from Abraham (see Romans 9:1-16; 3:1, 2). That covenant was not abolished.

Why did the Lord God add the 10 Commandments to this covenant of *promises*? Sins – the transgression of God’s Law (see Genesis 26:5 and 1 John 3:4). In other words, the Lord God *codified* – that is, arranged *systematically* – His Law for Israel. From Adam until His “marriage” covenant with Israel, the Law was in force, but it had not been *codified*. That is the sense of Romans 5:12, 13. He never intended that such *codification* should make His *promises* *null* and *void* (see Hebrews 6:13-20).

Galatians 3:21 says that the Law does not give *life*. What does Paul mean by that? It is the same word he uses in Romans 8:11 when he speaks of our human bodies being *quickened* by God’s Spirit. In that context, Paul is speaking of being *resurrected from*

the dead. This is the idea presented by Jesus Christ in John 5:24-29 (read Romans 7:24 with that in mind; read 1 Corinthians 15:35-56 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The Greek term *zoopoieo* (“quicken”) has three meanings: (1) give life to; (2) make alive (resurrect); and (3) preserve or keep alive. Paul’s point in Galatians 3:21 is that the Law of God was not designed to do any one or all of those things. It is patently obvious that it has no power to resurrect from the dead or to instantaneously change anyone from flesh to spirit. It can, however, change the *quality* of your life if you live by it.



Paul explains the Law’s primary function in vv. 23-29. The idea expressed in vv. 23-25 is that God has placed us into the *custodial care* of the Law – what the *Modern Language* translation refers to as “custody faith” and the *Living Bible* refers to as “protective custody” (see also *The Jerusalem Bible, Moffatt, RSV*, and others) – until Jesus Christ came to teach us the *spiritual intent* of the Law (see Matthew 5:17-48). In vv. 24, 25, Paul explains the *custodial* nature of the Law by calling it a *paidagogos*. While the meaning does not suggest that it is a *teacher*, it does suggest that it is a *guide that oversees the conduct of a child in school*. That custodian’s responsibility is to “bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (v.24). Christ, through the Holy Spirit, is our teacher. According to Ephesians 1:5, 6, it is Jesus Christ’s responsibility to oversee our adoption as children of God and to *make* us acceptable to the Father.

This is one of the main reasons that we describe *salvation* as an *educational process*. Under the “protective custody” of the Law and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are able to *internalize* the Law’s *spiritual* intent.

As a result of this tutelage, there eventually comes a time when that *external* oversight is no longer necessary...when true, abiding faith has been instilled in the believer. Galatians 3:25 is grossly misunderstood by many in mainstream Christianity because they teach that the Law was made *null* and *void* by the death Jesus Christ. That is a patent misunderstanding of Matthew 5:17. The idea is that the Law is no longer needed as an *external guide* because God’s Law is now placed into your *heart* and *mind* (see Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:8-13; 10:14-20) – into your *spirit*. When you have come to this point of spiritual growth and development, then you will have acquired the *mind of Christ*...but not by Christ setting aside your spirit and coming to personally live *His* life in you as a substitute. How much assistance do you still need in the ABCs, reading, writing, counting, and arithmetic? You have acquired (to state it simplistically) the *spirit* of those lessons to the point that they are in your heart and mind.

It only takes a few scriptures to understand clearly how the mind of Christ should work in you. In Romans 12:2, it says that there will be a *transformation* (a renewal) of your mind away from the carnal mind of the age in which you live. This, according to 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, will be made possible by the *influence* of God’s Holy Spirit – by which you will develop the ability to have *spiritual discernment*.

There are three things revealed in Philippians 2:5-8: (1) He became *totally submissive* to the one known as the Father; (2) He did not use His power to make Himself great; rather, He became a *servant* (see also Matthew 20:20-28); and (3) He became

obedient *unto death*. This was exhibited in His life as He submitted Himself to do the *Father's* will (see John 6:38-40 and Matthew 7:21-23). As you follow His example (1 Peter 2:21), you will grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17, 18).

How do we know that the *Law* is still in effect and not done away with? Hebrews 10:26 explains it very cogently. If you know that *sin* is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4) and that the wages of sin is *death* (Romans 6:23), then it is only logical that God has not made His Law *null* and *void* just because Jesus was crucified (read Hebrews 5:12-6:8). The

Law is not a ruthless tyrant. It is God's *guide* to His righteousness.

