

# **DIFFICULT SCRIPTURES FINALLY EXPLAINED!**

Typed and arranged

by

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## DEDICATION

To fellow believers who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, in truth and love. This is my Passover 2018 gift to the Body of Christ.

I, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the Kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, witnessed an apostasy in the Church of God as we were approaching the Passover 1995.

I was in the very last generation of Ambassador College students who started attending in August 1992, while that institution was still officially upholding Bible doctrines. Shortly after that, Ambassador was plunged into apostasy due to a massive doctrinal shift initiated by apostate leadership. That apostasy started slowly in 1993, with trinitarian teachings, and emerged with full force in January 1995! In those apostate days of 1995, I rejoiced greatly to find some at Ambassador walking in the truth, just as we were commanded by the Father.

In the spring of 1995, I had kept The Night to Be Much Observed at a Texas farm in a company of believers. Upon hearing my determination to resist the apostasy at Ambassador and the Worldwide Church of God, my hostess Ardys A. Seelig took me aside and handed me bound papers entitled „Difficult Scriptures... Explained“ dated April 7, 1993. The purpose of that compilation was to prove the inspiration and consistency of the Word of God! No names were provided. Yet, there is no doubt that such a formidable task required a whole team of dedicated individuals.

In the next two decades, the compilation survived my transitions between the continents before it was accidentally damaged in February 2017, when I was in Africa. By that time, I had it already typed out driven by a need to preserve precious explanations of the Word of God. It was my duty to share it with the entire Body of Christ. I only refined some points in relation to Bible prophecies and dropped several speculations that have been proven wrong.

In the last three decades, we have had plenty of fragmentation, backsliding and doctrinal compromise in our midst. Thus, we should be reminded, not

as though there is a new commandment, but the one we have had from the beginning — that we are to love one another. True love is that we walk according to His commandments. Watch, for many deceivers have gone out into the world, „Christians“ who preach not the Kingdom of God but destroy the very basis of that Kingdom - God’s immutable Law! Such are deceivers who have the spirit of antichrist!

May we not lose what we have worked for, but win a full reward. Whoever stops abiding in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. May this material help the true followers of Christ in their faithful walk with God „*who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love*“ (Colossians 1:13), so that „*we all come to the harmony of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to full growth, to the full measure of Christ*“ (Ephesians 4:13).

In Jeremiah 17:13-17 we are admonished, „*O Lord, **the hope of Israel**, all who give you up will be put to shame; those who go away from you will be cut off from the earth, because they have given up the Lord, **the fountain of living waters**. See, they say to me, Where is the word of the Lord? let it come now. As for me, I have not said; Let the day of trouble come to them quickly; and I have not been hoping for the death-giving day; you have knowledge of what came from my lips; it was open before you. Be not a cause of fear to me: you are my safe place in the day of evil*“.

Aleksandar Sasha Veljic

## FOREWORD

The Bible presents its readers with various levels of difficulty. The scriptures explained here fall in the following categories of difficulty:

- *Obscure, confusing or mistaken translations from the original manuscripts of the Bible.* The original manuscripts as penned by Isaiah, Jeremiah, John or Peter are lost. What we have today is copies of the original manuscripts.
- *Minor errors on the part of copyists through the centuries.* Since today we are dealing only with copies of the original manuscripts, many Bible difficulties are solved by using different copies of the Greek or Hebrew text, or different translations. These errors include: adding or subtracting letters or numerals, spelling errors, confusion due to similarities of Hebrew characters that look so much alike in manuscript form, lack of vowels in Hebrew, lack of punctuation marks in the Hebrew and the Greek texts, skipping of phrases or duplication of words or phrases, etc.
- *Alleged disagreement of the biblical text with historical events not yet studied or understood by secular history.* Erroneous or distorted historical records kept by ancient pagan societies are not all that accurate, since Ancient kings and rulers practiced propaganda, just as much as modern counterparts do today.
- *Apparent contradictions which are easily solved once the time element is analyzed.* These alleged discrepancies are usually attributed to different writers when they quote other speakers.

The objective of this compilation and explanations is to point the reader in the right direction. This is not an exhaustive encyclopedia of all difficult scriptures. This compilation emerged in the last century as the result of the diligent work of many individuals and consultations with various publications.

## GENESIS 1:1

„In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth“.

Many wonder who wrote the Book of Genesis and whether the Creation story in Genesis is meant to be taken literally or figuratively.

1. The Jewish community, which has the responsibility of preserving the Hebrew Old Testament (Romans 3:1-2), ascribes this book to Moses. There can be no doubt that Moses is the author of the book of Genesis as well as the rest of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).
2. Jesus said to certain religious leaders of His day, *„Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom you trust. For had you believed Moses, you would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But you believe not his writings, how shall you believe my works?“* (John 5:45-47).

Here is Jesus' own personal testimony that Moses wrote scripture. But what part?

3. Jesus gave the division of the Old Testament in Luke 24:44: *„All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms...“*
4. A little earlier, Jesus, *„beginning at Moses and all the prophets... expounded unto them (the disciples) in all the scriptures the things concerning himself“* (Luke 24:27).
5. Jesus began with Moses because it was Moses who wrote the first five books of the Bible. It does not, however, preclude the fact that Joshua and later prophets added further comments to the law as Moses wrote it. For example:
  - a. See Deuteronomy 34:5-12 for the account of Moses' death.
  - b. See Genesis 14:14 where the later name Dan is used instead of Laish (Judges 18:29).

6. All Biblical doctrines have their foundations laid in the book of Genesis, and the book of Genesis itself is founded on the events of its first chapter. Therefore, it is extremely important that we understand exactly what is revealed by God in this all-important chapter of the Bible, and that we believe it wholeheartedly. Just as any building is only as strong and as safe as its foundation, so the doctrines of the Bible and of true Christianity rest on the foundational doctrine of creation and are bound to fall if the foundation is undermined.
7. Many critics have maintained that Genesis is mainly an old legend, and that it is filled with scientific and historical errors. However, the writers of the New Testament frequently quoted from Genesis and obviously regarded it as historically accurate and as divinely inspired. If they were wrong about Genesis, they were probably wrong about other things and are thus not really dependable guides at all. Jesus Christ Himself specifically quoted from Genesis 1 and 2 (in Matthew 19:4-6), accepting it as historically accurate and divinely authoritative. Thus, even Christ may not really be believed, if Genesis 1 and 2 are not true.
8. It is not surprising that the earlier widespread rejection of Genesis and its account of creation has been followed by the present-day rejection of the teachings of Christ and His apostles and especially by the almost universal rejection of the doctrines of sin, salvation, redemption and regeneration. If Christ is not even a reliable teacher, then He can hardly be trusted as Savior and Lord of one's life.
9. Some Bible teachers have suggested that the author of Genesis wrote in terms of creation, rather than evolutionary development, because the primitive Hebrews for whom he was writing could not have comprehended such a sophisticated concept as evolution. He thus supposedly wrote in this figurative language merely as an accommodation to the naïve culture and mentality of the people of that day.
10. This notion is quite unsound, however. All of the ancient religions and philosophies were evolutionary systems, regarding matter as eternal and the earth as extremely old and developing into

its present form through many ages or cycles. This was true in particular of the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians with whom the Israelites had frequent contact.

11. The concept of special, recent creation, by an eternal, all powerful personal God is unique to the Bible! It was a radically new revelation to a people surrounded by pagan evolutionary speculations. In order to be understood at all, it thus had to be simple, clear, and direct, not mystical and vague.
12. Therefore, the Genesis record of creation was meant by its author to be a sober, straightforward, historical record of the actual events of creation. It is God's revelation to man of that which he could never discover for himself. „*All things were created by Him... and by Him all things consist*“ (Colossians 1:16-17). Since He is our Creator, He is also our Judge. For those who are willing to believe and trust Him, He can also be personal Savior and Lord.

## GENESIS 1:2

„And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters“.

Some use these verses to prove that the Bible says the Earth came into existence a little over 6,000 years ago.

1. These verses give no indication as to the age of the earth. There is an unknown time element between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2, perhaps millions or billions of years. The word translated „was“ in Genesis 1:2 could also be translated „became“ as it was in Genesis 2:7 and Genesis 19:26.
2. In Genesis 1:2, the earth became without form and void (Hebrew „tohu“ and „bohu“). „Tohu“ can be translated as: a) waste, b) desolate, c) or confused. „Bohu“ can be translated as emptiness or „void“.
3. Isaiah 45:18 says of the earth, „*He (God) formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain (Hebrew: „tohu“), He formed it to be inhabited*“. The angels shouted for joy at the beauty of the earth's original creation (Job 38:4-7).
4. God created the earth to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18), and was originally inhabited by Lucifer before he sinned (Ezekiel 28:13-15). Later, Lucifer sinned and became Satan and his angels became demons. They ascended to heaven to dethrone God and take over the universe (Ezekiel 28:13-15 and Isaiah 14:12-14). In this great battle, the earth and the universe were destroyed. Genesis 1:2 refers to the time when God renewed the earth after this battle when it became without form and void (Psalms 104:30).
5. There is no indication of how long Lucifer and his angels lived on the earth before they sinned and fought against God. There is also no indication of how long the Earth was without form and void before God renewed it in Genesis 1:2. The earth could be millions or billions of years old.



## GENESIS 1:3, 14

„And God said, Let there be light, and there was light”.

„And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years”.

Some don't understand what lights are referred to, and when the sun, moon, and stars were created.

1. The original creation – including the sun, moon, and stars – was so beautiful that the angels sang and shouted for joy (Job 38:4-7). The Earth was not created in vain, desolate, ruined (Hebrew: „tohu”), but to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18).
2. The Earth became desolate, ruined, and chaotic (Hebrew: „tohu” and „bohu”) when Satan tried to dethrone God (Genesis 1:2) and darkness was on the face of the deep from this battle. „Deep” is translated from the Hebrew word „to howm” (teh-home) which means „a surging mass of water” in Strong's concordance, or „water making noise, in commotion hence wave, a great quantity of water” in Gesenius Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament. The entire Earth covered with water would generate a lot of water vapor in the atmosphere. This would produce thick clouds, thereby blocking out the sun causing darkness.
3. God's first act in renewing (Psalms 104:30) the face of the Earth in Genesis 1:2-5 was to thin the clouds enough to let some of the light of the sun filter through the clouds.
4. Genesis 1:16 tells us God made the sun and moon. „Made” is translated from the Hebrew word „asah” (aw-saw). According to Gesenius, „aw-saw” can mean: 1) make, 2) had made, or 3) will have made. The correct translation must be determined from context.

Since God's original creation was beautiful and the Earth was created to be inhabited (Job 38:4-7, Isaiah 45:18), it is evident God had made the sun, moon and stars. Therefore, thinning the clouds in Genesis

1:3 would allow light from the sun to filter through to cause night and day.

## GENESIS 2:3

„And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, because in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made“.

Where the names of the days of the week and the names of the month in English come from?

1. According to the *Encyclopedia International* article „Week“, the days were names for the sun, the moon, and the five visible planets, all of which were associated with pagan deities. The names of the days of the week and their meanings are as follows:

SUNDAY – the sun, in honor of the sun god.

MONDAY – the moon, in honor of the moon god.

TUESDAY – the planet Mars, in honor of the god Mars. The Saxons named this day after their god Tiw and called it Tiw's say. „Tuesday“ comes from the name of this Saxon god.

WEDNESDAY – the planet Mercury. Later named in honor of the Teutonic god Wedn or Woden.

THURSDAY – the planet Jupiter. Later named in honor of the Teutonic god Thor.

FRIDAY – the planet Venus. Later named in honor of the Teutonic goddess Frigg or Freia.

SATURDAY – the planet Saturn, in honor of the Roman god Saturn.

2. But how did this planetary week come to be so commonly used in the professing Christian world? Hutton Webster, in his book *Rest Days* (pages 220-221), provides the answer: „The early Christians had at first adopted the Jewish seven-day week with its numbered weekdays, but by the close of the third century A.D. this began to give way to the planetary week... The use of planetary names by Christians attests the

growing influence of astrological speculations introduced by converts from paganism... Thus, gradually a **pagan institution** was engrafted on Christianity”.

3. This planetary week with its days named after pagan deities is not of God. God Almighty did create the week with seven days. But He merely numbered the days one through seven (Genesis 1, Genesis 2:1-3). The only day He named was the seventh day. He called that day „Sabbath” (Exodus 16:22-26, Exodus 20:8-11).

4. The names of the months and their meanings are as follows:

JANUARY – Januarius, in honor of the Roman god Janus.

FEBRUARY – Februarius, in honor of the Roman festival of general expiation and purification.

MARCH – Martius, in honor of the Roman god Mars.

APRIL – Aprilis, which was derived from „aperio”, a Latin verb meaning to open. So called because it is the month when the Earth opens to produce new fruits.

MAY – Maius, in honor of the Greek goddess Maia.

JUNE – Junius, in honor of the Roman goddess Juno.

JULY – Julius, in honor of Roman emperor Julius Caesar.

AUGUST – Augustus, in honor of Roman emperor Augustus Caesar.

5. The rest of the months – September, October, November, December – are derived from the Latin words for the numerals 7, 8, 9, and 10. They were the 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th months of the old Roman calendar.

## GENESIS 2:7

„And LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul“.

Some point to this verse to say that Adam was given an immortal soul at creation time.

1. This verse does not say Adam became an immortal soul. He became a living soul. The words „immortal soul“ are not in the Bible.
2. The Hebrew word used for „soul“ is „nephesh“. It is used three times in Genesis 1 for fish, fowl, and creeping things before it is used for man. This same word is also translated as:

Breath: Job 41:13 and Genesis 1:20-21

Life: Leviticus 17:11 and Genesis 9:4-5

Body: Leviticus 21:11

Creature: Genesis 1:21, 24; Genesis 2:7; Genesis 9:10, 12, 15.

3. Adam was „formed from the dust of the ground“ and God breathed into his nostrils the „breath of life“. He was formed of matter and was given temporary, physical life. The „life of the flesh“ is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11) which carries oxygen to the body. Without breath, man dies (Psalms 104:29). Man's physical life has no advantage over animals because „as one dies, so dies the other“ (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20). Both are made of the dust and both return to dust. The soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4, 20), and all have sinned (Romans 3:23).
4. „Immortal“ occurs only once in the Bible, and then only in connection with Jesus Christ (I Timothy 1:17). Immortality occurs only in these five scriptures:
  - a. 1 Timothy 6:16, only God has immortality.
  - b. 2 Timothy 1:10, Christ brought immortality to light.
  - c. Romans 2:7, we must seek immortality.
  - d. 1 Corinthians 15:53, we must put on immortality.

e. 1 Corinthians 15:54, after putting on immortality, death is swallowed up in victory.

5. God told Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die (Genesis 2:17). God then drove them from the garden and guarded it with cherubim so they could not gain immortality. Adam lived 930 years and then he died (Genesis 5:5).

## GENESIS 2:24

„Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cling to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh“.

This scripture is the first mention of man and wife – not wives! Some wonder why and when God approved of men having more than one wife, i.e. polygamy.

1. God never approved or sanctioned the practice of polygamy. He did permit it in the Law of Moses – just as He allowed divorce because of the hardness of man's heart (Matthew 19:18).
2. The culture of much of the ancient world permitted a man to have more than one wife and/or concubine. Even today there are some areas of the world where polygamy is an accepted and legal arrangement. But, as clearly shown by biblical examples, polygamy often encourages rivalry, quarreling, and emotional misery.
3. From reading about several Old Testament figures, one might get the idea that polygamy was common in ancient times. This impression is misleading, as indicated by the following quote from the book written by Ralph Glower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Moody Press, 1987, p. 63-64):

„Although marriage was allowed with more than one woman simultaneously, as when Jacob married Leah and Rachel, and had sexual relationships with their servants, polygamy was not common in Israel in biblical times. One reason was that a husband had to be quite wealthy to be able to afford more than one wife. Therefore it tended to be royalty who had many wives. David had many, including Michal, Abigail, and Bathsheba, and Solomon had still more during the wealthiest part of his kingship.