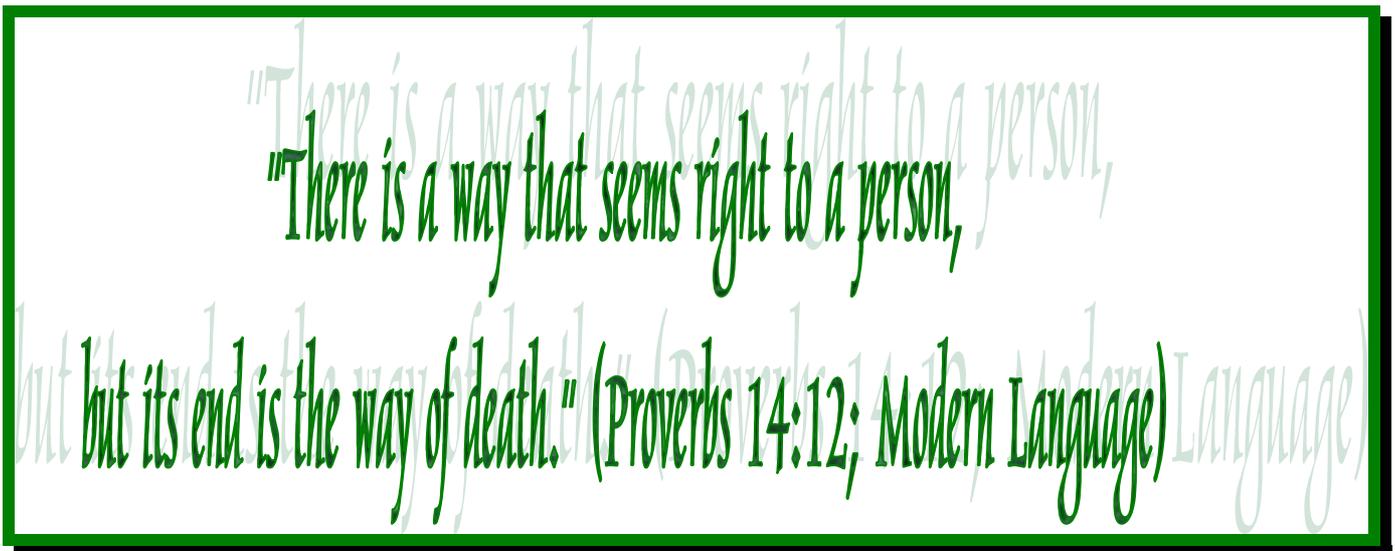
Conclusion

God's *revelation* is that the *spirit* in man was given by God at man's creation in order to equip man with *mind power* and the means by which he can interact with God's mind and intellect. Without this gift, man would be fundamentally no better off than the other *nephesh* that were also created to inhabit the earth because they were not so endowed. In fact, if man does not *voluntarily* avail himself of the mind and intellect of God, then he will be judged as unfit to

enter the family of God and will be destroyed (see John 3:3-8, 1 Corinthians 15:50, and Revelation 20:15).

Joel 2:28, 29 is God's revelation that He intends to go far beyond what He did on the Day of Pentecost, June 17, A. D. 31. The expression *all flesh* in v. 28 means that He will pour out His *spirit* upon all of *mankind* once He has set up the Kingdom of God. The *fruit* of that *Holy Spirit* in their hearts and minds will prove that to be the case (see Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Galatians 5:22-26).

What a marvelous God! What a marvelous revelation! What a marvelous plan! Have *you* begun yet to fulfill *your* great potential?



It is, perhaps, a *truism* to say that we have all been *fooled* by situations that either seemed too good to be true or that were so very appealing on the surface that we could not resist being personally involved with them. Read Matthew 24:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:11-13; 2 Peter 2; 1 John 4:1; Jude 3, 4; and Revelation 12:9. Now answer these questions based on what you have read: How many of the 32,000+ "Christian" denominations represent God's *truth*? Have you been fooled into thinking that they *all* represent it? You can apply the same question to all of the world's various religions. Do they all represent *different paths* to the same goal? How much do you think that *you* have been *fooled* by the claims of some that it really does not make any difference? Is that one of those ways that *seems* right? You need to know.

The Big Picture

(About Understanding God's Truth)

John P. Newport and William Cannon make an interesting point in their book *Why Christians Fight Over the Bible*: “Differing views of conceptualizing the ultimate nature of *truth* and *reality* have caused many a bitter battle” (p. 47; emphasis added). In the introduction to this book, they say: “...It is difficult to approach the Scriptures without a prior *theological* system in one’s mind; therefore, it is important, in interpreting Scriptures, for one to have an awareness of his own presuppositions as well as those of others” (p. 15). The problem of settling one’s mind about the *truth* of God is one of the major battles a person will get into when s/he desires to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24).

If we are not careful, we will develop the attitude expressed by Pilate when Jesus told him : “...I was born [to be a king], and the reason I came into the world was to bear witness to the *truth*; and all who are on the side of *truth* listen to my voice.” This reply angered Pilate to the point that he sarcastically and scornfully asked: “*Truth*? What is that?” (John 18: 37, 38; *The Jerusalem Bible*; emphasis added).

Since this situation exists very commonly among us, we should take time to consider some factors that can be very helpful in understanding the *truth* of God’s word. We must be willing to step back and examine why we believe what we believe, as well as be willing to be instructed by God’s word as opposed to being the victims of the traditions of men. If we can grasp the “big picture” of God’s word, perhaps it will make it easier to work our way into understanding some of its finer details with more clarity and confidence. There are four major principles for scriptural interpretation that I would like for you to consider.

1. It is God’s will that we understand His truth.

One of the first lessons we must learn about the “big picture” is that it is God’s will that we understand His truth. We are told this very plainly in scripture. Remember this from 2

Timothy 3:16, 17: *Scripture is the voice of God to mankind.* John 17:17 shows Jesus Christ asking God the Father to set aside His disciples for holy usage ***through His truth.*** He emphasized this request by saying: “***Your word is truth.***” In verse 19, He added: “...For their sakes I sanctify myself that they might be sancti-

fied ***through the truth.***” The word “sanctify” that Jesus used in verses 17 and 19 is *hagiazō* in the Greek language. According to the Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich Greek/English Lexicon, the word means to consecrate, dedicate, or sanctify a person so s/he can be included in the ***inner circle*** of what is holy, in both the reli-

gious and the moral uses of the word. Pay attention to the expression “*inner circle*” because it plays a key role in understanding the following discussion. As you might be well aware, the *inner circle* is not a place for anyone and everyone of the general public. It is a place of intimacy – private, close, personal, familiar.

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich then cross-references this to Exodus 28:41 where the Lord God told Moses how to set aside Aaron and his sons into the priesthood: “You shall...anoint them, and consecrate them, and sanctify them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”

In John 17:19, where Jesus said that He sanctified Himself, He was explaining that He had dedicated Himself to be a sacrifice for His disciples. BAG refers back to Exodus 13:2 and Deuteronomy 15:19 where the Lord God commanded Moses to sanctify unto God all of the firstborn of man and beast.

So, by the very nature of the word used by Jesus Christ in John 17:17, 19, we can understand that it is God’s will that the disciples of Christ should be included in the *inner circle* of what is holy. In order for that to become a reality, the disciples of Christ must have access to *God’s truth*. They cannot be casting about with doubt and half-truths.