„The high priest could have only one wife (Leviticus 21:13-14), and other leading figures of the Old Testament were monogamous – Noah, Isaac, Joseph... It was often pointed out by the rabbis that more than one wife led to problems (Leah and Rachel, Genesis 30; Hannah and Peninnah, 1 Samuel 1)“.

4. It is stated in the article „Marriage” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*: „It is significant that the common Semitic name for 'second wife' is tsarah, the root of which is 'show hostility toward', 'vex'.”
5. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Associated Press Publishers, 1979) defines tsarah as „tightness” (i.e. figuratively trouble); a female rival: adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble. These words certainly describe the relationship between Hannah and Peninnah: „*And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb*” (1 Samuel 1:6)
6. According to the Bible, the ideal marital state is one husband and one wife who become one flesh in marriage for life. God gave Adam one wife (Genesis 2:24).
7. Such intense rivalries arose in polygamous households that the law codes of Assyria (in the patriarchal period) and Hammurabi protected the rights of the various wives, concubines and children. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 protects the right of the firstborn son when he is the offspring of the less favored wife. That is, the civil law code of Israel did not forbid polygamy though it described its consequences.
8. While polygamy was practiced by some of the patriarchs and was permitted by the culture and laws of their times, it clearly was not the ideal marital arrangement.
9. Jesus, in responding to questions about divorce (another practice allowed because of the hardness of unconverted human hearts), cited the original marriage to reveal God's will. God made one wife for Adam, and God told Adam that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (not many wives), and the two of them should become one flesh (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6).
10. Jesus also said that from the beginning it was God's will that a man leave his parents and cleave to his wife – not wives – and the two of them would become one flesh (Matthew 19:4-9).



11. The New Testament makes it clear that each husband should have his own wife and each wife her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:2). Also in the New Testament, a minister or a spiritual leader is to set the right example and have only one wife (1 Timothy 3:2).
12. Paul, mindful of God's instruction that the high priest could have only one wife, also stated that a man ordained to the ministry must not have more than one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). Therefore, monogamy, not polygamy, is given more honorable status in God's revelation.
13. In addition to the scriptural admonition, polygamy is against the laws in many countries. In cultures where polygamy is legal and still accepted, however, persons who might become converted already legally bound to two or more wives are to continue to honor their commitments.

## GENESIS 3:15

„And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. He shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel“.

Many misunderstand the meaning of the promised seed.

1. This scripture is the Bible's first recorded prophecy about the coming Messiah. In Genesis 3:14 God is talking to the serpent who deceived Eve. Revelation 12:9 identifies the serpent as Satan who was in the Garden of Eden (Ezekiel 28:13). With this understanding, there are three application of this prophecy.
2. The first and primary meaning is that Jesus Christ, born of a woman, would nullify Satan's power over mankind. Satan (symbolized as a serpent in Revelation 12:9) bruised Jesus Christ's heel (caused Him to be put to death to fulfill God's purpose).

However, through the resurrection Jesus Christ conquered sin and death and rendered the devil's work of no effect (symbolized by bruising the serpent's head, its most vulnerable place).

3. Hebrews 2:14-15 says: *„Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself (Jesus) likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy (or „bruise the head“) him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage“.*
4. A second meaning is that God's Church will crush Satan's works. Genesis 3:15 also reveals the „woman“ as the Church from whom Jesus Christ was born. A woman is symbolic of a church (Ephesians 5:31-32). Romans 16:20 tells us: *„and the God of peace will crush Satan under your (the Church's) feet shortly“.*

Thus the Church (the body of true believers), as well as Jesus Christ, has overcome Satan. Even so, there is enmity between Satan's seed (non-Christians) and true Christians – the seed of the woman – just as prophesied in Genesis 3:15.

5. A third application is that God will put enmity between Satan and the woman, Eve. Even today there seems to be a special fear or dread most women have for snakes as a result of Eve's encounter with Satan, the serpent.

## GENESIS 3:16

„Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children“.

Many do not understand what is meant by „in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children“.

1. When Adam and Even sinned, they cut themselves off from God and brought the entire creation under a curse. That curse affected Eve as well as Adam.
2. God told Eve *„in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children“* (Genesis 3:16). Eve's punishment may well have included a significant amount of birth pain during delivery. Nevertheless, the greater part of her sorrow was the realization that she and her offspring would be cut off from God and His blessings.
3. Eve lived to see her children grow from bad to worse. Her firstborn son – Cain - killed his brother Abel. Violence and hatred became so rampant in the pre-flood world that God finally had to destroy all life, save Noah and his family. Eve lived to see her children and their children's children living in a totally degenerate and unhappy state. The mistake she made when she listened to the devil must have weighted heavily on her mind for as long as she lived.
4. The curse of sin will be removed after Jesus Christ returns and establishes His Kingdom on this Earth.

## GENESIS 3:19

„In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, till you return to the ground; for out of it were you taken: for dust you are, and to dust shall you return“.

Some have questions concerning the belief in reincarnation.

1. Those who believe in reincarnation teach that after death a person's „soul“ is reborn in a new body, which may be that of an animal, an insect, or another human being. It is sometimes referred to as the „transmigration of the soul“ or metempsychosis.
2. The immortality of the soul doctrine is basic to the belief in reincarnation. But, that doctrine is false! The Bible plainly shows that one's soul is not immortal. Let us notice Genesis 3:19: *„for dust you are, and to dust (not another body) shall you return“.*
3. Also, we notice Ecclesiastes 3:19-20: *„For that which befalls the sons of men befalls beasts; even one thing befalls them: as the one dies, so dies the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man has no preeminence above a beast... All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again“.*
4. Psalms 146:4 states that when a man dies *„his breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish“.*

## GENESIS 3:24

„So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life”.

Many do not understand who or what are the „*cherubim*” mentioned in this scripture.

1. Cherubim are angelic beings. The best description of them is found in the book of Ezekiel. They certainly don't look like babies with wings as the artists in the Middle Ages painted them. Instead, they appear as large, powerful, man-, lion-, ox-, and dragon-like creatures.
2. The cherubim are associated with God's throne either transporting it about (2 Samuel 22:11, Psalms 18:10, Psalms 80:1, Ezekiel 1:5-25, Ezekiel 9:3, Ezekiel 10:4, Ezekiel 11:22), or carrying out important responsibilities, such as guarding the tree of life.
3. The one whom we know as Lucifer, before his name was changed to Satan, was called „the anointed cherubim that covereth” in Ezekiel 28:14. He was one of the two cherubs whose wings covered God's throne.

## GENESIS 4:5

„But to Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell”.

Many do not understand why God rejected Cain's offering. What was there about Cain's offering that made it unaccountable to God? Was it the offering itself, or was it Cain's attitude?

1. It would appear that Cain was at fault, both in his attitude and in the offering he presented to the Lord. Cain's attitude and approach to life was not right with God. Genesis 4:7 reads: *„If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not well, sin lies at the door...”*

Cain was living a sinful life and he knew it!

2. Cain's sacrifice consisted of crops he had raised in his garden (Genesis 4:3), rather than a blood sacrifice, as his younger brother Abel had set before the Lord. Because Cain was in a rebellious state of mind, God would not have accepted his sacrifice even if he had offered an animal. Proverbs 15:8 states: *„The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is his delight”.*
3. What was the difference between Cain and Abel? That Abel presented a blood sacrifice and did so in faith (Hebrews 11:4) strongly suggests that he was claiming a divine promise of grace as he laid lamb on the altar – a promise he had learned from his parents. Abel was upright in heart. He was a man of faith (Hebrews 11:4). God therefore was pleased with Abel's offering (Genesis 4:4) and responded to him with approval, in contrast with God's rejection of Cain's offering.
4. It would seem that Cain had followed his own judgment in choosing a bloodless sacrifice, disregarding the importance of blood as explained by God to Adam and Eve, and disregarding the principle of substitution of offerings. Cain rejected God and His instructions and led an evil life. Let us notice: *„Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his works were evil, and his brother's righteous” (1 John 3:12).*

5. Cain's willful substitution of the work of his own hands was followed by a savage jealousy and burning resentment toward his younger brother (Genesis 4:5). Eventually, this led to the murder of Abel in the field, where Cain assumed that no one will see him. His proud self-will led him to commit homicide, and his descendants carried on something of his man-centered, God-denying attitude for many generations to come until the flood.
  
6. God admonished Cain to overcome the sin which permeated his life (Genesis 4:7). However, Cain did not heed this admonition and his way of life went from bad to worse. He ultimately murdered his brother, Abel, and founded a society which completely rejected God and His laws. Mankind, in general, has followed in Cain's footsteps ever since.



## GENESIS 4:15

„And the LORD said to him, Therefore whoever slays Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the LORD set a mark on Cain, lest any finding him should kill him”.

Many have wondered about the „mark” God put on Cain. Some have wrong ideas that Cain’s mark involved skin color.

1. The Bible does not specifically say what this „mark” was.
2. According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, the Hebrew word „owth” may be rendered „mark”, or „signal, flag, monument, sign or beacon”. Strong's number is 0226 „owth”, derived probably from 0225 (in the sense of appearing).
3. *Young's Analytical Concordance* renders this word as „sign”.
4. *The Critical and Experimental Commentary* by Jamieson, Fausset and Brown shows that this word can be translated „sign”, „token” or „pledge”.
5. *The Typological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (page 41) gives the meaning of the Hebrew word „owth” as follows:
  - a. sign, signal
    - a distinguishing mark
    - banner
    - remembrance
    - miraculous sign
    - omen
    - warning.
  - b. token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof.
6. In the Authorized Version (AV) this word appears 79 times and it has been translated as follows:
  - a. sign(s) 60 times

- b. token(s) 14 times
- c. ensign(s) 2 times
- d. miracles 2 times
- e. mark 1 time.

7. The Hebrew word „owth” could also indicate a boundary marker that God set up to separate or segregate Cain and his descendants from the rest of mankind. Genesis 4:12 and Genesis 4:16 shows that God banished Cain to the land of Nod – meaning land of „wandering” – east of Eden.
8. The „owth” – mark or sign – that God made for Cain could also have been something to carry on his person, perhaps around his neck – from which the ancient and modern custom of wearing a charm or talisman – or cross – for protection may be derived.
9. Cain's mark was not the changing of his skin from one color to another. Cain, in accordance to West African traditions, may well have been dark, but his sin was lack of character. Thus, his „mark” was either carried on his person, or a sign set up to segregate him from others – or both!

## **GENESIS 4:16**

„And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelled in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden“.

Some have wondered about the location of the land of Nod mentioned in this scripture.

1. The only information the Bible gives concerning this land is that it was east of Eden (Genesis 4:16). The Hebrew word for Nod means „wandering“. Cain's punishment for murdering his brother, Abel, was that of being a wanderer and vagabond in a land apart from his kinsman.
2. In Genesis 4:15 we are told that God put a „mark“ on Cain. „Mark“ has been translated from the Hebrew word „owth“, which could also indicate a boundary marker that God set up to separate or segregate Cain and his descendants from the rest of mankind.
3. Genesis 4:12 and Genesis 4:16 shows that God banished Cain to the land of Nod – meaning land of „wandering“ – east of Eden.

## GENESIS 4:17

„And Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bore Enoch: and he built a city, and called the name of the city, after the name of his son, Enoch”.

Many don't understand where Cain got his wife.

1. Cain married one of his sisters. There simply wasn't any other female for him to marry. In Genesis 5:4-5 we read: *„And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: and all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died”.*
2. This is certainly one of the most ancient of all questions raised by Bible critics, and we can be sure that the superficial contradiction it implies did not escape notice by the original writers of the Bible. Cain was apparently the first son of Adam and Eve (Genesis 4:1) and Abel the second (Genesis 4:2).
3. After Cain had murdered his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8), God punished him by sending him away from his home and from God's presence forever. But then we are told that Cain was fearful of vengeance by others who might slay him (Genesis 4:14), that he knew his wife (Genesis 4:17), and even that he built a city. The descendants of Cain and the antediluvian civilization which they developed are described in Genesis 4:17-24.
4. Skeptics have „wondered” where all those other people came from if no one except Adam, Eve, and Cain were living at this time. The idea that there might have been in the vicinity a „pre-Adamic” race of men is clearly precluded by the unequivocal Bible teaching that Adam was the „*first man*” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and that Eve was „*the mother of all living*” (Genesis 3:20).
5. However, the real reason for this criticism is merely the evolutionary presupposition that such critics hold. They are unwilling to believe that God started the human race by special creation of one man and one woman, preferring instead to believe that man came instead as a

slowly evolving population of primates which eventually acquired what we consider human characteristics about one million years ago.

6. However, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was Himself man's Creator in the beginning (note John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16-17), taught otherwise. He said: „*Have you not read (that is, in Genesis 1:27, which He was quoting) that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?*” (Matthew 19:4). Thus, the creation of Adam and Eve, as the progenitors of the human race, was „at the beginning”, not after millions of years of evolution of a pre-human population of animals.
7. In the beginning, according to Scripture, man was created „very good” (Genesis 1:31) and would have lived forever had he not sinned. But, „*by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*” (Romans 5:12).

Even after the reign of decay and death entered the world at the time of God's great Curse on man's dominion (Genesis 3:17), most men did live for hundreds of years and undoubtedly had large families.

8. Adam and Eve had both „sons and daughters” (Genesis 5:4) during the 930 years of Adam's lifetime, and the same is true of each of the other antediluvian patriarchs listed in the genealogies of Genesis 5. The average life-span of these patriarchs is 912 years.
9. The question of how man was able to live to such great ages is a separate problem, which cannot be discussed here. Taking the record at face value, however, it is obvious that a very large population could have developed in the world before the Flood. It can be shown that, based on very conservative assumptions as to family size, average longevity, etc., there could easily have been many millions of people in the world long before Cain's death.

Since the Bible does not indicate at what period of life he murdered his brother, took his wife, or built his city, there is obviously no contradiction in the record. Consequently, neither the original writer

of Genesis 4 nor any later editors ever felt this was a problem that needed explanation.

10. Jewish tradition recorded by Josephus, says that Adam and Eve had 33 sons and 23 daughters. These brothers and sisters would have had to marry each other in order to obey God's command to propagate the human race (Genesis 1:28).
11. Today, there are biblical laws which forbid marriage between those who are closely related. But, it was not wrong for brothers and sisters to marry at that early time in human history. However, in Abraham's day it was permissible to marry only one's half sister. Abram married his half-sister, Sarai (Genesis 20:12). Nahor married his brother Haran's daughter (Genesis 11:29). There was then no genetic harm to the children. When men and women over the centuries continued in sin, it became genetically harmful for close blood relatives to marry (see Leviticus 18:6-19), and for the sake of future generations it is forbidden.
12. Now, at least one son and one daughter of Adam and Eve had to marry each other in the first generation after the beginning in order for the race to get started at all. There is no other possibility if all men are descended from Adam and Eve as the Bible teaches. In later generations, brother-sister marriages would come to be recognized as genetically dangerous and would be prohibited as incest. Not only Bible but also most other legal codes refuse to sanction marriages of close relatives.
13. The scientific reason for this restriction is that children of such marriages are more likely to be deformed or sickly or moronic than those of other marriages. The genetic basis for this probability is that inherited mutant genes, producing such unwholesome characteristics, are more likely to find expression in the children if they are carried by both parents.
14. However, there were no mutant genes in the genetic system of Adam and Eve, as these had come directly from the creative hand of God Himself. Thus no genetic harm could have resulted had Cain or

some other son of Adam married his sister. In fact, it undoubtedly have taken many generations before enough genetic mutations (which are random, and therefore harmful, changes in the highly ordered structure of the germ cell, brought about by penetration of the cell by shortwave-length radiation or some other destructive agent) could have accumulated in the human race to make such marriages of close relatives genetically harmful.

The Bible is thus always consistent, not only with its own statements, but also with all known facts of science.

## GENESIS 4:19

„And Lamech took to him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah“.

Some wonder why God approved of men having more than one wife. This scripture is the first account of a polygamist marriage.

1. God never approved or sanctioned the practice of polygamy. He did permit it in the law of Moses – just as He allowed divorce because of the hardness of man's heart (Matthew 19:18).
2. The culture of much of the ancient world permitted a man to have more than one wife and/or concubine. Even today there are some areas of the world where polygamy is an accepted and legal arrangement. But, as clearly shown by biblical examples, polygamy often encourages rivalry, quarreling, and emotional misery.
3. From reading about several Old Testament figures, one might get the idea that polygamy was common in ancient times. This impression is misleading, as indicated by the following quote from the book written by Ralph Glower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times* (Moody Press, 1987, p. 63-64):

„Although marriage was allowed with more than one woman simultaneously, as when Jacob married Leah and Rachel, and had sexual relationships with their servants, polygamy was not common in Israel in biblical times. One reason was that a husband had to be quite wealthy to be able to afford more than one wife. Therefore it tended to be royalty who had many wives. David had many, including Michal, Abigail, and Bathsheba, and Solomon had still more during the wealthiest part of his kingship.

„The high priest could have only one wife (Leviticus 21:13-14), and other leading figures of the Old Testament were monogamous – Noah, Isaac, Joseph... It was often pointed out by the rabbis that more than one wife led to problems (Leah and Rachel, Genesis 30; Hannah and Peninnah, 1 Samuel 1)“.



4. It is stated in the article „Marriage” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*: „It is significant that the common Semitic name for 'second wife' is tsarah, the root of which is 'show hostility toward', 'vex'.”
5. *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Associated Press Publishers, 1979) defines tsarah as „tightness” (i.e. figuratively trouble); a female rival: adversary, adversity, affliction, anguish, distress, tribulation, trouble. These words certainly describe the relationship between Hannah and Peninnah:
 

*„And her rival also provoked her severely, to make her miserable, because the Lord had closed her womb” (1 Samuel 1:6)*
6. Nevertheless, according to the Bible, the ideal marital state is one husband and one wife who become one flesh in marriage in marriage for life. God gave Adam one wife (Genesis 2:24).
7. Such intense rivalries arose in polygamous households that the law codes of Assyria (in the patriarchal period) and Hammurabi protected the rights of the various wives, concubines and children. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 protects the right of the firstborn son when he is the offspring of the less favored wife. That is, the civil law code of Israel did not forbid polygamy though it described its consequences.
8. While polygamy was practiced by some of the patriarchs and was permitted by the culture and laws of their times, it clearly was not the ideal marital arrangement. It is not even an acceptable practice in many modern cultures which in their turn now permit casual living together and easy-to-obtain divorce.
9. Jesus, in responding to questions about divorce (another practice allowed because of the hardness of unconverted human hearts), cited the original marriage to reveal God's will. God made one wife for Adam, and God told Adam that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife (not many wives), and the two of them should become one flesh (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6).

10. Jesus also said that from the beginning it was God's will that a man leave his parents and cleave to his wife – not wives – and the two of them would become one flesh (Matthew 19:4-9).
11. The New Testament makes it clear that each husband should have his own wife and each wife her own husband (1 Corinthians 7:2). Also in the New Testament, a minister or a spiritual leader is to set the right example and have only one wife (1 Timothy 3:2).
12. Paul, mindful of God's instruction that the high priest could have only one wife, also stated that a man ordained to the ministry must not have more than one wife (1 Timothy 3:2). Therefore, monogamy, not polygamy, is given more honorable status in God's revelation.
13. In addition to the scriptural admonition, polygamy is against the laws in many countries. In cultures where polygamy is legal and still accepted, however, persons who might become converted already legally bound to two or more wives are to continue to honor their commitments.

## GENESIS 5:4

„And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years”.

Many have marveled about the long life-spans (hundreds of years) of the patriarchs before the Flood.

1. One of the remarkable things about the record of the early chapters of Genesis is the straightforward simplicity with which the writer recorded certain amazing and almost unbelievable facts of history. One would think that if Genesis were really written in some late period of Jewish history, as critics allege, the writer would have interjected some explanatory comment or at least some expression of wonder at the uniqueness of the phenomena he was describing. But instead the writer wrote the account in the most simple and straightforward way possible, as a sober historian or news reporter would do, with no attempt whatsoever to justify or explain events which would seem almost incredible to later generations.
2. Thus, in Genesis 5 appears a simple chronological and genealogical table, sketching the line of the antediluvian patriarchs from the first man, Adam, down to Noah. The age of each man at the birth of the next son in the patriarchal line given, and also the age of each man when he died. This would be very dull and uninteresting, were it not for the remarkable fact that the age of each at his death was many hundreds of years!
3. Adam lived 930 years, Methuselah lived 969 years, and the average age of the nine antediluvian patriarchs (excluding Enoch) was 912 years. The only logical explanation for reporting these amazing facts in such a mundane fashion is that, when the original writer recorded them they were not unusual at all, but common experience. These accounts in the early chapters of Genesis were probably eyewitnesses' accounts written originally on stone tablets and then transmitted down the line of the patriarchs until they finally came into Moses' possession, who collected and edited them as the book of Genesis.

4. That these ages are given in terms of real years, and not months as some have suggested, is evident from the ages of the fathers at the birth of their sons, ranging from 65 years in the case of Mahalaleel and Enoch to 500 years in the case of Noah. Another proof of this is fact that, after the Flood, the life-span began a slow and erratic decline from 950 years for Noah to 205 years for Terah (as recorded in Genesis 11), and eventually down to about 70 years at the time of Moses (note Psalm 90:10).
5. Evidently something happened at the time of the Flood that affected the human environment drastically, gradually accelerating the aging process and the onset of death. Although we cannot be sure what this was, there are certain interesting intimations in both science and Scripture which provide at least a plausible hypothesis.
6. No one knows, of course, even today exactly what causes death. There seems to be no necessary, innate reason why man could not live hundreds of years. As a matter of fact, death came only as a judgment of God upon sin.

*„Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned“*  
(Romans 5:12).

7. Now a remarkable fact brought to light by modern gerontology (the study of aging processes) is that probably no one actually dies simply of old age. Rather, aging so increases susceptibility to disease and so decreases the operational efficiency of bodily organs and functions that, finally, there is a complete breakdown of some particular aspect of the body's mechanism, and this causes death. This may happen earlier or later in various individuals, but eventually it happens to all.
8. The fundamental factor in longevity, therefore, is the rate of the aging process and the environmental influences which affect it. There are various theories of aging, but the one apparently supported by the best evidence is the somatic mutation theory. A somatic mutation is a sudden, random change in the structure of a cell of the body. Since almost all mutations are harmful, the gradual accumulation of

mutations in the cells of various organs and tissues will inevitably lead to impaired bodily efficiency and eventually to complete breakdown of one or more bodily components.

9. Now various environmental factors may cause mutation, but probably the most important is radiation, both from the sun and from other radiation sources. Radiations also cause genetic mutations in the germ cells, although these are much better shielded than the somatic, or body, cells. Though much less frequent than somatic mutations for this reason, genetic mutations, which are also almost always harmful, are transmitted to the children and thus affect not only the individual, but also all his descendants.
10. It seems reasonable to suggest, therefore, that somatic mutations lead to the aging and death of the individual and genetic mutations to the aging and death of the species, with both primarily attributable to radiations in the environment. Other facts also are involved, of course, but this seems to be the most universally prevalent cause.
11. Before the Flood, the „waters above the firmament“ (Genesis 1:7) probably were in the form of a vast blanket of invisible water vapor in the upper atmosphere. Not only would this have produced a wonderful „greenhouse effect“, maintaining a mild and calm climate over all the world, but also it would have provided a highly efficient filter for the lethal radiations bombarding the Earth from outer space. Thus the „background radiation“ of the environment before the Flood was much less than it is at present and this could certainly have contributed significantly to the long ages of men before the Flood. These upper waters later condensed and fell to the Earth as one of the causes of the great Flood, and so are no longer available for this function in full. However, even the 1-1/2 of water vapor remaining in the present atmosphere maintains enough of a green house effect and radiation filter to sustain life at least in its present less efficient and durable form on the Earth.
12. The drastically changed climate and denuded Earth after the Flood, together with the inbreeding necessitated for the very few

survivors of the cataclysm, undoubtedly also contributed to the general decline in longevity and viability. In any case, there is no good reason to doubt the reasonableness of the Biblical record of the antediluvian patriarchs and their great ages.

## GENESIS 5:24

„And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him“.

Many use this verse to prove that Enoch went to heaven.

1. This verse only says God took him, not that He took him to heaven. Enoch could not be in heaven because Jesus Christ said in John 3:13, *„No man has ascended to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man“*. Only Jesus Christ has ascended to heaven.
2. Genesis 5:22 and Genesis 5:24 both say Enoch „walked (past tense) with God“, not that he is still walking with God. Genesis 5:22 says he walked with God for 300 years after he begat Methuselah and begat sons and daughters.
  - a. Enoch only walked with God 300 years, not one year more.
  - b. Enoch had sons and daughters while he walked with God, so he walked with God and lived God's way, while he was on earth, not in heaven.
3. Genesis 5:23 says, *„all the days“* of Enoch were 365 years. This expression, *„all the days“* or *„all his days“* was used about 12 times in chapter 5 and always means the person lived only that long and then died. Therefore Enoch died after 365 years – *„he was not“*.
4. Hebrews 11:5 says, *„By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God“*. Nowhere in the Bible does *„translate“* mean to make immortal. It means transfer, transport, exchange, change sides, etc.
  - a. God took (removed, translated) Enoch and buried him so he was not found, just as He took Moses from the people and buried him where he was not found (Deuteronomy 34:6)

- b. *„Translate“* has a dual meaning. In Colossians 1:13, the Father *„has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son“*. The followers of Christ are already translated yet they still die.
5. There are two deaths. The first death is appointed to all humans (Hebrews 9:27). Enoch, therefore, died this death. The second death in Revelation 20:6 *„has no power“* on those in the first resurrection. This is the death Jesus spoke of in John 8:51 and John 11:26 that could be escaped. This is the death Paul referred to in Hebrews 11:5 that Enoch *„should not see“*.
6. Enoch had been translated (converted) from the ways of the world. He *„walked with“* and *„pleased“* God and *„died in faith“*. He had qualified for the first resurrection. Therefore, he would not see the second death.



## GENESIS 6:1-4

„And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair. And they took to them wives of all that they chose. And LORD said, My spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he also is flesh. Yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years. The Nephilim were on the earth in those days. And also after that, when the sons of God came to the daughters of men, and they bore sons to them, the same were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown”.

Many maintain that these verses mean angels married women before the Flood and engendered a race of giants.

1. This scripture does not say that angels married women. It states that the „*sons of God... took them wives of all which they chose*” (Genesis 6:2). These sons of god were not angels. The fact is that angels do not marry. Jesus said those in the resurrection „*neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels*” (Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25).
2. Angels cannot cohabit with women and reproduce sexually. Angels are spirit beings (Hebrews 1:14). Women are human beings. Here we have two different kinds. God established a law that each kind produces only after its own kind (Genesis 1:11-12, 21). This is made clear by the context as well. In Genesis 6:3-4 God states, „My spirit shall not always strive with man”. God is speaking of mankind, not angels. Genesis 6:4 shows that the children of the sons of God and the daughters of men were „*mighty men*”, not angels. They were „*mighty*”, indeed, but still only men.
3. In the Bible the phrase „*sons of God*” can have different meanings. The phrase sometimes refers to spirit-begotten Christians (Romans 8:14, 1 John 3:2). Also, angels are called „*sons of God*” (Job 1:6, 38:4-7). But we must not forget that angels „*neither marry, nor are given in marriage*”.
4. A third meaning refers to mankind in general, because all men are sons of God by creation (Psalms 82:6, Malachi 2:10, Luke 3:38). Since these were obviously not spirit-begotten Christians, and could

not be angels it is evident that these „*sons of God*“ were simply mankind in general, who had forsaken God and were intermarrying in defiance of God's law.

5. We should note that giants were not exclusively the progeny of these specific marriages between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Genesis 6:4 shows that the giants existed before the sons of God married the daughters of men and afterward as well, but does not state that they were the result only of these marriages.

## GENESIS 6:4

„The Nephilim were on the earth in those days. And also after that, when the sons of God came to the daughters of men, and they bore sons to them, the same were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown”.

Where did the giants mentioned in the Bible come from?

1. The Bible indicates that men of great size lived both before and after the Flood (Genesis 6:4, Deuteronomy 2:10-12, 20-23). The giants who lived after the Flood were some of the offspring of Canaan, one of Ham's sons. These descendants of Ham were living in the land of Canaan when the Israelite spies went through it. The size of those men made the spies feel like they were grasshoppers in comparison (Numbers 13:1-2, 32-33).
2. When the Israelites conquered the lands east of the Jordan, they encountered Og, king of Bashan. He was the last of the giants on that side of the river (Joshua 12:4, 13:12). His death dispelled the legend that those giant warriors were invincible (Deuteronomy 1:28).
3. Three chiefs of the giants lived in Hebron until Caleb took the city (Numbers 13:22, Joshua 15:13-14, Judges 1:10). After the conquest of Canaan by Joshua (Joshua 11:21-22), remnants of the giants were still living in the Philistine cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. The most famous of these was Goliath, who lived during the time of King David (1 Samuel 17). A later encounter by David's „mighty men” with four other giants is recorded in 2 Samuel 21:18-22 and 1 Chronicles 20:4-8.
4. These giants terrorized Israel periodically from the time of the entry into Canaan until late in the reign of King David. The Bible says nothing further about giants from that time (about 1000 B.C.) on.

## GENESIS 6:6

„And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart“.

Some misunderstand what the Bible means when it says that God repented. Since God doesn't sin, He does not need to repent.

1. The Hebrew word translated repent in English is „nacham“. It has the connotation of „being made sorry“ or „saddened“. Genesis 6:6 could actually be translated: „and the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart“.
2. Why was God expressing this kind of emotion? Because He saw the depth of evil into which man had degenerated (Genesis 6:5). God had not made a mistake in creating mankind. Instead, He was sorry and very grieved at the wretched state man had achieved by the time of Noah. Therefore, He decided to put mankind out of its misery and carry on the human family through Noah and his descendants.

## GENESIS 6:19

„And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort thou shall bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee. They shall be male and female“.

Some think that it is unrealistic and unscientific to believe that Noah could have saved all animals in the ark. They also wonder how could Noah get two of each of the millions of animal species into the ark.