Jesus told us in John 14:15-18, 26 that we would have help from the Holy Spirit, which Jesus called the Spirit of *truth*, and that the Holy Spirit will teach us the things of Christ. In John 16:13, Jesus said: “When the Spirit of *truth* is come, it will guide you into all *truth*...” You should be able to discern from this superficial treatment that it is God’s will that the disciples of Jesus Christ should know God’s *truth*, i.e., the disciples of Christ should be included in the inner circle of what is holy. In a similar way, Jesus told His disciples in John 15:15:

From this time forward, I will not call you servants because

the servant does not know what his lord is doing. I will call you friends because all the things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you.

Being a *friend* of Jesus also presupposes that you will be in the inner circle of what is holy.

How does Jesus Christ intend for His disciples to learn the *truth*? Are they just stuck out there by themselves to figure it out on their own? The Apostle Paul answered this question in Romans 10:13-15: God provides spirit-led ministers to preach the truth to those whom He will call out of the world to become the disciples of Jesus Christ. He explained to the Ephesians that God has provided apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers for the purpose of educating the disciples of Jesus Christ in the *truth*.

Each category of minister represented in Ephesians 4:11 has a specific spiritual office to be used in teaching the disciples of Christ the truth. But the overall purpose of their existence is found in verses 12-15: They are to bring the disciples of Christ to spiritual maturity and educate them so thoroughly in the *truth* that they will be in spiritual unity as the body (or, Bride) of Jesus Christ. Notice that the unity is in faith *and* knowledge. Why? “That we be from this time forward no more like children who are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; **but speaking the truth in love**, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

God will not tolerate double-minded people (see James 1:5-8; 4:8); therefore, it is His will that the disciples of Jesus Christ be able to speak with certainty the *truth* of God. You cannot do that if you do not *know* the *truth* of God (see John 10:30; 17:11, 21, 22).

2. The truth of God is applied *universally*.

Second, it is a spiritual misconception that God allows so many so-called “versions” of the truth to exist under the umbrella concept that they are all working for the same thing – even though they are going about it in contradictory and opposing ways. The existence of over 32,000+ different so-called “Christian” denominations is not a testimony to how God has chosen to spread His truth. These different denominations do not represent different parts of the body of Jesus Christ; indeed, they cannot do that because they do not have the unity of spirit that God wills for His people. This is a violation of Ephesians 4:3-6. It is difficult enough to rationalize the differences in theology that exist within the mainstream of the churches that are part of the Church of God Seventh Day movement, much less the broad, chasmic differences that exist among the so-called “Christian” churches in the world!

In applying His truth universally to all of mankind, God has revealed a peculiar aspect of His great character: He is not a respecter of persons; He is not biased in His judgment of mankind. Leviticus 24:22 says: “You shall have *one manner of law* that will apply in the same way to the people of your own country and any strangers who come among you” (emphasis added). In Acts 10:34, the Apostle Peter proclaimed: “God is not a respecter of persons.” God has amply demonstrated this in many ways, but let’s take note of a few examples that can serve to generalize the principle to the many.

In Ezekiel 18:4, the Lord God proclaimed: “Behold, all living creatures are mine; the life of the father and the life of the son are mine: the living creature that sins shall die.” This principle of law is universally applied. God does not differentiate between racial groups or people of different historical ages. From the

beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages, any living creature that sins will die because God is not a respecter of persons, i.e., He is not biased in His judgment of mankind. He has one law that He applies equally across the vast spectrum of mankind in all ages in which mankind has lived.

Paul explored this idea in Romans 1-3. He stated his specific theme in Romans 1:18 by saying: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness..." He followed up this idea in chapters two and three by showing how the Jews **and** the Gentiles have violated God's law and will be held accountable for doing so.

In chapter 3:9-11, he asked:

Are [the Jews] better than [the Gentiles]? No, not in any way at all: because we have proved that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; as it is written, "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God."

This is a "backdoor" way of demonstrating a simple principle: **If God applies His law universally to all people, then God's truth is universally applied to all people.** God does not have one truth for one group and a different, contradictory truth for anyone else – any more than He has different laws for different people.

Romans 2:12 gives us additional insight to this characteristic of God. The point of Paul's statement is this: the Jew will not be excused from the penalty of sin because he has the law, and the Gentile will not be excused because he does not have the law. God's requirement is not for someone to merely **hear** the law; His requirement is that they **live by** what the law expresses – whether it is written on tablets of stone or written upon one's

heart and entrusted to his conscience. God's law is *universally* applied.

3. God does not change.

After proclaiming in Malachi 1:1 that He would suddenly come to His temple in the day of His coming, the Lord God revealed that He will come in judgment against sorcerers, adulterers, liars, and those that oppress others. He punctuated this information by saying: "I am the Lord, **I do not change**" (emphases added). His simple message is that there is great continuity and constancy in God that can be trusted from age to age.

The Apostle Paul said the same thing in Hebrews 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." The Lord's own brother, James, wrote:

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, **who does not change like shifting shadows.** (James 1:16, 17; emphases added)

The King James Version says: "With whom is **no variableness, neither shadow of turning**" (emphases added). *The Jerusalem Bible* says: "With Him there is **no such thing as alteration, no shadow of a change**" (emphases added).

Why is it important that we understand this concept in relationship to the **truth** of God? Notice this piece of information in Hebrews 6:13-20 that sheds light on this question. When God made His promise to Abraham, He swore by His own holy name. After that, He took an oath as a second witness to His intention to fulfill to Abraham all of the promises He made. Paul drew the following conclusion:

God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of the

promise the **unchangeable** nature of His counsel, confirmed the promise with an oath: that by two **unchangeable** things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, **we might have a strong consolation**, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: **which hope we have for an anchor of our lives, both sure and steadfast...** (emphases added).

We can have confidence in God that He will not allow any changes in His promises to take place from age to age just to suit the whims and dictates of different cultures or religions.