1. This is a standard objection that critics frequently level at the Biblical record of the Great Flood. They like to ridicule the thought of Noah setting off on trapping expeditions to Alaska and Australia, and they especially seem to relish the thought of the insuperable difficulties encountered by Noah's family in feeding and cleaning up after the animals during their year in the ark!
2. Traditional images and popular literature picture the Ark as scarcely larger than an ordinary fishing smack. Genesis 6:15 gives the dimensions of the ark:

*„The length of the ark should be 300 cubits (137.16 meters – based on a cubit 45.72 cm long or 450 feet – based on an 18-inch cubit, its commonly accepted length), the breadth of it fifty cubits (22.86 meters/75 feet) and the height of it 30 cubits (13.71 meters/45 feet).*

### DIMENSIONS OF THE ARK:

LENGTH: 300 cubits = 137.16 meters = 450 feet

BREADTH: 50 cubits = 22.86 meters = 75 feet

HEIGHT: 30 cubits = 13.71 meters = 45 feet

### VOLUME OF THE ARK:

$300 \times 50 \times 30 = 450,000 \text{ cubits}^3$

$137.16 \times 22.86 \times 45 = 42,987,40 \text{ m}^3$

$450 \times 75 \times 45 = 1,518,750 \text{ feet}^3$

3. On this basis, the volumetric carrying capacity of the ark can be calculated to show that the box-shaped Ark („ark“ means „box“ or „chest“ in the Hebrew) was ocean-liner size in cubic capacity – at least the equivalent of that of 522 standard American railroad stock (freight) cars.

It had a volume of about 42,900 cubic meters or 1,518,750 cubic feet, and virtually the entire capacity of the Ark could be used for storage. (It had no engine room or fuel tanks!)

4. Still the question is could Noah get all those animals into the Ark? A standard stock car can transport 240 sheep, so the ark could have carried at least 125,000 sheep. The average dry-land animal undoubtedly is considerably smaller than a sheep, as there are only a few large animals.
5. The ark had to transport only land animals, of course, so that the mammals, birds, and reptiles were essentially all that needed accommodations. The ark was constructed in three stories, and each was fitted with „rooms“ or „nests“ (Genesis 6:14) – evidently tiers of cages or stalls – to store the different kinds of animals.
6. God specifically instructed Noah to select one pair of every „*kind*“ of unclean animal and seven pairs of every „*kind*“ of clean animal (Genesis 7:2). The Bible term „*kind*“ refers generally to a group of creatures, all of which interbreed. The horse kind could be represented, therefore, by one pair of animals having the genetic potential to produce after the flood all varieties we have today. The same would be true also for dogs, cats, etc.
7. The Genesis „*kind*“ is undoubtedly a more flexible term than our biological „*species*“. However, even assuming they are the same, there is not very many species of mammals, birds, amphibians and reptiles. The systematic biology says their number is 17,600. Recognizing that only kinds, not species, were included, and allowing for two of each „unclean“ kind on the ark, plus seven of the few so-called „clean“ kinds of animals, plus a reasonable increment for known

extinct species, it is obvious that not more than say, 50,000 animals were on the ark. Most animals are „unclean“ (Leviticus 11), so most animal kinds would have been represented by one pair. This is obviously much less than 125,000 that could easily have been carried. There was also ample room for food storage and for living quarters for Noah and his family.

8. Only air-breathing, terrestrial animals were included in the Ark. Genesis 7:22 states: „*All in whose nostrils was the breath of life*“. This excluded all sea creatures and simple forms of life which could survive the deluge.

9. Now consider this. Only 40 percent of the animal kingdom lives on land, and 70 percent of all species of land animals are insects. The remaining 30 percent of the terrestrial animal kingdom are on a mean average the size of a rhesus monkey. Most animals can be maintained in small confinement for long periods and remain healthy. A rhesus monkey, for example, can be maintained in a cage about 75 cm/30 inch cubed with a capacity of 0.42 cubic meters/15.69 cubic feet.

10. If there were 40,000 animals whose average size is that of rhesus monkey, on the Ark. How much room in the Ark would be needed for all these animals? About 40 percent of the Ark's capacity would suffice:

40,000 animals x 0.42 cubic meters = 16,800 cubic meters out of 49,000 available

40,000 animals x 15.69 cubic feet = 627,600 cubic feet out of 1.5 million cubic feet.

11. What about insects? Remember that the Ark had a storage capacity of 522 standard railroad freight cars. Two hundred cars would be occupied by mammals, birds and reptiles. Giving every pair of known species of insects 16 cubic inches of space, another 21 such freight cars would be required. (Counting Genesis kinds, only, the required space would be far less.)

12. And so, viewed from the perspective of simple arithmetic, only about half of the space on the three decks would have provided plenty of room to accommodate all those animals. That left the other half of the ship for food and supplies and for Noah and his family.
13. In fact, the ark was so commodious and large that the story makes sense only if the Flood were a universal flood. The ark was far too large for only local animals. For that matter, if the Flood were only local, no ark would have been needed at all!

The problem of preserving human and animal life could have been solved far more easily by merely moving out of the endangered flood plains.

14. As far as the problem of obtaining the animals is concerned, God solved this merely by sending them to Noah (note Genesis 6:20), so that he didn't have to go searching for them at all. Animals can migrate long distances, especially when impelled to do so by imminent weather changes. These still-mysterious „instincts“ were implanted somehow within those animals God wanted preserved, and He thus caused them to „*come unto*“ Noah and the place of safety from the gathering storm.
15. Once they were safely on board, lodged in their stalls, and properly fed, most of them very likely settled down for a long period of dormancy, or hibernation. The sudden darkness and chill in the air, when „*the sluiceways of heaven were opened*“, quite probably set in action those remarkable physiologic powers, which seem to be shared in some degree by all orders of the animal kingdom.
16. The animal world seems to have, in fact, these two remarkable mechanisms for coping with unfavorable climatic conditions – namely, migration and hibernation. Modern biology, despite much study, has still been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation for the origin and operation of these fantastic capabilities. The known facts fit the hypothesis that God imparted these abilities, perhaps by new „information“ conveyed to the „genetic code“ at this time, to those animals selected by Him to go to the ark, and their new hibernation



mechanisms enabled them to pass the awful year of the deluge in relative quiet and comfort. The descendants of those animals that „went forth from the ark“ have all inherited these capacities in greater or lesser degrees, still enabling them, as necessary, to escape unfavorable environmental conditions by one or both mechanisms.

17. Before the Flood, it is likely that there was worldwide warm, pleasant climate. This is indicated both by the fact that such a climate is implied in the fossils and sediments from practically all the so-called „geologic ages“ prior to the Pleistocene ice age, and also by the fact that the Bible record of the „waters above the firmament“ points to a great antediluvian canopy of invisible water vapor in the upper atmosphere which would have produced just such a „greenhouse effect“ all over the world.
18. Thus, before the Flood, animals had no need for migration and hibernation, and probably all kinds of animals were dispersed more or less uniformly all over the world. When the thermal vapor blanket condensed and precipitated at the time of the Flood, there was a rapid change of climate, which led finally to the ice age and then eventually to the present climate regimes of the world.
19. Evidence and documentation for all the above and many other aspects of the great Flood are given in various books and documentaries.
20. It is recognized that this is a minority view in science (as a matter of fact, true followers of Christ represent a minority in any field), but there are many scientists who agree with it in all essentials. In any case, the actual observed facts agree with it, so far as known at present. The decision to accept or reject any part of the biblical record (confirmed as fully historical and factual, even in its stories of Creation and the Flood by Christ and His apostles in the New Testament) is therefore not a scientific decision at all but a spiritual decision.

## GENESIS 7:4

„For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will destroy from off the face of the ground“.

Many doubt the extent of the Flood. They have wondered about whether the Biblical Flood was only a local flood or a worldwide event.

1. The Bible writers undoubtedly describe the Flood as universal in extent and effect. Most geologists reject the historicity of such a flood, and this has therefore become one of the chief points of conflict between Christianity and the modern evolutionary philosophy. Some Christian writers have tried to promote the compromised view that the Flood was only a great river overflow on the Euphrates or some other river in the Middle East.
2. However, the Biblical case for a global deluge is quite convincing. The following are just a few of the many reasons for this position:
  - a. More than 30 statements of the universal character of the Flood and its effects occur in Genesis 6 through Genesis 9.
  - b. The purpose of the Flood was to destroy not only all mankind, but also all animal life on the dry land as well (Genesis 6:7, 16; 7:22).
  - c. The Flood was even sent to „destroy the earth“ (Genesis 6:13).
  - d. The Flood covered all the mountains (Genesis 7:19-20).
  - e. The Flood lasted over a year (Genesis 7:11, 8:13).
  - f. The ark had a volumetric capacity of more than 500 standard railroad stock cars, which is far more than adequate to hold two of every known species, past or present, of dry land animals.
  - g. The ark was ridiculously unnecessary for Noah, the animals, and especially the birds, to escape from a mere local flood.

- h. God's promise (Genesis 8:21, 9:11, 15) never again to send such a flood has been repeatedly broken if it were not only a local flood.
  - i. All men in the world today are said to have descended from Noah's three sons (Genesis 9:1, 19).
  - j. Many later Biblical writers accepted the historicity of the worldwide Flood (note Job 12:15, 22:16; Psalms 29:10, 104:6-9; Isaiah 54:9; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:5, 3:6; Hebrews 11:7)
  - k. Jesus Christ believed in the universal Flood and took it as the type of the coming destruction of the world when He returns (Matthew 24:37-39, Luke 17:26-27).
3. The above and other biblical proofs that could be added, if necessary, prove that not only the author of the book of Genesis but the other biblical authors as well, and even Jesus Christ Himself, accepted the Flood as of worldwide extent and effect. To this evidence could be added the well-known fact that practically all nations and tribes in the world have retained some kind of tradition of the Flood at the dawn of their history.
4. The fact that most modern geologists reject these evidences stems from the philosophy of uniformitarianism and evolutionism that has formed the backbone of geological interpretations for the past century.
- a. The uniformity principle, popularized originally by Hutton and Lyell (a medicinal man and a lawyer, respectively), claims that all of earth's past history should be explained in terms of ordinary natural processes as they occur today.
  - b. The evolutionary philosophy popularized by Charles Darwin (an apostate divinity student turned naturalist) says that the origin or all the forms of life and of life itself must likewise be explained in terms of present natural processes.

These two philosophies are at the foundation of the evolutionary interpretation of the earth's supposed geological ages, and they

obviously preclude the Biblical record of special creation and the Flood.

5. Thus the fossils of former living plants and animals, as found in the sedimentary rocks of the earth's crust, are used to „date“ the rocks and to determine the particular geologic age of the formation containing them. This is done primarily on the assumption that rocks containing „simple“ fossils must be older, and those containing „complex“ fossils must be younger, since all things have developed by a process of evolution over the ages.
6. But then these geological ages and their fossil record supposedly provide the best (indeed the only) historical proof of the „fact“ of evolution over the ages! This is a notorious case of the flagrant circular reasoning that is frequently used for evidence in modern scientific philosophy. It is significant that, before the time of Lyell and Darwin, and their followers and popularizers (Marx, Spencer, Huxley, Nietzsche, et al.), the dominant theory of geology for the preceding century, that of the great awakening in science, had been the Flood theory, which understood the sedimentary rocks and their fossil contents as having been originally deposited as sediments during the awful year of the Great Flood and the century or so following.

This explanation of the geologic strata was never disproved. It was simply rejected as inconsistent with the philosophies of progress and humanism and evolutionary socialism that came into vogue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

7. Actually, there is much evidence that most of the strata must have been deposited rapidly, not gradually (otherwise, for example, how could their fossil contents have been preserved?). Furthermore, instead of a universal principle of evolutionary progress in the world, the Second Law of Thermodynamics combines with all actual human experience to indicate rather that there prevails a universal law of decay and deterioration in the world.

Although creationism and catastrophism, as opposed to evolutionary uniformitarianism, does represent a minority view in science, it is an increasingly recognized view. There is not only overwhelming Biblical

testimony, but also adequate supporting scientific data, to warrant acceptance of the Noahic Flood.

### **GENESIS 9:3**

„Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. As the green herb, I have given you all“.

Many use this verse to show that all meats are fit to eat.

1. *„I have given you all things, even as the green herbs“* (Genesis 9:3). In this verse, God is telling Noah that he and his family could now eat animal flesh without fear of exterminating a particular species. This would have been a natural concern for Noah as there was a limited amount of animals on the ark. However, God reassured him with this verse.
2. It does not mean that animals were not eaten before the Flood. Abel kept sheep and sacrificed of the firstlings of his flock and of the fattest ones.

## GENESIS 9:21-25

„And he drank of the wine, and was drunken. And he was uncovered within his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father. And their faces were backward, and they did not see their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his youngest son had done to him. And he said, **Cursed be Canaan.** He shall be a servant of servants to his brothers”.

Many wonder why Canaan was cursed.

1. The English word „uncovered” has been translated from the Hebrew word „galah” meaning to denude for an immoral sexual purpose (Leviticus 20:11, 17-18, 20-21). Apparently, someone had committed a homosexual act with Noah while he was drunk with wine.
2. Combining the information in Genesis 9:22 with the personal pronoun „his” in Genesis 9:24 could imply Ham was the guilty party. We must determine to whom the pronoun „his” applies.
  - a. The word „younger” in Genesis 9:24 can also be translated „youngest”. Ham was not Noah's youngest son, but his middle son (Genesis 10:1). Canaan, though, was Ham's youngest son (Genesis 10:6).
  - b. Genesis 9:22 and Genesis 9:18 emphasize Canaan by saying twice that he was the son of Ham without mentioning any of Noah's other grandchildren.
3. Therefore, Genesis 9:24 could read, „And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what Ham's youngest son (Canaan) had done unto him”. Canaan was cursed because he was the one who had committed the act. Ham only saw his father's nakedness and reported it to his brothers. Shem and Japheth walked backwards to cover their father out of respect for him and because they didn't want to see the evidence of what had happened to him.

## GENESIS 14:18

„And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine. And he was priest of God Most High“.

Some don't understand who Melchizedek was in the Old Testament.

1. Melchizedek is the King of Salem and the priest of the Most High (Genesis 14:18, Hebrews 7:1). Hebrews 7:2 adds that He is also the King of Righteousness and that the King of Salem is the King of Peace.
2. Hebrews 7:3 says He was *„without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abides a priest continually“*.

Therefore, Melchizedek was a spirit being. He could not have been human for three reasons:

- a. A human could not be the King of Righteousness because *„all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God“* (Romans 3:23) and have therefore broken God's Law of Righteousness. None are righteous and do good (Psalms 14:1-3, Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:10). Jesus said, *„There is none good but one, that is, God...“* (Matthew 19:17).
  - b. A human could not be the King of Peace because *„the way of peace they (men) have not known“* (Romans 3:17).
  - c. He has existed forever, without father or mother.
3. Melchizedek could not have been an angel because even the angels were created and therefore had a „beginning of days“.
  4. Melchizedek could not have been God the Father because He was *„priest of the Most High God“* and He was seen by Abraham. No one has seen God the Father (John 1:18, 5:37).



5. Speaking prophetically of Christ, David said, *„You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek”* (Psalms 110:4). This statement is quoted also in Hebrews 5:6, 10.

Hebrews 7:3 says Melchizedek was made *„like unto the Son of God”*. In the days of Abraham, the One who became Jesus Christ was not yet the *„Son of God”*. This was His manifestation to the ancients. Since there could not be two High Priests, Melchizedek was the One who became Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:20 also says that Christ was a Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

## GENESIS 14:20

„And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And Abram gave him a tenth of all”.

Some believe that tithing originated with Moses and that tithing is part of the Mosaic law. Yet, the Bible mentions that Abraham paid tithes. How did Abraham know about tithing?

1. Abraham knew the importance of tithing because God taught him His statutes and laws. Notice: *„Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws”* (Genesis 26:5).
2. Abraham, in turn, instructed Isaac, who instructed his son, Jacob, concerning tithing (Genesis 18:19). The English word „tithe” simply means „tenth”. Therefore, when Abraham „tithed”, they gave the tenth of their increase to God's representative at the time. This individual happened to be Melchizedek, who was the priest of the most high God (Genesis 14:18).
3. Jacob vowed to pay God a „tenth”, or „tithe” of all that God would give Jacob (Genesis 28:22) as his father and grandfather had done.
4. After God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He chose the tribe of Levy and established the priesthood through them.
5. The children of Israel continued to pay God's tithe, and God in turn directed the Levites, who functioned as God's representatives, to collect the tithe as their wages from God.
6. With the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Testament Church, God has ordained that His tithe be paid to His true ministers and be used to finance God's Work today.

## GENESIS 15:13

„And he said to Abram, Know of a certainty that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs. And shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years“.

Many believe that this scripture contradicts Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17 which mentions 430 years. Why is there a difference?

1. Genesis 15:13 states that Abraham's seed (Acts 7:6) – not Abraham – was to be „*a stranger in a land (that is) not theirs... and they shall afflict them 400 years*“.
2. This would be the length of time from the death of Abraham (76 years after the covenant was made – compare Genesis 25:7 with Genesis 17:1) through the 40 years' wandering to the division of the land when the children of Israel received their inheritance under the direction of Joshua. This occurred 6 years after they entered the land of Canaan (see Numbers 10:11 and Joshua 14:7-10).
3. The 400 years begins with the death of Abraham (1797 B.C.) and ends when Israel divided the Promised Land (1397 B.C.)
  - a. Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7). 76 years after the covenant was made.
  - b. Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made (Genesis 17:1-2).
  - c. Abraham's seed was oppressed 400 years (Acts 7:6) in a land not theirs (Genesis 15:13).
  - d. The Promised Land was divided in 1397 B.C. (Joshua 13:7). This occurred 45 years after Joshua spied out the land (Joshua 14:7-10). The spies were sent out in 1442 B.C., one year after leaving Egypt (Numbers 1:1, 13:1).
4. The 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 began with the confirming of the covenant God made with Abraham – when Abraham was 99

years old in 1873 B.C. Notice Genesis 17:1-10: „*And when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be you perfect... and Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations... and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you...*”

5. Genesis 21:1-5 continues the story. Sarah finally became pregnant at the „set time” (Genesis 21:2). This physical evidence fully confirmed the covenant, and Isaac, the son of the promise, was born in 1872 B.C. when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5).
6. Since Galatians 3:17 states that the law was given 430 years after the covenant was made, it is evident that the 430 years began when Abraham was 99 years old and ended the year of the exodus of his descendants out of Egypt in 1443 B.C. and their appearance at Sinai. The law was given on the day of Pentecost 1443 B.C., soon after Israel left Egypt.
7. The 430-year period begins with the confirming of the covenant (1873 B.C.) and ends with Exodus (1443 B.C.).
  - a. Genesis 17:1-2 shows that Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made.
  - b. Israel left Egypt 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham. Exodus 12:40 in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint Version (LXX) reads as follows: „The time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan (was) 430 years”.
  - c. The dwelling period of Israel in Egypt extended from Jacob's bringing his family into Egypt during the famine to Israel's Exodus: 1682-1443 B.C., or 239 years.

- d. Galatians 3:17 shows that the law was given 430 years after God made the covenant with Abraham. Paul, therefore, accepted the Septuagint Version chronology. This chronology is also supported by the genealogy of Exodus 6:14-20 which allows only four generations between Jacob and Moses, and there is reason to think that the genealogical table has been abridged.

### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 430 YEARS AND THE 400 YEARS:**

Birth of Abraham – 1972 B.C.

Covenant confirmed when Abraham was 99 years old – 1873 B.C.

Death of Abraham – 1797 B.C.

Exodus (Law given at Pentecost) – 1443 B.C.

Period between 1873 B.C., when covenant was confirmed with Abraham to the Law given at Pentecost in 1443 B.C. is 430 years.

Period of wandering of Israel from the Pentecost when the Law was given in 1443 B.C. to the entering into the Promised Land in 1403 B.C. is 40 years.

Period of 6 years during which Israel divided the land brings us to 1397 B.C.

From the death of Abraham in 1797 B.C. to the year when division of the Promised Land was completed in 1397 B.C. there are 400 years.

## GENESIS 17:10

„This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee: every male among you shall be circumcised“.

Some don't understand why the act of circumcision is not necessary today. Yet, this scripture commands circumcision as the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants.

1. Circumcision is not a necessary as a religious requirement for salvation. Under the new covenant, God is calling a remnant of Israel begotten by His Spirit. That Spirit-led nation is composed of converted individuals who have His Holy Spirit. True Christians are now all to be „circumcised“ spiritually.
2. Physical circumcision was only a forerunner or type of circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4). Let us also notice Romans 2:28-29: *„A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, nor by the written code (in the letter)...“*
3. Spiritual circumcision is a process of conversion. It is Jesus Christ who circumcises one's heart – spiritually. *„And you have been given fullness in Christ... In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ“* (Colossians 2:10-11, NIV).
4. This is why God inspired the apostles and elders of the New Testament church to decree that physical circumcision was no longer necessary for salvation (Acts 15:24, 28).

## GENESIS 21:33

„And Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of LORD, the Everlasting God“.

Some use this verse to show that Abraham planted a grove when the Bible condemned it.

1. The Hebrew word „eshel“, translated as „grove“ here, means tree or tamarisk tree. It is translated as tree in 1 Samuel 22:6 and 1 Samuel 31:13. This verse is also translated as „tamarisk tree“ in various other English translations, for example in Moffatt version. In Strong's Concordance, every other reference in the Bible to „grove“ or „groves“ comes from the Hebrew word „asherah“ for the **pagan goddess** known as Asherah, Astarte, and Ishtar.
2. Thus Genesis 21:33 does not say Abraham worshipped the tree, or worshipped there. Abraham called on God and trusted in Him (Genesis 12:8, 13:4, 17:7, 13, 19).
3. Apparently, the tree was planted as a witness to his faith in God, since a tree is sturdy and immovable.
  - a. It was a custom of that time and area to plant a tree to symbolize the long duration of something – such as a treaty – to be valid indefinitely.
  - b. The tree was planted as a witness to the covenant or treaty between Abraham and Abimelech after a disagreement over a well. The place was named Beersheeba because of their agreement (Genesis 21:23-24, 30-32).

## GENESIS 28:22

„then this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God's house. And of all that thou shall give me I will surely give the tenth to thee“.

Some believe that tithing originated with Moses and that tithing is part of the Mosaic law. Yet, the Bible mentions that Jacob paid tithes. How did Jacob know about tithing?

1. Abraham knew the importance of tithing because God taught him His statutes and laws. Notice: *„Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws“* (Genesis 26:5).
2. Abraham, in turn, instructed Isaac, who instructed his son, Jacob, concerning tithing (Genesis 18:19). The English word „tithe“ simply means „tenth“. Therefore, when Abraham „tithed“, they gave the tenth of their increase to God's representative at the time. This individual happened to be Melchizedek, who was the priest of the most high God (Genesis 14:18).
3. Jacob vowed to pay God a „tenth“, or „tithe“, of all that God would give Jacob (Genesis 28:22) as his father and grandfather had done.
4. After God delivered the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage, He chose the tribe of Levy and established the priesthood through them.
5. The children of Israel continued to pay God's tithe, and God in turn directed the Levites, who functioned as God's representatives, to collect the tithe as their wages from God.
6. With the coming of Christ and the establishment of the New Testament Church, God has ordained that His tithe be paid to His true ministers and be used to finance God's Work today.



## GENESIS 30:37-40

„And Jacob took for him rods of fresh poplar, and of the almond and of the plane tree, and peeled white streaks in them, and made the white which was in the rods appear. And he set the rods which he had peeled before the flocks in the gutters in the watering troughs where the flocks came to drink. And they conceived when they came to drink. And the flocks conceived before the rods, and the flocks brought forth ringstreaked, speckled, and spotted. And Jacob separated the lambs, and set the faces of the flocks toward the ringstreaked and all the black in the flock of Laban. And he put his own herds apart, and did not put them near Laban's flock”.

Some want to understand how the rods affected the color of Jacob's flock.

1. This account is somewhat vague in the King James Version because the translators did not fully understand what Jacob did. Genesis 30:41-42, however, indicate clearly that Jacob was practicing selective breeding.
2. Evidently, Jacob built pens or corrals around the watering troughs using rods made by peeling poplar, hazel, and chestnut limbs. Instead of driving the animals together, he just waited until they came to drink and then penned them in. Genesis 30:38 is poorly translated and does not mean Jacob put the rods in the watering troughs.
3. Jacob separated the weaker males from the breeding flock, leaving the stronger ones to produce offspring. God then miraculously intervened on Jacob's behalf and caused the offspring to have the coloring Laban had promised to Jacob. In other words, Jacob did his part by seeing to it that the stronger males bred the herds and flocks in order to produce strong offspring. God rewarded Jacob by causing the newborn animals to have the proper coloring.
4. Jacob took poles or logs and peeled the bark off in strips, making them striped like a barber pole by exposing the light colored wood. When these rods were placed on the ground, the cattle would not cross them because they did not want to be hurt or have the feet caught. This method is still used today with cattle guards made of wood or metal, or even painting white stripes on the highway.

5. These cattle guards allowed Jacob to separate the spotted, speckled, and ringstraked cattle so he could use selective breeding to increase his herd.

## **GENESIS 32:32**

„Therefore the sons of Israel do not eat the sinew of the hip which is upon the hollow of the thigh, to this day, because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew of the hip“.

Some wonder if Christ's followers are bound to observe this Jewish custom.

1. The children of Israel began the observance of this custom voluntarily, out of respect for their ancestor Jacob. This tradition was faithfully observed by the Jews in the time of Jesus, as is recorded in the *Antiquities of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus (Book I, Chapter XX, section 2), and is followed today by some Orthodox Jews. There is, however, no record in the Bible that Jesus Himself ever observed it. It was a tradition of men and is not binding upon Christ's followers today.
2. It would not be wrong to observe this custom today. Such an observance, however, would be totally unnecessary.

## GENESIS 49:10

„The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, **until Shiloh come**, and to him shall the obedience of the peoples be”.

Some have a question about the phrase *„until Shiloh come”*.

1. Although several alternative translations for the phrase *„until Shiloh come”* have been suggested, the one found in the King James Version fits the Hebrew construction. Until modern times, the majority of both Christian and Jewish scholars translated this passage the same way and also applied it to the Messiah.
2. The traditional understanding is that Shiloh comes from the root word peace. With this in mind, the passage could be phrased to read, *„until the man of peace comes”*. Please compare this with the last part of Isaiah 9:6 (Revised Standard Version): *„For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; And the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called „Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*.

## EXODUS 4:24-26

„And it came to pass on the way at the lodging-place, that LORD met him, and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a flint, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet. And she said, Surely a bridegroom of blood thou art to me. So he let him alone. Then she said, A bridegroom of blood thou art, because of the circumcision“.

Some question why God wanted to kill Moses.

1. Exodus 4:24 has been disputed by a number of Hebrew scholars as to whether or not it was Moses or his son whom God sought to kill. Exodus 4:24 does not clearly give an answer.
2. Moses knew that all Israelites were to be circumcised after they were eight days old. However, his wife was a gentile and did not believe in circumcision. Apparently, Moses let his wife have her way and failed to circumcise his son.
3. If we will read all of Exodus 4, we will see that Moses was going back to lead God's people, Israel, out of Egypt, and yet did not have his own house in subjection. God could not allow His direct representative to lead the entire nation of Israel when he had not faithfully obeyed the command to circumcise his own son. See Genesis 17:10-14.

## EXODUS 12:40

„Now the time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan was four hundred and thirty years“.

Some believe that this scripture contradicts Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 which mentions 430 years. Why is there a difference?

1. The 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 began with the confirming of the covenant God made with Abraham – when Abraham was 99 years old in 1873 B.C. Notice Genesis 17:1-10: *„And when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be you perfect... and Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations... and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you...“*

2. Genesis 21:1-5 continues the story. Sarah finally became pregnant at the „set time“ (Genesis 21:2). This physical evidence fully confirmed the covenant, and Isaac, the son of the promise, was born in 1872 B.C. when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5).

3. Since Galatians 3:17 states that the law was given 430 years after the covenant was made, it is evident that the 430 years began when Abraham was 99 years old and ended the year of the exodus of his descendant out of Egypt in 1443 B.C. and their appearance at Sinai. The law was given on the day of Pentecost 1443 B.C., soon after Israel left Egypt.

4. The 430-year period begins with the confirming of the covenant (1873 B.C.) and ends with Exodus (1443 B.C.).

a. Genesis 17:1-2 shows that Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made.

b. Israel left Egypt 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham. Exodus 12:40 in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint Version (LXX) reads as follows: „The time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan (was) 430 years“.

c. The dwelling period of Israel in Egypt extended from Jacob's bringing his family into Egypt during the famine to Israel's Exodus: 1682-1443 B.C., or 239 years.

d. Galatians 3:17 shows that the law was given 430 years after God made the covenant with Abraham. Paul, therefore, accepted the LXX chronology. This chronology is also supported by the genealogy of Exodus 6:14-20, which allows only four generations between Jacob and Moses, and there is reason to think that the genealogical table has been abridged.

5. Genesis 15:13 states that Abraham's seed (Acts 7:6) – not Abraham – was to be „*a stranger in a land (that is) not theirs... and they shall afflict them 400 years*“.

6. This would be the length of time from the death of Abraham (76 years after the covenant was made – compare Genesis 25:7 with Genesis 17:1) through the 40 years' wandering to the division of the land when the children of Israel received their inheritance under the direction of Joshua. This occurred 6 years after they entered the land of Canaan (see Numbers 10:11 and Joshua 14:7-10).

7. The 400 years begins with the death of Abraham (1797 B.C.) and ends when Israel divided the Promised Land (1397 B.C.)

a. Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7). 76 years after the covenant was made.

b. Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made (Genesis 17:1-2).

c. Abraham's seed was oppressed 400 years (Acts 7:6) in a land not theirs (Genesis 15:13).

d. The Promised Land was divided in 1397 B.C. (Joshua 13:7). This occurred 45 years after Joshua spied out the land (Joshua 14:7-10). The spies were sent out in 1442 B.C., one year after leaving Egypt (Numbers 1:1, 13:1).

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 430 YEARS AND THE 400 YEARS:**

Birth of Abraham – 1972 B.C.

Covenant confirmed when Abraham was 99 years old – 1873 B.C.

Death of Abraham – 1797 B.C.

Exodus (The law given at Pentecost) – 1443 B.C.

Period between 1873 B.C., when covenant was confirmed with Abraham to the Law given at Pentecost in 1443 B.C. is 430 years.

Period of wandering of Israel from the Pentecost when the Law was given in 1443 B.C. to the entering into the Promised Land in 1403 B.C. is 40 years.

Period of 6 years during which Israel divided the land brings us to 1397 B.C.

From death of Abraham in 1797 B.C. to the year when division of the Promised Land was completed in 1397 B.C. there are 400 years.



## EXODUS 15:4

„Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea, and his chosen captains are sunk in the Red Sea“.

Some wonder whether or not Moses and the Israelites passed through the body of water we call the Red Sea. Some have suggested that the Israelites actually crossed a reedy marsh north of the Gulf of Suez. The Bible itself, however, proves that this is not what happened.