If the Lord God was concerned that His nation Israel should judge the citizen and the stranger by the same law, then He would be concerned that His promises would be based on the same **truth** from age to age! The reason is simple: **You cannot test the truth of God's word or God's faithfulness to His word throughout the ages if He constantly changes His mind and gives it different meanings or allows it to be changed by men to suit the whims and changes of society.**

4. God's word does not contradict itself.

Do not expect to find a contradiction between the truth revealed in the Old Testament and the truth revealed in the New Testament. It does not exist. Men might attach some meaning to some situations that make them **seem** as though God's word contradicts itself, but these are situations in which the men, not God, have attached the contradictory meaning to something.

One simple example of this type of situation can be found in Mark 7 where Jesus is having a discussion with the Pharisees about why His disciples did not wash their hands before they ate. The hand-washing itself was not part of the law of God; it was

an invention of the Scribes. Jesus condemned them severely for using their own human, religious inventions to make void the word of God.

When Jesus explained the principle by which man becomes unclean in the sight of God, He told them that *spiritual* defilement comes from what one puts into his *heart*, not into his *body*. In practical fact, said Jesus, whatever is put into the mouth of man is subsequently run through the digestive tract; whatever remains of it, after it has been processed in this manner, is purged out of the body by a bowel movement.

I checked several different translations, and most – with the exception of the King James Version – add a parenthetical statement at the end that says: “(Thus he declared all foods clean)”. While the meaning of the parenthetical statement is clearly suggesting that Jesus did away with the clean and unclean *meat* (flesh) laws of the Old Testament, there is no reason to assume that such a statement was uttered by Christ in opposition to those laws given in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14:1-21.

Notice this statement in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (volume 7, page 753):

Many interpretations have been given to this clause, *which may be a gloss*. The meaning of the phrase, even in some of the cruder translations, is clear. (Cf Acts 10:15; Rom[ans] 14:14, 20) ***But it is much more likely to be an early Christian interpretation than part of a***

saying of Jesus” (emphases added).

What is the point being made here? What *difference* does it make?

If it is, indeed, a *gloss* (an explanatory note in the margin of a transcript) that has been added to the text, or if it is an early Christian *interpretation*, rather than part of a saying of Jesus, then it is an *invention of men* that has been added – by mistake or deceitful design – to God’s word. *God* did not change it, nor did *God* inspire such a contradiction into His word. Check out Matthew 5:17, 18 to see if Jesus did away with that law.

In Ezekiel 40 through 48, Ezekiel is shown in a vision the Lord God’s preparation for the return of Israel to their own land and His reoccupation of His temple. One peculiar statement is made in chapter 44:23 about this particular setting that should be of some interest to this conversation about clean and unclean meats: “[The Levitical Priests] shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” If God had ever done away with such laws due to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, why would Jesus Christ *re-institute* them upon His return? The same question may be asked about verse 24 where He tells Ezekiel about judging controversies according to His judgments and laws and statutes *in all of His assemblies*; and His Sabbaths shall be observed (see Exodus 31:13-18 and Leviticus 23).

The only change that can be seen is in the quality of the observation of these laws – that is, we know that

God is going to take away their stony hearts and put His Law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33) in order for them to be able to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth*. They will learn the *spiritual righteousness* of the Law (Romans 8:1-4).

Conclusion

So, if I take these four principles and apply them to the situations discussed in Acts 10, Acts 15, Romans 14, 1 Corinthians 8, and Colossians 2, would I *logically* conclude that God has done away with His law and allowed mankind to: (a) change the day of commanded worship from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday, (b) omit His commanded holy days (see Leviticus 23) in favor of “Christianized” pagan celebrations like Christmas and Easter, and (c) read and interpret the Bible to suit his own circumstances? I dare say that such a conclusion would be most highly unwarrantable. I would suspect that a malevolent force is at work here to cause confusion and/or perversion of the word of God’s *truth* by making claims not supported in the scriptures (see 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; 11:4, 13-15; Galatians 1:6-9; Ephesians 4:11-15; 2 Peter 2; and Jude).

God’s *truth* is extraordinarily precious and valuable (read Psalms 42:1, 2; 119:131; Matthew 5:6; 6:33). If you treat it that way, it will serve you well throughout eternity. *That* is the BIG picture about understanding God’s truth. Use it wisely.

A Quotable Quote

“Today everyone knows that no amount of force which the police are capable of exerting can stop urban crime. In the last analysis, what deters crime is the tradition of being law-abiding, and this in turn depends upon a deeply and passionately held conviction that law is not only an instrument of secular policy but also *part of the ultimate purpose of life*.” (*The Interaction of Law and Religion*, Harold J. Berman, former Story Professor of Law at Harvard Law School; Abingdon Press: Nashville; 1974; p. 29; emphasis added)

In *God’s Law*, *unfairness* and *inconsistency* are eliminated at both ends: both God and man must abide by His Law. That is what scripture refers to as a *righteous* relationship. God’s Law is *righteousness* (Psalm 119:172) because it governs God/man and man/man relationships (see Matthew 22:34-40).

The Spirit of Holiness: A Gift From God

It is interesting that, when the Lord God created man out of the dust of the ground, *He did not place an obedient nature within him*. As a matter of fact, He originally made man a living being with a *neutral* spirit. Then, He placed him in a garden in the midst of fruit-bearing trees, one of which, **the tree of life**, represented *life and the holy spirit*, and another of which, **the tree of the knowledge of good and evil**, represented *death and the unholy spirit* (Genesis 2:9).

Man was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v. 16, 17). From that point on, the Lord God waited and watched to see if there was in man the *desire* to obey Him. Since man showed no *natural inclination* to obey God and did not eat first from the tree of life, he was not empowered by “holy spirit” to obey and, thereby, resist the temptation by the serpent – the consequence of which mankind has suffered in all ages since. It has been necessary from that time to this for mankind to acquire “holy spirit” in order to be saved out of the mess caused by his unholy disobedience (Romans 8:9-14). Let’s understand how that works.

What is “Holy Spirit”?

The most apt symbol of “spirit” is the wind, which stirs among us in all sorts of ways but remains totally invisible. We cannot see from where it comes or to where it is going (John 3:8). We can see the evidence of its having been among us and know that it is power and vitality; yet, we also know that it is not ours to command and master and control. And we know that when *holy spirit* comes, it comes from God. *That* is what makes it “holy” spirit. But, what does that *mean*?