1. The modern-day Red Sea, with the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, was known by the Hebrews as Yam Suph – the Reed Sea. It was in the Reed Sea that Solomon based a „navy of ships“ (1 Kings 9:26-28). It was also the Reed Sea which at first stopped the Israelites in their trek out of Egypt (Exodus 15:4, 22). Was Yam Suph a marsh or a shallow lake? Did the translators make a mistake in identifying this place as the Red Sea?

The evidence proves that the answer to both of these questions is no. Solomon's ships brought back great treasures from distant ports. The gold alone weighed about 22 tons (1 Kings 9:28). The language and meaning is clear. Solomon's men did not merely pole their way across a lake and return with a few ounces of the precious metal. Solomon's ships were seagoing vessels and were manned by those who were thoroughly experienced in sailing the oceans (1 Kings 9:27).

2. But there is stronger evidence yet. The biblical description of the crossing of yam suph could hardly be applied to wading across a reed-filled, marshy bog. Notice: *„Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea into dry land, and the waters were divided. So the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea on the dry ground, and the waters were a WALL to them on their right hand and on their left“* (Exodus 14:21-22, NKJ; compare with Exodus 14:29).

Notice also Exodus 14:28-30: *„Then the waters returned and covered the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them. Not so much as one of them remained... So*

*the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore".*

3. Elsewhere it is shown that Pharaoh's army drowned in the water as it overflowed them (Exodus 15:4, Hebrews 11:29, Deuteronomy 11:4). The water returned with such great force that not one Egyptian escaped.
4. And consider, even though they walked on dry ground, the Psalmist tells us that the children of Israel passed through the depths of yam suph (Psalm 106:9). Notice Moses' song: *„Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; His chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them; they sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You; You sent forth Your wrath which consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of Your nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood upright like a heap; and the depths congealed in the heart of the sea" (Exodus 15:4-8).*
5. In the New Testament, the crossing of the Red Sea is referred to as a *„baptism"* of the Israelites (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). True baptism is accomplished only by total immersion in water. With a wall of water standing on each side of the fleeing Israelites and the cloud covering them, the entire nation, in effect, was buried in water. The picture is striking. Walking across a dried-up marsh, on the other hand, could hardly be taken to represent baptism.
6. The Bible record clearly refers to what we know of today as the Gulf of Suez (Red Sea), the same sea which is several miles wide and hundreds of feet deep. The crossing of the Red Sea was a spectacular miracle which carries great meaning for Christ's followers today.

## EXODUS 15:19

„The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil, my desire shall be satisfied upon them. I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them“.

Some wonder whether or not the pharaoh of the Exodus drowned in the Red Sea.

1. The pharaoh of Egypt at that time was Amenhotep II. The overwhelming biblical and historical evidence is that he did not die with his army in pursuit of Israel.
2. In Psalm 136:15, we find that God „*overthrew Pharaoh and his host (army) in the Red sea*“. The Hebrew word translated here as „overthrew“ is na`ar. This word is also found in Exodus 14:27. It does not mean “to drown” or “to toss or tumble about as in the water” as some have attempted to assert. It simply means „shook off“ as is mentioned in the margins of many Bibles and in various lexicons. Nehemiah 5:13 is a good illustration of how na`ar should be translated. Therefore, these verses simply say that God shook off the Egyptians (including pharaoh) from their pursuit of the Israelites. These scriptures say nothing of who was drowned.
3. In Exodus 14:28 we see that the waters covered „the host of Pharaoh“, but pharaoh himself is not mentioned. Exodus 15:19 reads: „*For the horse of Pharaoh went in with his chariots and with his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought again the waters of the sea upon them*“ (Authorized King James Version).

At first, this might appear to be evidence that pharaoh drowned. But an examination of this Exodus 15:19 reveals that „horse“ should not be singular. Exodus 15:19 is correctly rendered in the New King James Version (also called the Revised Authorized Version): „*For the horses of Pharaoh went with his chariots and his horsemen into the sea, and the Lord brought back the waters of the sea upon them*“.

Naturally, the horses and horsemen of Egypt were considered to be Pharaoh's. But this scripture does not say that pharaoh's personal horse, or that pharaoh himself, drowned in the sea.

4. This is significant because the death of such an important person would almost certainly have been given special note in the Bible. The Old Testament contains many clear references to the deaths of enemy kings, most of them much less important than this pharaoh. Archaeology proves that Amenhotep II ruled for at least 16 years after the Exodus.

## EXODUS 20:4

„Thou shall not make to thee a graven image, nor any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth“.

Some wonder about having pictures or statues of Christ.

1. The Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4) prohibits the use of anything which represents God or could easily become an object of worship.
2. Since Jesus Christ is God (Hebrews 1:8), this would directly prohibit any picture or likeness of His person.
3. In addition, so-called pictures or statues of Christ have no similarity whatsoever to the way Jesus Christ really looked. Christ inspired the apostle Paul to write in 1 Corinthians 11:14: *„Does not even nature (the inborn quality of a man as contrasted to that of a woman) itself teach you, that, if a man has long hair, it is a shame unto him?“*

Yet, these pictures invariably show a man with long hair, soft feminine features, and a sentimental, sanctimonious look in his eyes. This is NOT the Christ of our Bible.

4. Jesus was undoubtedly very masculine in appearance. He spent most of His time outdoors during His ministry. He was not womanish in appearance, but rather had short hair like a man should have.
5. Christ inspired the prophet Isaiah (53:2) to describe His human appearance in this way: *„For He (Jesus) shall grow up before him... He had no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him“.*
6. As a human being, Jesus was a normal, healthy, perhaps somewhat „outdoorsy“-looking young Jew. Therefore, most crucifixes, pictures, and images of Jesus are in total opposition to every

description given of Him in the sacred Word of God. They give a false impression of the true Jesus Christ in every respect.

7. If we think of Jesus' appearance at all, we should think in general terms at least, of the way He looks today. He inspired John to describe His present appearance in these words: *„His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire“* (Revelation 1:14).

Christ, through John in the book of Revelation, tells us that His overall countenance is as the sun shining in its full strength (Revelation 1:16).

## **EXODUS 20:12**

„Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee“.

Some wonder about whether Father’s and/or Mother’s Days are pagan holidays.

1. Neither of these days is fundamentally religious in character (in the United States or elsewhere). They are secular holidays of comparatively recent origin. In this world, parents are too often forgotten and neglected in day-to-day living. This world tries to make up for this by a special holiday dedicated to the role of each parent. The Bible, of course, teaches that parents should be honored at all times (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3).
2. The followers of Christ follow God’s instructions in remembering and honoring parents. If one also wants to send a card with personal best wishes or telephone parents on Mother’s Day or Father’s Day, there is nothing wrong with doing so.

## EXODUS 20:13

„Thou shall not murder“.

Some have a question concerning the subject of „mercy killing“.

1. There has been a great deal of controversy about this practice which is called euthanasia in medical circles. Few, it seems, look to the Bible to see what God says. When we do, we find that from the beginning God intended that each human being live out a productive and fulfilling life in preparation for eternal life with Him in His Kingdom.
2. We also find in the Bible that the giving and taking of life is a prerogative which belongs only to God, the Giver of life (Psalms 36:9, John 6:35).
3. While God has authorized man's governments to end the lives of those who have committed murder and the like (see Romans 13), there is no support in the Scripture for ending the life of an innocent person simply because of sickness, old age, or disease. In fact, God's Word shows that the weak are to be cared for, not murdered (see 1 Thessalonians 5:14).
4. On the other hand, the idea that heroic measures must be taken to keep a terminally ill person alive as long as possible is not biblical either. There is no sense prolonging a person's dying. Many righteous people in the Bible knew when they were dying, got their affairs in order, gathered their families to say good-bye, and simply died. It is not wrong to ask God in His mercy to allow a suffering person to peacefully die.



## EXODUS 23:19

„The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shall bring into the house of LORD thy God. Thou shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk“.

Some have a question concerning the command not to „seethe a kid (young goat) in his mother's milk“.

1. This command is also found in Exodus 34:26 and Deuteronomy 14:21.
2. The setting of each of these verses is the proper observance of God's Holy Days. God did not want His people borrowing customs from the pagans to use in worshipping Him: *„Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh. Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD... When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it“* (Deuteronomy 12:23-32).
3. According to *Peake's Commentary*, the pagans practiced a fertility rite which involved boiling a young goat in the milk of its mother and sprinkling the broth on their fields and gardens. They believed that doing so was a magic charm which would insure and increase the yield of their crops. God warned Israel not to pollute His Holy Days by following this pagan custom.

## EXODUS 28:30

„And thou shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goes in before LORD. And Aaron shall bear the judgment of the sons of Israel upon his heart before LORD continually“.

Some wonder about the Urim and Thummim.

1. Exodus 28:30 states that the Urim and Thummim were placed in a breastplate which was worn by Aaron, the high priest, and that this breastplate was able to reveal God's judgment. In Numbers 27:21 is an account of the Urim being used to give judgment; it showed what God wanted Israel to do: *„And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation“*.
2. Josephus, a well-known Jewish-Roman historian, wrote about Urim and Thummim in Book 3, Section VIII of his book *Antiquities of the Jews*. He describes the Urim as being two sardonyx stones which were placed on the shoulders of the high priest; and the Thummim, he says, were 12 stones which were set in three rows of four stones in a breastplate which the high priest also wore. When God wished to guide the Israelites, He often did so by means of these stones. Josephus states, *„God declared beforehand by these twelve stones which the high priest bear on his breast, and which were inserted into his breastplate, when they should be victorious in battle; for so great a splendor shone forth from them that the army began to march, that all the people were sensible (aware) of God being present for their assistance“*.
3. These few details from historical tradition plus the brief mention in the Bible is all the information presently available on this subject.

## EXODUS 34:26

„The first of the first-fruits of thy ground thou shall bring to the house of LORD thy God. Thou shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk“.

Some have a question concerning the command not to „*seethe a kid* (young goat) *in his mother's milk*“.

1. This command is also found in Exodus 23:19 and Deuteronomy 14:21.
2. The setting of each of these verses is the proper observance of God's Holy Days. God did not want His people borrowing customs from the pagans to use in worshipping Him (Deuteronomy 12:23-32).
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### EXODUS 35:3

„Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day“.

This verse seems to indicate that you cannot light a fire for cooking or warmth on the Sabbath.

1. The command in Exodus 35:3 was given in the context of smelting metal for the building of the tabernacle and does not apply to lighting a fire to keep warm or to heat food.
2. Also, the man in Numbers 15:32-36 was not merely picking up a few „sticks“ as the King James Version might appear to indicate. This incident is mentioned in the context of one who acts presumptuously (Numbers 15:30-31). Obviously, this individual knew he should not be laboring on God's Sabbath gathering woods (not „sticks“). Had there been a genuine need he would certainly have been given assistance, rather than the penalty he received for his rebellion.

## LEVITICUS 3:4

„And the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away“.

Some have a question concerning eating animal fat and kidneys.

1. The Bible specifically prohibits eating animal fat (Leviticus 3:17, 7:23). In addition, the Levitical priesthood was instructed to remove the kidneys and „*the caul above the liver*“ and burn them upon the altar along with the fat (Exodus 29:13, Leviticus 3:3-5, 9-11).
2. The New King James Version translates „the caul above the liver“ as the „*fatty lobe attached to the liver above the kidneys*“ (Leviticus 3:4). The „caul“ of an animal is defined in *Unger's Bible Dictionary* as the „liver-net, or stomach-net, which commences as the division between the right and left lobes of the liver, and stretches on the one side across the stomach, and on the other to the regions of the kidney“. In other words, the „caul“ is the fatty membrane surrounding the liver and the kidneys.
3. Since the priests never ate the fatty membrane or the kidneys, the indication is that we should also do well to not eat those parts.

### **LEVITICUS 3:17**

„It shall be a perpetual statute for your generations throughout all your dwellings, that ye eat neither fat nor blood“.

Some use this verse to prove that a follower of Christ should not receive a blood transfusion.

1. Although the Bible does not specifically mention this medical practice, we do not believe God will condemn one for having a transfusion. Some religious groups have misinterpreted God's command against eating blood (Leviticus 3:17) and have mistakenly extended it to receiving blood by transfusion. Ingesting blood and receiving it into circulatory system are not the same thing.
2. While having a transfusion is not a sin, there are medical risks involved, as any doctor might tell you. Thus, one ought to weigh these risks and the anticipated benefits carefully.

## LEVITICUS 11:8

„Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they *are* unclean to you“.

Some wonder whether the use of medicines, vitamins, and mineral supplements derived from unclean animals would violate the biblical laws concerning clean and unclean meats.

1. God commands us not to eat the flesh of certain animals. The scriptural instructions concerning food are abundantly clear.
2. Products that are consumed, however, can be broadly divided into the two categories of food and nonfood.

Food is what we eat on a regular basis to sustain our physical life. Medications, drugs, and supplements would be in the category of nonfood.

In the nonfood category, we may find that some products are made from chemicals obtained from animals God classifies as unclean. Manufacturers select animals for economical reasons and process specific parts in order to obtain particular chemicals, minerals, or vitamins in concentrated form. Calcium, an element, can be extracted from oyster shells. Two chemicals which are commonly processed from unclean animals are estrogen, from horses, and insulin, from pigs. Some vitamins are also composed of chemicals processed from unclean animals. Vitamin A oil is obtained from fish livers.

3. Consuming these types of nonfood items, however, is not the equivalent of eating the flesh of unclean animals. Therefore, such products are not forbidden. Of course, „*whatsoever is not of faith is sin*“ (Romans 14:23). If the prospect of using such an item defiles one’s conscience, one should obtain a product that does not cause concern.

## LEVITICUS 15:19

„And if a woman have an issue, *and* her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even”.

Some have a question concerning a husband and wife having sexual intercourse during the time the wife is menstruating.

1. The primary biblical instruction about this is found in Leviticus 15:19-30. We may also wish to read Leviticus 18:19 and Leviticus 20:18.

In this law given to ancient Israel, it was forbidden for a husband and wife to have sexual intercourse when the wife was menstruating. The law protected health and promoted hygiene. While the ceremonial aspects of this law, such as the specified periods of separation and „uncleanness”, are no longer applicable, there is an important principle of health to be considered.

2. Some medical evidence suggests that some diseases may be more easily acquired by a woman during menstruation. Apparently at that time a woman’s vagina is more tender and susceptible to injury. Some form of even minor injury during sex could provide an opening for disease organisms to enter her bloodstream. Also, sex during menstruation presents a positive risk of fragments of the uterus lining migrating to other organs in the pelvic region and producing cysts.
3. The importance of this matter to God is evident from Ezekiel 18:5-9. Here are listed some of the characteristics of a righteous man. Among them is not having sexual intercourse with his wife while she is menstruating (Ezekiel 18:6). Therefore, God’s Word shows that a couple should refrain from coming together sexually during that time.
4. Does this instruction prohibit other methods of lovemaking during menstruation? It does not. However, a Christ following husband would not impose himself upon his wife during that time.



## **LEVITICUS 17:10-11**

„And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it *is* the blood *that* maketh an atonement for the soul“.

Some have a question concerning whether or not eating rare meat is a violation of God’s prohibition against eating blood.

The command in Leviticus 17:10-11 prohibits eating blood as such; it does not refer to juices which remain in the meat. If the animal is allowed to bleed freely at the time it is butchered, God’s requirement has been fulfilled, and we may eat the meat without misgivings. We need not be concerned about any other juice, whether reddish colored or not, which remains in the meat.

## LEVITICUS 19:19

„Ye shall keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind: thou shalt not sow thy field with mingled seed: neither shall a garment mingled of linen and woollen come upon thee“.

Some wonder about wearing clothes made of mixed fabrics when they read this scripture.