The *ruach Yahweh* in the Old Testament (Genesis 2:7) is His breath or life or spirit (mind power). It is not a personage – not a separate, distinct entity or one of three roles played by a single God. It is God’s active *power* – the personal power released in achieving whatever God wills to happen (see Isaiah 55:8-11). This is no different from the meaning of the New Testament term “...pneuma...hagion,” i.e., the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). At the base of this is the concept of something that is pure, perfect, and worthy of God. It is as though one could translate “...pneuma...hagion” to read “the power of holiness” or “the power to be holy.”

Is it any wonder, then, that Jesus Christ would tell His disciples shortly before His ascension to the right hand of the Father: “You shall receive *power* after the Holy Spirit is come upon you” (Acts 1:8)? This *holy power* would enable them to carry out their mission of preaching the gospel of the kingdom and meet with alacrity and faith whatever difficulties they would encounter along the way.

Holy Spirit is not Inherent

Man does not *naturally* have Holy Spirit. If he did, God would not have found it necessary to remind us that His thoughts and ways are not like ours – that there is a vast difference between His thoughts and ways and ours (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Holy Spirit has to be given to man in order for him to possess it (Acts 2:38) and be able to think about things and act on them with the kind of mind that God possesses, instead of with what is rightly called *carnal mindedness* and *human nature*.

We should understand that the Holy Spirit is given to us to affect the way we think and act in relationship to God and our fellow man. When Paul wrote that we are not to conform our way of thinking to that of this

world system, he added that it would be accomplished by “the *renewing* of your mind “ (Romans 12:2; emphasis added). When he wrote to the Philippians to “Let this mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:5), he was insisting that there needs to be a *change* in the way we think if we are to become holy and blameless and loving (see Ephesians 1:4).

This is not some voice of conscience or some innate spark of divinity that many teach; it is a power to be holy that is given by God to those who will obey Him in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:18-22). This dynamic, *supernatural power* is given by God to become part of our very minds (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). It is the very essence of God’s holy mind, holy life, holy nature. When it mingles with the human mind, it gives to it a *power* not *naturally* possessed by man to live and act with purity, with spiritual maturity, and in a way that is worthy of God Himself. We must have this power in order to be *born again* as the sons of God (John 3:1-3; 4:23, 24; Romans 8:14).

Holy Spirit Promised to Man

Israel, for the most part, was only able to keep just the *letter* of God’s

law because they were a physical, carnal-minded church (Deuteronomy 5:29; Acts 7:38; 51-53). Without the Holy Spirit, they did not have the spiritual strength of character to faithfully keep the covenant they had made with God. God had not promised to make the Holy Spirit available to them before the ascension of Jesus Christ to the throne of the Father. However, God did promise that the Holy Spirit eventually would be made available to all of mankind (see Joel 2:28, 29).

Ezekiel was inspired by God to prophesy:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. *And I will put my spirit within you*, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26, 27)

Even though this passage specifically refers to a re-united Israel, God made it abundantly clear that He will make His Spirit available to all who choose to receive it: "It shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon ***all flesh.***"

Another apt symbol of "spirit" is water. Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to "rivers of living water" in John 7:38. Notice this by Jeremiah:

O Lord, the hope of Israel, all that forsake you shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. (Jeremiah 17:13)

So, Jesus Christ Himself is that fountain of "living waters."

Jesus Himself declared this truth to the Samaritan woman when He told her:

If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, "Give me something to drink," you would have asked him and he would have given you living water....Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into eternal life (John 4:14, 17).

Isaiah, under the inspiration of God, cried:

For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring (Isaiah 44:3)

It is made abundantly clear in the use of such powerful imagery that a person must ***sincerely desire*** this Holy Spirit before God will pour it out upon him.

In John 7:37-39 Jesus declared:

If any man thirsts, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me...out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this He spoke of the spirit that will be given to those who believe on Him). (See also Matthew 5:6.)

This spirit was to be made available after Jesus was glorified.

We Must Grow Spiritually

It would stand to reason that a person's whole life and attitude of mind must be completely changed as a result of the work of God's Holy Spirit (Romans 12:1, 2). Paul said:

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and...put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and

true holiness. (Ephesians 4:23, 24)

This process of spiritual change is supposed to create a "new man" in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is not just a temporary reformation; it is a miraculous transformation that would not be possible without a supernatural act of Almighty God! This requires a ***miracle!***

It is by this indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God that you begin that journey that will lead to your new birth. The receiving and indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God is a renewing of the mind. God pledged Himself to perform this miracle upon your ***real*** and ***thorough*** repentance (Acts 2:38). But God ***cannot*** work this complete change unless you are willing to totally surrender to Him and submit yourself to the process! Such is Paul's message in Romans 8:1-17. If you continue to pursue the things of the "carnal mind," then the Holy Spirit will not guide you into God's truth. You must be willing put to "death" the carnal mind and all that is implied by that expression (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16-21).

Conclusion

God is in the process of forming His *spiritual* creation in man. Only those who have yielded to the power of His Holy Spirit will become His sons and enter into eternal life. We are in a training period at present, learning how to rightly direct the even more vast powers God will give us when we are born as His sons (see Hebrews 12).

Few grasp how great and all-powerful God really is, and the depth of His loving kindness in making it possible for us to have His mind and great power. What about you? Are you interested in being given such a magnificent gift by God? It is truly a life-changing experience. Please contact us if we can assist you.

Jesus Christ: God's Special Messenger

About the Kingdom

Every now and then there is a comment in scripture that seems to be at variance with the entire idea of spreading the gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the world. At the same time, if you understand certain aspects of the fight of faith, it makes perfect sense in the context of the larger message of scripture. This is what is called a **paradox**: it is contrary to common sense; yet, it is found to be true. John 3:31-34 is such a scripture.