1. A companion scripture is Deuteronomy 22:11. It seems strange to us today that God would be concerned with such things as the kinds of cloth used in making garments, the kinds of seeds used in planting, and the breeding of cattle. Ordinarily God would leave such matters to man's judgment. In ancient times, however, idol worshippers made perverted uses of these things in various religious rituals, and God wanted to protect His people from defiling themselves.
2. The setting of Leviticus 18, 19, and 20 is made clear by the following verse: *„You must not imitate the practices of the land of Egypt in which you lived, nor imitate the practices of the land of Canaan to which I am about to bring you“* (Leviticus 18:3, Today's English Version).
3. God did not want His people to copy religions of the peoples around them because they were riddled with sensuality and perversion and even involved the use of seeds and threads of mixed kinds in vain fertility rites.
4. Today, making a garment from cloth of mixed kinds of thread or sowing different kinds of seeds together has nothing to do with religion. Therefore, these practices are no longer of spiritual concern. It is not sin to wear a garment made of mixed fabric or to plant different kinds of seeds together.
5. Some of the things mentioned in Leviticus 19:19 and related passages, however, are inherently wrong – such as mating different kinds of animals together to pique some perverse sexual interest, coupling humans with animals, and incest. These were included in the hideous religious ceremonies conducted at pagan temples, and God, both here

and elsewhere, warned against contaminating oneself with them. They were sinful then, and they still are.

6. The primary message we are to derive from passages like Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11 is that God's people should keep themselves pure and not participate in any of the evil customs of society. Notice 1 John 3:2-3: *„Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure“* (New King James Version).

## LEVITICUS 19:23-25

„And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of. But in the fourth year all the fruit thereof shall be holy to praise the LORD *withal*. And in the fifth year shall ye eat of the fruit thereof, that it may yield unto you the increase thereof: I *am* the LORD your God“.

Some wonder whether this passage concerning a principle in the care of fruit trees still applies today.

1. This passage still applies today. As these verses show, we should not use any of the fruit which is produced during the first three years of the tree's growth. This allows the tree to become established. Often very little or no fruit would be borne at this young age anyway. These three years pertain to the age of the tree itself – from the time it came up, or was rooted – not to the number of years it has borne fruit.
2. In the fourth year – after the tree has grown for three years – the fruit is to be used in praising God. In ancient Israel such fruit, as well as any tithe, was given to the priests and Levites for their personal use. Today, we praise God with the fruit by giving it to one of God's elders or by sending an offering equivalent to its wholesale value to the Church.
3. In the fifth year and following years the fruit produced belongs to the individual (Leviticus 19:25). Of course, we should not forget to tithe on the increase from our fruit trees during this fifth year and onward.
4. This law concerns only those trees that bear fruit and does not apply to shrubs, bushes, grapevines, or olive trees. These types of plants, having a production cycle different from that of fruit trees, are classified in the Bible with field crops. This is shown in the law of gleaning (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:19-22) and in the law of letting the land rest (Leviticus 25:3-5, Exodus 23:10-11). A clear distinction is made between these two types of produce.

5. God promises to bless the increase of our trees – make them more productive – if we obey this command. With this and proper care in their management, God will cause fruit trees to provide us with good crops for many years.

## LEVITICUS 19:27

„Ye shall not round the corners of your heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of thy beard“.

Some wonder whether or not it is wrong to shave or cut one's hair.

1. A similar instruction is found in Leviticus 21:5. Notice a good rendering of these verses in the American Translation by Goodspeed: „You must not shave around your temple, nor do away with the corners of your beard“ (Leviticus 19:27); and, „They must not shave part of their heads bald, nor shave off the corners of their beards, nor make incisions in their bodies“ (Leviticus 21:5).
2. It was a ceremonial custom of the heathen to cut and trim their beards and hair into special shapes in honor of a particular pagan deity – the sun god. The ancient Egyptians had their dark locks cropped short or shaved with great nicety, so the hair which remained on the crown appeared in the form of a circle surrounding the head (the halo has been borrowed from this), while the beard was dressed in a square form. Alternatively, a round bald spot might be shaved on the head.
3. It is this type of false worship the Bible forbids. Shaving one's beard and cutting one's hair for normal good grooming is something entirely different and not at all condemned in the Scriptures!

## LEVITICUS 21:5

„They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh“.

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3. It is this type of false worship the Bible forbids. Shaving one's beard and cutting one's hair for normal good grooming is something entirely different and not at all condemned in the Scriptures!

## LEVITICUS 23:15-16

„And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD“.

Some don't understand the day of the week Pentecost falls on.

1. Leviticus 23:16 clearly states that the day of Pentecost is on the morrow (day) after the seventh day Sabbath. The day after any Sabbath is Sunday. Therefore, Pentecost is on Sunday.
2. The English word „from“ in Leviticus 23:15, as it is commonly used, does not include the first day. For example, a week from Sunday usually means the next Sunday. Using this meaning, seven weeks from Sunday would be 49 days, ending on a Sunday and the 50<sup>th</sup> day would be a Monday.
3. The Hebrew word „min“ when used in the sense of counting from, usually includes the first day. A better translation of Leviticus 23:15 would be: *„And you shall count unto you beginning with the morrow after the Sabbath“.*



## LEVITICUS 27:31

„And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth *part* thereof“.

Some use this verse to show that it is permissible to borrow from one's second tithe provided that an extra twenty percent is added when paying it back.

1. „*Adding the fifth part thereof*“, was an instruction God gave to ancient Israel concerning redeeming the tithes of grain, produce or animals. Rather than give a particular tithe crop, or a particular animal that happened to be the tenth, to the high priest, one could redeem (keep, buy back) it by paying its estimated monetary value plus an additional one-fifth (20 percent).
2. This instruction was given based on Israel's agrarian society, where their medium of exchange was produce and cattle. This procedure does not apply today because we live in a monetary society.

## NUMBERS 21:8-9

„And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived”.

Some use this verse to prove that God told Moses to build an idol.

1. This verse does not say anything about people bowing down to, or worshipping the image of the serpent. Later, when the people began to worship this same serpent, it was destroyed (2 Kings 18:4). It was not to be worshipped. It was not an idol.
2. The image was to perform three functions:
  - a. To remind the people of their sin of speaking against God and Moses (Numbers 21:5). The serpents were sent by God to punish the people (Numbers 21:6). The people then realized their sin and asked Moses to pray that the serpents be removed (Numbers 21:7).
  - b. To impress upon the people the lesson of God’s deliverance from the poisonous serpents.
  - c. To impress upon the people the lesson of coming to God for deliverance from all of their problems.
3. This was also a foreshadow of Jesus Christ being lifted up on a stake when He was crucified and that those who believe in Him should not perish (eternal death), but have everlasting life (John 3:14).

While the serpent was for the physical healing of ancient Israel, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was for the physical and spiritual healing of modern Israel and the whole world.

## DEUTERONOMY 6:4

„Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD”.

Some claim to believe in „one God” while accepting the doctrine of the trinity, which teaches a tri-une God.

1. The Church of God believes in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). In this context, it teaches the full divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions. It accepts every facet of God's self-disclosure as found in the Holy Scriptures.
2. Though the Church considers some positions on the Trinity to be heretical (all forms of Arianism, for example), it maintains that the particular creeds adopted by the Councils since the fourth century come short of an entirely satisfactory explanation of the nature of the Godhead. Indeed, these creedal statements are often contradictory and unnecessarily divisive.
  - a. For example, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan statements of the fourth century speak of the single procession of the Spirit from the Father, which is still the position of the Eastern Church.
  - b. The Councils of Toledo in the fifth and sixth centuries adopted the position of the double procession of the Spirit (both from the Father and the Son), and the Western Church maintains this view to this day.
  - c. Furthermore, debates over monistic and pluralistic traditions have never been resolved. It goes without saying that a full and accurate statement on the nature of God would be a major achievement in the history of dogmatics.

In the meantime, believers need not be concerned in the practice of the Faith, even though theologians and philosophers cannot agree on the nature of God.

3. The Church of God has made all biblical truths an indispensable part of its teaching, including the doctrine that God is One – but not the specific way in which God is One (which is entirely a philosophical matter). It teaches the full divinity of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit – but it does not enter the debate of whether God is an essential, a personal, or a supra-personal being, in the way these terms are used by theologians.
4. God is not a Trinity. The New Testament does not explicitly teach the „personhood“ of the Holy Spirit as later defined in trinitarian thought. The Bible does reveal three entities within the one God-head – the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that the Bible portrays the Holy Spirit as the presence of God in action, distinct from the Father and the Son, yet one with them.
5. The Bible tells us that, upon conversion, the follower of Christ is „born from above“ into the Kingdom of God as one of the „children of God“ (John 3:3, 1 John 3:2). Thus we learn that God has a family (Ephesians 3:15), composed of the Father, and Jesus Christ, the first-born among many brethren (Romans 8:29) and many „children“. The Bible does not teach a „closed“ God-head. Rather, the true followers of Christ can become spirit-composed Sons of God – very members of the God family – if they are changed, at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51) by His Spirit at the resurrection.
6. At the resurrection, the true followers of Christ will become co-inheritors with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). We will be glorified just like Jesus Christ – we will be like Him, „*for we shall see Him as He is*“ (1 John 3:2) as very God. God's family is getting ready for an enormous expansion.
7. The Church of God believes that God's wonderful purpose in creating man is to perfect individuals by the power of Christ and then to give the saints immortality and glory like Christ. God's purpose is to make us His own children in His own Family (Romans 8:17, Philippians 3:21, 1 John 3:2, Revelation 21:7). Ultimately, we are to be born again into the very God Family.

8. The Church of God believes that God the Father and God the Son are both divine persons, and the Holy Spirit is the essence of which God is composed and the power by which He projects Himself and accomplishes His Work. The Holy Spirit proceeds from God (John 15:26) and is poured out in men (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:16-17). We do not believe God is a trinity, as Adventists teach.
9. The Church of God believes that Jesus Christ will soon return from heaven to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, to glorify the saved, and to rule on earth over all nations for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10, 11:15, 20:4-6). During that time all peoples will be given God's truth, and salvation will be opened to all those who have never had their chance (Isaiah 2:2-4).
10. The Church of God teaches that all people who have ever lived will have a fair and ample opportunity for salvation (Matthew 18:14, Romans 11:26, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9). Christ will yet save billions during the Millennium and the judgment period that follows (Isaiah 62, 65:17-25). Those who have died unsaved are not lost. There will be a resurrection in which they will have their opportunity to be saved. This wonderful, encouraging doctrine from God's Word is not understood or taught by other churches!

## DEUTERONOMY 7:2

„And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them“.

Some believe that God told Israel to commit genocide.

1. There are two parts to this question which will be addressed separately:
  - a. This land was promised to the descendants of Abraham forever (Genesis 13:14, 17:7-8) and God would have driven the inhabitants of the land out if Israel had faith in Him and obeyed Him (Exodus 23:28-31, 34:11).
  - b. The inhabitants were living in terrible sin and idolatry (Deuteronomy 9:4-5), including burning their children in idolatry (Deuteronomy 12:29-31). It was more humane to destroy them then since they would be in the second resurrection (Matthew 11:23-24). The people in the land of Sodom were of the same lineage as those in Deuteronomy 7:2.
2. When the Israelites neared the border of the Promised Land the first time, we again see God had promised them the land (Deuteronomy 1:8, 21). The Israelites lacked faith in God to carry out His promises and „murmured against“ and „accused“ Him (Deuteronomy 1:26-28). God then reassured them by reminding them He had fought their battles for them and cared for them when they left Egypt (Deuteronomy 1:29-31). Israel still lacked faith in God (Deuteronomy 1:32). They chose to rebel, to take up weapons and fight against God’s will (Deuteronomy 1:41-43).
3. God’s promise to Abraham of the Promised Land was unconditional, and God’s purpose must stand. It was His responsibility to place the Israelites in the Promised Land. It was their decision whether to rely on God or to fight. Since they chose to fight, God used them as His instruments to drive out the inhabitants of the land. He therefore told them to do whatever fighting and killing was necessary to accomplish

His purpose. If Israel had trusted God, they would only have had to overthrow these peoples' gods and break down their images, NOT fight them (Exodus 23:24, 34:13).

4. When Israel chose to fight instead of trust God to drive the people out, He chose to use them and help them drive the inhabitants from the Promised Land, as His instruments (Deuteronomy 20:1-4). God commanded Israel to destroy the inhabitants because of their wickedness and the abominations they did to their gods – including burning their children in fire – and to prevent them from teaching those abominations to Israel (Deuteronomy 7:2-4, 25; 9:4, 20:16-18; Exodus 23:32-33, 34:12-16).

## DEUTERONOMY 14:21

„Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it unto the stranger that *is* in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien: for thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God. Thou shalt not see the a kid in his mother's milk“.

Some have a question concerning the command not to „see the a kid (young goat) in its mother's milk“.

1. This command is also found in Exodus 23:19 and Exodus 34:26.
2. The setting of each of these verses is the proper observance of God's Holy Days. God did not want His people borrowing customs from the pagans to use in worshipping Him (Deuteronomy 12:23-32).
3. According to *Peake's Commentary*, the pagans practiced a fertility rite which involved boiling a young goat in the milk of its mother and sprinkling the broth on their fields and gardens. They believed that doing so was a magic charm which would insure and increase the yield of their crops. God warned Israel not to pollute His Holy Days by following this pagan custom.



## DEUTERONOMY 22:11

„Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, *as* of woollen and linen together”.

Some wonder about wearing clothes made of mixed fabrics when they read this scripture.

1. A companion scripture is Leviticus 19:19. It seems strange to us today that God would be concerned with such things as the kinds of cloth used in making garments, the kinds of seeds used in planting, and the breeding of cattle. Ordinarily God would leave such matters to man's judgment. In ancient times, however, idol worshippers made perverted uses of these things in various religious rituals, and God wanted to protect His people from defiling themselves.
2. The setting of Leviticus 18, 19, and 20 is made clear by the following verse: „*You must not imitate the practices of the land of Egypt in which you lived, nor imitate the practices of the land of Canaan to which I am about to bring you*” (Leviticus 18:3, Today's English Version).
3. God did not want His people to copy religions of the peoples around them because they were riddled with sensuality and perversion and even involved the use of seeds and threads of mixed kinds in vain fertility rites.
4. Today, making a garment from cloth of mixed kinds of thread or sowing different kinds of seeds together has nothing to do with religion. Therefore, these practices are no longer of spiritual concern. It is not sin to wear a garment made of mixed fabric or to plant different kinds of seeds together.
5. Some of the things mentioned in Leviticus 19:19 and related passages, however, are inherently wrong – such as mating different kinds of animals together to pique some perverse sexual interest, coupling humans with animals, and incest. These were included in the hideous religious ceremonies

conducted at pagan temples, and God, both here and elsewhere, warned against contaminating oneself with them. They were sinful then, and they still are.

6. The primary message we are to derive from passages like Leviticus 19:19 and Deuteronomy 22:11 is that God's people should keep themselves pure and not participate in any of the evil customs of society. Notice 1 John 3:2-3: *„Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure“* (New King James Version).

## DEUTERONOMY 23:2

„A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD“.

Some wonder whether or not an illegitimate child can be a member of the Church.