John wrote: "The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what He has seen and heard, **but no one accepts His testimony.**" Then, as if to leave room for that exception to the rule, John wrote: "The man *who has accepted it* has certified that God is truthful." What is the sense of this paradox? What does it have to say about the spreading of the gospel of the Kingdom of God to the entire world?

In this study, we will see that Jesus Christ was a special messenger sent from God, but His message has been largely ignored by the very ones who profess to be His followers! It is **paradoxical**. It is also **ironic** – an event in which the results are the opposite of what is expected (example: an atheistic priest).

The Specific Message Given To Jesus Christ

John 12:49, 50 say that Jesus was sent by God to speak a message from which He could not deviate. Jesus said:

...I do not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

In John 14:24 He said:

He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

The language is not difficult to understand: Jesus was sent from God the Father with a specific message from which He could not deviate. He was not, as some teach, tempering the

wrath of the God of the Old Testament, setting the record straight, and correcting all of the mistakes that God had made. He, in fact, **was** the Lord God of the Old Testament!

Jesus began to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God in Galilee shortly after He was baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:14, 15). He began calling His disciples in order to teach them how to spread the same gospel. What did He mean when He said that the Kingdom of God is **at hand**? Were these people expecting a message about believing on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in order to acquire personal salvation so they would be able to go to *heaven* when they died? No such idea is indicated in scripture – Old Testament or New Testament.

Other scriptures give us indications about how His message was interpreted. Notice John 6:15: "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself." Why? Verse 14 shows that they were of the opinion that Jesus was the Prophet who was supposed to come into the world (see Deuterono-

my 18:15). Their reaction to this belief was to come and make Him king because they believed that the Prophet would be the messianic king who would throw off the yoke of the oppressive Roman government and restore the Kingdom of Israel to the status and majesty of the Davidic Kingdom at the height of its power. Their belief was based on a scriptural misinterpretation. Such a thing is not uncommon in present-day "Christianity." Not by a long shot.

Jesus' Kingdom Not What They Expected

Jesus was not shy to admit to Nicodemus that He had come from heaven (John 3:13). And John wrote: "...The one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives [to Him] the Spirit without limit" (v. 34). In spite of this, we know that John had stated already that "He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). Before His crucifixion, He cried in disgust over the attitudes of His own people:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets, and stone those which are sent to you [by God Himself], how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, only to have you reject me? (Matt. 23:37).

The matter becomes a little clearer once you understand that Jesus was sent primarily to “His own,” i.e., the Jewish people of His day, to preach the message of the gospel concerning the coming of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 15:24).

What was the result? His own did not receive Him or His message. Instead, they crucified Him. Only a very few of the Jewish nation ultimately received Him and accepted His message.

When Jesus was taken before Pilate (John 18:33-37), he asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews. Jesus was curious: “Did you ask that as a personal question, or did someone tell you that I am the King of the Jews?” Pilate, somewhat indignant, replied: “Am I a Jew? Your own people delivered you to me. What have you done to deserve this?” The answer Jesus gave to Pilate should be considered carefully.

Jesus replied:

My kingdom is not of this world [Greek: kosmos]: if my kingdom were of this world [kosmos], then would my servants be willing to fight to prevent me from being handed over to the Jews: but now [Greek: nun] is my kingdom not from this place [i.e., not from this kosmos].

How, then, could it be *at hand*?

Many believe that Jesus was telling Pilate that His kingdom is not on the earth – that it is in heaven. Remember that I said to consider Jesus’

answer *carefully*. The important thing is what Jesus *meant*, not what traditional teachings *say* He meant.

Kosmos has many meanings in the Greek language. In this case, *kosmos* means the world and everything that belongs to it; all that is at enmity with God (and entirely at odds with anything divine), ruined, and depraved [Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), page 447, definition #7].

It would be very difficult to believe that Jesus would be just another king in a long line of kings and rulers of this world system who have never served the True God well for very long, if at all. But, would this suggest that *heaven* is a better place to put the Kingdom than is the planet earth? We would do well to remember that the problem has always been with the *inhabitants*, not the *habitation* (Hebrews 8:6-10).

When He said, “*Now* is my kingdom not from this place,” He was not speaking of the present time or the specific place. The Greek word translated “now” shows that He was speaking of the kind of situation that has prevailed upon the earth at any given time under *man’s* rule.

In other words, Jesus was telling Pilate that His kingdom would not have tolerated the circumstances that have been extant upon the earth. By extension, one should be able to extrapolate from this that His Kingdom, when it is set up, will not be run like the kingdoms of fleshly, sinful mankind.

Pilate moved away from “King of the Jews” and asked: “Are you a king, then?” Jesus answered: “You are correct in saying that I am a king. In fact, I was born for the purpose of being a king, and I came to the earth to bear witness of the truth [i.e., presumably, about His being a king].” After crucifying Jesus, Pilate mockingly put up a sign on the cross in Hebrew,

Greek, and Latin that read “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews” (John 19:16-22).

Regardless of that mockery, regardless of the way mankind has misinterpreted Jesus’ plain words about setting up a kingdom, it is plain that His disciples at least understood that it was to be a kingdom located on the earth (Acts 1:6, 7).

How His Testimony Has Not Been Accepted

Mark 1:1 is translated a couple of different ways: some read that it was the beginning of the gospel *about* Jesus Christ, while others read that it was the beginning of the gospel *of* Jesus Christ. The difference in meaning of these two prepositions can be significant.

The Apostle Peter told Cornelius: “You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.” The common mistake made by many well-meaning people is that they assume that the gospel is primarily a message *about* the *person* of Jesus Christ Himself. So, they “preach Christ” and believe that the purpose for doing so is to get people to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior so they can receive salvation and go to heaven. This, to them, represents *the gospel*. Even when they append “of the Kingdom of God” to it, they believe it means that the Kingdom of God is set up in their hearts.

Notice this very frank admission from a large, mainstream, “Christian” denomination:

...While God’s sovereignty over the natural universe is presented in the New Testament, the major emphasis is placed upon *God’s reign in the hearts* of all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior. *Jesus sought to guard against the idea of an earthly territorial kingdom.*

(Herschel H. Hobbs, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, 1971, pp. 98, 99).

This suggests two things: (a) the Kingdom of God is set up in the *hearts* of men – not upon the earth as a literal governmental entity; and, (b) the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament disciples and writers were subject to wrong interpretations of the truth Christ taught them.

Another writer says:

The kingdom is the reign of God, his sovereignty over mind and heart and will, and in the world. It is sonship to God and brotherly relation with men. It is the future. But whenever a human life is brought into harmony with the Father's purpose, it is present. (Frederick C. Grant, *The Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7, 1951, p. 656)

Is this what Jesus meant when He said that the Kingdom of God is **at hand**?

In his exposition of Mark 1:15, Halford E. Luccock wrote:

The time...means simply the time foreseen by the prophets, the time fixed in God's foreknowledge....**At hand**...can scarcely mean "has arrived," but only "has drawn near"; nevertheless, the kingdom is still approaching, it is drawing ever nearer, i.e., it has begun to arrive. (Ibid., p. 657)

There is good reason why Jesus said that the Kingdom of God had **begun** to arrive.

There are four things necessary to constitute a **kingdom**: (a) territory, (b) king or ruler, (c) citizens or subjects, and (d) laws and government. Therefore, we would define the True Gospel as being "the good news about a king who will exercise legal rule, according to commandments, sta-

tutes, and laws, over his subjects in a designated territory." God established the territory, i.e., the *earth*, when it was originally created (Psalm 24:1-5; 25:12, 13; 37:9).

He provided inhabitants on the earth who could, under the proper circumstances, become the citizens of the Kingdom He was going to establish. He also provided the legal means by which the affairs of the Kingdom could be conducted by establishing commandments, statutes, and laws. Finally, the Father commissioned His Christ to come as a messenger to proclaim the truth about that kingdom – and to commission generations of spirit-led ministers who would faithfully continue to spread the good news that Christ will become the King at the time appointed by the Father – and not before.

Read Isaiah 2:1-5; 45:18; Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13, 14; Zechariah 14:1-9; Matthew 25:14-46; Luke 19:12-40; and Revelation 5:9, 10; 11:15-19; 19:1-16. Now, ask yourself if this "good news" of the Kingdom of God is *consistent* in both Testaments. Ask yourself *where* that Kingdom is going to be established (see Hebrews 11:8-16 and Revelation 21:1-5). Ask yourself if this is the *gospel* that is typically preached in traditional, mainstream "Christianity." Do *any* of these references imply that the reward of the "saved" is going to be eternal residence in *heaven* – a concept that takes the "saved" well beyond the environs of the earth?

Without allowing the traditional teachings to get in the way, what are you willing to admit and believe from God's word? Can you at all see that the *earth* is the place where God's attention has been focused for so many aeons of time? Read Ephesians 1:4. "Before the foundation of the world" means "before the creation of the orderly universe." How long ago was that? Read carefully, in this context, Jeremiah 33:17-26. The One who became Jesus Christ made this covenant with David. Is He a *liar*?

At some point in time, we must all grapple with God's revealed truth and make a decision to obey it instead of the traditions of men (Matthew 15:1-9).

Clarence Tucker Craig wrote:

The "kingdom of God" means the kingly rule or dominion of the God who is believed to be the sole God of the universe. The emphasis is upon his sovereignty rather than upon the place where that sovereignty is exercised. ***Still the local significance cannot be excluded.*** (Ibid., p. 145; emphasis added)

Indeed. To exclude the "local significance" is to deny the truth of the testimony of Jesus Christ, His prophets, and His ministers. His *sovereignty* is the power to which you must surrender your thoughts and ways. That is most important. But...it is also important not to deny the *place* where the plan and intention of God the Father (the one who sent Jesus Christ with the message from which He could not deviate) is going to take place. Jesus Christ is God's special messenger sent to proclaim the coming of that great and marvelous Kingdom of God on this very planet!

Conclusion

It is a shame that so many do not preach the gospel of the imminent establishment of God's *personal* control over the earth and the personal preparation that we should make as we anticipate its realization. This is the *truth* that Jesus brought. This is the message that He intended His true ministers to preach. Those learning the truth about it should know that it ***is to be*** a kingdom on the earth ruled over by Jesus Christ and His saints (read again Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel 2:44, 45; Zechariah 14:9; Revelation 5:10; 11:15). *Are you willing to repent and believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15)?



The Proverbs 31 Wife in Today’s Culture

**“Who can find a virtuous woman? ...Her price is far above rubies.”
(Proverbs 31:10; KJV)**

Elaine Ford

This last section in the book of Proverbs (vv. 10-31) describes what was considered virtuous character for a wife in the time of Solomon (or as the NIV states it: “a wife of noble character”). But as a Christian wife today reads through this passage, she might wonder, “Just how am I supposed to fulfill the role described here? What are the virtues involved in all that this woman does for her husband and family?” Let’s examine some of the ways that a modern-day Christian woman can apply this lesson of the virtuous wife to her own life.

The Woman’s Personal Attributes

It becomes obvious as we read this scripture that this woman is a joy and blessing to her husband and children in many ways. She is faithful, and her husband knows he can depend on her to not bring any shame or disgrace upon him (vv. 11, 12, 25). She is industrious, not lazy or idle (v. 27), providing good food (vv. 14-15) and appropriate clothing (vv. 13, 19, 21, 22), and making sure that her family is warm in winter and well-dressed all year round.

But there is much more to this woman than cook and tailor or dressmaker. Notice v. 16: “She considers a field

and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.” Where did her earnings come from? Note verse 24: “She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes.” And verse 18a says that she makes sure her trading is “profitable.” Apparently she is free to spend those earnings in any way she sees fit as long as it will benefit her household – although she probably would have asked her husband’s advice about buying a vineyard (scripture does not indicate that was necessary).

What other virtuous attributes does this wife display? Verse 20 shows that she is generous, giving to the poor and helping the needy. She conducts herself with strength

and dignity (v. 25) and is free of worry or anxiety about the future because she has prepared ahead of time. She is wise and is able to give good advice to others (v. 26). Because of all these things, verse 28 says: “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”

What about Today?

There are numerous ways in which today’s wife and mother, and even single women, can apply the lessons of the Proverbs 31 wife. Even in today’s “enlightened” society, the wife is still the family member most often expected to prepare the family’s meals, purchase the family’s clothing, and be the nurturer. But, let’s be honest. There aren’t many women in our modern society who can grow their own food or weave their own cloth and sew the clothes needed by all family members. What does the Proverbs 31 wife do instead?

For starters she could become familiar with which foods would provide the best nutrition for the family. God’s instructions in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 regarding “clean and unclean” foods would be a good beginning. And there are numerous other resources – the local library, the Internet, community college courses – from



which to obtain information about foods and nutrition. These same resources can give insight into the clothing industry and what to look for in determining the quality of the clothes one purchases.

In today’s economy, and since we do not live in an agrarian society, a woman may seek employment outside the home. This can often provide her a sense of fulfillment because she feels she is doing her part to provide for the needs of the family and to be a help to her husband. (If that is the case, then the husband should be willing to share in some of the household duties that would normally fall to the wife.) But there are many aspects of working outside the home that must be considered to determine if it will actually be profitable for her to do so. And if there are pre-school-aged children at home, then caring for them should be her first priority.

As for being generous and helping the poor and needy, there are many avenues through which to demonstrate that

attribute. It can be through monetary donations to various charities, donations of food or clothing, or by giving one’s time to volunteer to help family, friends, and even strangers in need.

Put God First

The last attribute mentioned, and the *most important* of all because it is what drives her actions in all other things: she “fears the Lord” (v. 30). Proverbs 1:7 states: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”



This is where the modern-day Christian wife can begin to become like the virtuous wife of Proverbs 31. It is this “fear of the Lord” that leads us to a proper humility and desire to do His will. Read the entire book of Proverbs, and you will find this type of fear mentioned many times. To better understand this attitude of “fear” toward God, I think of my feelings toward my own father. I loved him dearly, but also had a feeling of awe and respect toward him that made me want to do as he said and to behave in a way that would please him. In the same way, a woman who is a true Christian should show her fear and love toward God by doing His will in her life. If she does this, then all the attributes of the Proverbs 31 wife will become a part of her.

As a woman, wife, and/or mother, consider this section of scripture and pray for God’s Holy Spirit to direct your steps and help you to develop the attitudes and attributes of the Proverbs 31 wife.

from the desk of: the Pastor

This spiritual communication between God's mind and the human mind makes it possible for the human to receive God's thoughts and ways and to understand things otherwise incomprehensible to him. He will, thereafter, be able to compare spiritual things with spiritual. As Paul puts it in Romans 8:9-16, our human minds must be *permeated* with God's Holy Spirit for several very good reasons: (a) It identifies us as those who belong to God as His very own children (vv. 9, 14); (b) that indwelling *spirit* brings about the "death" of the unspiritual human mind and, as a subsequence, paves the way for a different manner of life in the present, as well as the perpetuation of life in a spirit composition beyond this human life (vv. 10-13); and (c) we have the blessing of receiving spiritual communication from God (v. 16). You can see the radical change that takes place in a person's life by comparing Romans 8:1-8 to Galatians 5:16-25.

Words That Are *Life*

The ultimate goal of man being imbued with God's *Holy Spirit* is for his redemption. Simply put, *redemption* is the process by which God delivers man from the effects of his sins and from his earthly, human limitations that cannot extend his *life* beyond the grave. The gift of God's *Holy Spirit* is His *guarantee* that a present change will take place in one's thoughts and ways, as well as a future change in one's *composition* (see Luke 21:27, 28; John 3:3-8; Romans 8:19-23; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; 2 Corinthians 4:6-5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 14; and 1 John 3:1-3).

Therefore, the words Jesus spoke to those people were *spirit* because they were words spoken in the power of the Holy Spirit that reflected the mind and thoughts of God Himself. They were *life* because anyone who accepted them and lived by them would begin a process of conforming to *God's* thoughts and ways and, thereafter, would begin to receive increasing increments of His Holy Spirit (2 Peter 3:18) that would lead to *life everlasting!*

Our Vision Statement

As you might well be aware, a *vision statement* is a summary statement of what an organization foresees happening as a result of its work. Ours is a statement about what we hope to achieve from our efforts in preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Here is our *vision statement*:

We are dedicated to revealing to you the *truth* of God's holy word in order to increase your understanding of it. If successful in that mission, we envision radically changed lives and a radically changed world. To God be the glory.

While that *seems* rather simple, it is far more complicated than it seems. Why so? The answer is simpler than the process.

It is because of what we saw in the scriptural lesson in John 6. We can reveal to you God's *truth* (see John 17:14-17) – if you will accept it. We can give you the avenue by which your *understanding* can be *increased* – if you will accept it. However, we cannot give you the *willingness* to *accept* it and *live* by it. With the help of God's *spirit*, we can open to you the avenue by which your *life* can be perpetuated beyond the death of your present physical, electro-chemical existence. However, we cannot give you the *willingness* to tolerate and accept what we tell you to make that happen.

Nevertheless, it is our *vision* to present to you the *revelation* of God's *truth* with the hope that it will increase your understanding so that you, too, may be a partaker of God's *divine nature* (see Hebrews 12:10 and 2 Peter 1:4). If we are willing to commit ourselves to that *vision*, are you willing to commit yourself to have "eyes that see and ears that hear" so that you, too, can worship God in *spirit* and *truth* (see Isaiah 6 and Matthew 13:10-17)?

We sincerely hope so.

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford, Pastor
The Seventh Day Christian Assembly



Straight Talk...Plain Truth