1. This instruction forbade an illegitimate child or, as some Bible scholars believe, a racially mixed Israelite from holding a public office in the nation of Israel. We should remember that Old Testament Israel was an unconverted, carnal people whose interests had to do only with the flesh. This statute was given in order to keep the physical nation pure and strong.
2. Today, however, God is building a spiritual house rather than a physical nation. Each individual may or may not become a part of the building depending on how he conducts his life. A child is not prevented from receiving eternal life because of his parents' sins, nor are the parents to be cut off from God as a result of their children's sins. Our relationship with God depends wholly upon our own actions (notice Jeremiah 31:29-30).
3. Jesus Christ said that His followers are to worship God in spirit (John 4:23-24). Therefore, one's physical ancestry will not prevent one from becoming a child of God today. The descendants of certain nations and peoples were never to enter the congregation of ancient Israel, but today we are told that all men of all nations may enter God's family upon real repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior (Acts 17:30, Galatians 3:28-29 and 2 Peter 3:9).

## DEUTERONOMY 23:19-20

„Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury: Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it“.

Some wonder whether it is all right to collect interest from others.

1. The Bible teaches that, as they are able, the followers of Christ are to help persons who are in real need and to refrain from charging interest in such situations. We should love our neighbor and not take advantage of his financial difficulties. Jesus said, *„Give to him that asks you, and from him that would borrow of you turn not you away“* (Matthew 5:42).
2. Although a follower of Christ’s attitude should be one of giving, sharing, and helping in meeting the needs of the less fortunate, there are instances when it would be all right to accept interest. For example, if money is loaned to another individual purely as a business deal so he can make money, then it is not wrong to collect interest, because both are sharing in the profits. It is also proper to accept interest from money placed in savings accounts, since the money is earning the increase.
3. By usury is generally understood in the Bible any interest on a loan, whether in money or in wheat or other commodities. Modern usage has confined the meaning of the word to an unlawful interest.
4. The Law of God prohibits rigorous imposing of interest or exacting it, or a return of a loan without regard to the condition of the borrower; if his poverty occasioned his borrowing.
5. Ancient Israel was plainly commanded in Exodus 22:25 not to receive interest for money from any that borrowed for necessity, as in the case of Nehemiah 5:5-7.

## DEUTERONOMY 33:1

„And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death“.

Some wonder why Moses did not pronounce a blessing on the tribe of Simeon when he blessed the other tribes.

1. A possible reason is that Jacob (Israel) had long before excluded Simeon and Levy from a direct inheritance because of their tendency to cruelty. Notice Jacob's pronouncement: „*Simeon and Levy are brethren (a pair, Moffat translation); instruments of cruelty are in their habitations (Hebrew: weapons of violence their kinship)... Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel (a clear reference to the incident recorded in Genesis 34:25-29): I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel“ (Genesis 49:5-7).*
2. This was fulfilled by the intermingling of the Simeonites in the inheritance of Judah (Joshua 19:1) and by the dispersion of the tribe of Levy among the other tribes (Joshua 14:3-4).
3. Of course, we should realize that Simeon was not cursed. It was simply a matter of not being qualified to receive a separate blessing like the other tribes.

## JOSHUA 10:13

„And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. *Is* not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day“.

Many wonder whether the long day of Joshua is a fact of history or only a legend. The question is not whether an alleged miracle could occur, but whether it did occur.

1. The account of the „*long day*“, as found in Joshua 10 is certainly one of the most remarkable records in the Bible. That a day could actually have been extended, even though the length of another whole day, as indicated in Joshua, seems impossible and unbelievable.
2. And yet it is found in the Word of God! Furthermore, it is found in the context of the other events in Israel's conquest of Canaan, the general outline of which has been remarkably confirmed by archaeological discoveries. Dr. Nelson Glueck, an outstanding Holy Land archaeologist, president of Hebrew Union College from 1947 until his death (February 12, 1971) writes in *Rivers in the Desert* (page 31): „As a matter of fact, it may be stated categorically that no archaeological findings have been made which conflict in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible“.
3. According to the narrative, God caused the day to be lengthened in order that the army of Israel could complete the conquest of the Amorite forces before they could escape and regroup under cover of darkness. This was a key battle in the Canaanite campaign, and its outcome would determinate whether or not Israel could win the Promised Land.
4. Thus, the integrity of God's promises was at stake here, as well as the vindication of His moral Law. He had, at one time, delayed the occupation of the land by Abraham's descendants because, as He said, „*the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full*“ (Genesis 15:16).

But by Joshua's time, their wickedness and degeneracy were so pervasive and irreversible (a fact increasingly being confirmed by archaeological research into their cultures) that considerations of mercy, for their neighbors, and even for their descendants, dictated their removal.

5. There was, thus, adequate reason for God to intervene in any way appropriate to accomplish His purpose:
  - a. In the destruction of Amorite power and influence and,
  - b. In the fulfillment of His promises to the seed of Jacob.
6. The reason for using the sun in such an unusual way to do this, quite possibly, was because the Amorites were sun-worshippers. For the chief object of their worship to be used as an agent in their defeat must have implied that the God of Israel was the true God, not only to the Amorites themselves but also to the other peoples of the region who had been intimidated by them.
7. It is noteworthy that the Bible is not the only ancient record of the long day. As a matter of fact, traditions of a long day (or of a long night, among the American Indians and the South Sea Islanders) are quite common among early nations and tribes.

Immanuel Velikovsky, in his book *Worlds in Collision* (New York: Doubleday, 1950, 401) gives abundant documentation of this fact, as have many other writers. It is difficult to account for the widespread incidence of such an unlikely narrative unless it is based on an actual fact of early human history. Whatever the cause, the event itself seems really to have occurred.

8. One common criticism of the Biblical record of the long day is that its language is unscientific. It says, for example, that „*the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day*“ (Joshua 10:13).

Critics say that the Earth, rather than the sun, would have to „stand still“ for the day to be prolonged, since normally its axial rotation controls the length of the day.

9. But such a criticism itself is unscientific! All motion is relative motion, and the sun is moving as well as the Earth. No one knows where in the universe there may be a fixed point of zero motion. That being so, all velocities must necessarily be measured with respect to some arbitrarily assumed fixed reference point. The proper point to choose is normally the one which is most convenient to the observer. In the case of the relative motion of the sun and the Earth to each other, it is almost always most convenient (and therefore most „scientific“) to consider the Earth as fixed and the sun as moving around it. Joshua's language, therefore, is perfectly modern and correct.
10. As a matter of fact, since the account says that the moon also stood still (Joshua 10:13), it may be that the entire solar system stopped in its tracks for a day, with all relative positions and motions simply suspended. This seems no more difficult to believe than that only the Earth stopped rotating.
11. The natural reaction to the idea of a „long day“ is one of incredulity, of course. It would certainly constitute an amazing miracle. The Bible itself says „*there was no day like that before it or after it*“ (Joshua 10:14).
12. But to deny the possibility of the miraculous (and, after all, how do we measure the dynamics of one miracle against another?) is to deny the existence of God. That the Earth should stop rotating on its axis for a time is no more inexplicable than that it should start rotating in the beginning. The Creator who started it could also stop it if He so desired. The question is not whether an alleged miracle could occur, but whether it did occur. The testimony of Scripture, as well as the many supporting traditions, confirms that it did.
13. There was presumably a gradual deceleration of the motions, rather than instantaneous, so that no catastrophic geologic changes need have been caused by the long day. However, the circulation of



the atmosphere and the hydrologic cycle are both controlled to some extent by the earth's rotation, so that such an event would undoubtedly disturb the atmosphere to a profound degree. This is indirectly confirmed by the devastating hail storm which accompanied the long day as recorded in the Bible (Joshua 10:11) and by the many evidences of atmospheric violence noted by Velikovsky in his collection of ancient traditions of the miracle.

14. Although no amount of evidence could prove a miracle to someone who does not want to believe they can occur, there is certainly adequate reason for the followers of Christ to accept Joshua's long day as a real fact of history.

## JUDGES 4:4

„And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time“.

Some wonder whether women should rule.

1. During the time of the judges, Israel went from one captivity to another because of her sins. Of this period God said, „*In those days there was no king in Israel, everyone did what was right in his own eyes*“ (Judges 1:25). Things were being done man's way, not God's way.

Here, Israel had again sinned and done „*evil in the sight of the LORD*“ (Judges 4:1). They had been „*mightily oppressed*“ for 20 years and lacked a strong leader to free them. Israel then „*cried unto the LORD*“ for deliverance (Judges 4:3).

2. Deborah was a prophetess. Her responsibility was giving God's instructions to Israel (Judges 4:6-7), in this case instructions for their deliverance. She also judged Israel according to God's word, not because she wanted to, but because of the deteriorating conditions in Israel she arose to become a MOTHER to them (Judges 5:7).
3. God chose Barak to lead Israel out of captivity (Judges 4:6). He did not want to be a leader, though. When Deborah told him of God's plan for him to lead and deliver Israel, he would only proceed if Deborah went with him (Judges 4:8). God showed his displeasure of Barak's unwillingness to lead by having a woman kill Sisera and take the glory for it instead of him, or any man in the army (Judges 4:9).
4. God created man first, then created woman from man to be a helper for him (Genesis 2:18-23, 1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man (1 Corinthians 11:7).
5. The head of the woman is man (1 Corinthians 11:3). Women are not to teach (preach) in church, but are to be submissive (1 Corinthians 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-12, 1 Peter 3:1). Older women are to teach younger women (Titus 2:3-4).

6. As a sign of the decadence of Israel, God said, *„As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them“* (Isaiah 3:12).
  
7. These scriptures show that women are not to rule, but should be in subjection to man. Deborah was a judge because the people did not heed God and did what was right in their own eyes. Apparently there was not a man competent to lead Israel during Deborah's time so God worked through her.

## JUDGES 11:31

„Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the LORD'S, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering“.

Some have a question as to whether Jephthah kept his vow and sacrificed his daughter.

1. The earliest Christian and Jewish commentators accepted the account of Judges 11 at face value. They believed, as some scholars still do today, that Jephthah carried out his vow and killed his daughter. The medieval Jewish commentator David Kimchi was apparently the first to put forth the idea that Jephthah simply kept her a perpetual virgin. Many modern writers agree with his theory. They cannot believe that one of God's servants could have killed his daughter. But, putting the opinions of men aside, what does the Bible say?
2. The Hebrew of Judges 11 indicates that Jephthah did indeed keep his vow and sacrificed his daughter. But, would God have required him to do that? Was God pleased with his action? Absolutely not! The Bible reveals that human sacrifice is abhorrent to God: *„And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart“* (Jeremiah 7:31).
3. Please also see Jeremiah 32:35. Human sacrifice is totally contrary to God's will!
4. Of course, Jephthah did not make his vow with his daughter in mind. In Judges 11:31, we read that he said, *„Whatsoever comes forth of the doors of my house to meet me... I will offer it up for a burnt offering“.*
5. It was common at that time for houses to have enclosed courtyards where animals were kept. Jephthah incorrectly assumed that the

first creature to meet him upon his return from battle would be an animal.

6. Jephthah made a very rash and foolish vow. He further compounded his error by keeping his vow (Judges 11:39). That, no doubt, was greatly displeasing to God. Nevertheless, Jephthah is mentioned among the faithful listed in Hebrews 11 (see Hebrews 11:32). This leads us to conclude that – like other servants of God – he ultimately realized the error of his own ways, repented, and received God's forgiveness.

## 1 SAMUEL 6:19

„And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter“.

Some wonder about the number of people killed.

1. The King James Version states that at the time the ark of the covenant was returned to Israel by the Philistines, God slew 50,070 men because they had looked inside the ark. Many Bible translations and commentaries reject the number 50,070 as inaccurate and unreasonable. They argue that this verse should read that only 70 men were actually killed.
2. This conclusion, however, is inconsistent with the second part of 1 Samuel 6:19. The Bible plainly states that „*the people lamented, because the Lord had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter*“.
3. The term „*great slaughter*“ is used many times in the Old Testament to describe military engagements where tens of thousands of soldiers were killed. Notice 1 Samuel 4:10 and 1 Samuel 4:17, where 30,000 Israelite soldiers died at the hands of the Philistines in a „*great slaughter*“. Compare also Joshua 10:10, Judges 11:13, and 2 Samuel 18:7.
4. Nevertheless, some people still find the account of 1 Samuel 6:19 difficult to accept. The original Hebrew clearly reads „seventy men, fifty thousand men“. Scholars point to the unusual arrangement of the numbers in that the 70 stands before the 50,000. The smaller number appearing first, however, is not an unprecedented arrangement in the Hebrew language. Even the omission of a conjunction between the two numbers does not change the meaning of the original text.
5. The Bible very precisely states that 50,070 men died in a great slaughter because of the irreverence and presumption of the men of Bethshemesh. The critical arguments of Bible scholars to dismiss the

number 50,000 as a scribal error or a deliberate corruption of the text are a misguided attempt to diminish this dramatic account.

## 1 SAMUEL 28

Many wonder about Saul's visit with the witch of Endor.

1. There are many lessons here. Notice what happened. King Saul asked God about the impending battle with Philistines. But God gave him no answer (1 Samuel 28:1-6). In great fear (1 Samuel 28:5), Saul disguised himself and went to the witch of Endor, a woman who had contact with familiar spirits or demons. She asked, „*Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, bring me up Samuel*” (1 Samuel 28:11).
2. The woman complied with Saul's request – or at least she performed some ritual which made it appear that she did. And „*when the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice*” (1 Samuel 28:12) because she then realized she was dealing with King Saul and could well be in jeopardy of her life for practicing witchcraft (1 Samuel 28:3 and 1 Samuel 28:9). But Saul told her not to be afraid and asked what she had seen. She replied, „*I saw a god-like being coming up out of the earth*” (1 Samuel 28:13, Jewish translation). Saul then asked the woman, „*What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived (thought) that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself*” (1 Samuel 28:14).

In describing what she saw, the woman used these expressions:

- a. „a god-like being”,
- b. „an old man”, and
- c. „he is covered with a mantle”.

There is not one word that it was actually Samuel himself! What did she see? She saw an evil spirit which presented itself in a way in which it could be mistaken for Samuel.

3. The Bible reveals that Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2). He is the god of this world and can transform himself into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:14). Satan and his



demons have the power to produce apparitions and to appear in human or animal forms.

4. The next question arises in 1 Samuel 28:15: „*And Samuel said to Saul, Why have you disquieted me, to bring me up?*” Why does the account read as though Samuel were speaking to Saul? It is merely a matter of what Saul wanted to see and hear. Demons enjoy fooling people.
5. This one took the opportunity to play into Saul’s hand by impersonating Samuel. It apparently knew the outcome of the battle and told Saul that he would die the following day and that his army would be defeated by the Philistines.
6. Deception is one of Satan’s devices (Revelation 12:9). 1 Samuel 28 records that „Samuel” spoke, although it was actually a demon speaking through what looked like a human. Samuel was not there, either in body or spirit. He was, and still is, dead and in his grave, awaiting the resurrection. This account is written, at least in part, from the human point of view, that is, the way it appeared to the witch and to Saul.
7. This scripture in no way contradicts the multitude of clear scriptures proving that the soul is mortal.

## 1 KINGS 8:9

„There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made *a covenant* with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt“.

Some wonder concerning the contents of the ark of the covenant. This scripture seems to contradict Hebrews 9:4.

1. 1 Kings 8:9 and Hebrews 9:4 do seem to contradict each other. One verse says that only the two tables of stone (inscribed with the Ten Commandments) were in the ark. See also 2 Chronicles 5:20. The other verse lists several additional objects which apparently were also in the ark. But, God’s Word does not contradict itself!
2. The original Greek word translated „wherein“ in Hebrews 9:4 is hou. From *Strong’s Concordance* and other sources, we find that „hou“ means „at which place“. „Hou2 is a general word which does not necessarily mean „wherein“, „within“, or „in“. It simply means „in the same location as“.
3. With this in mind, let us notice Deuteronomy 31:24-26: *„And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book (not the Ten Commandments which God had written on two tables of stone, but the civil law which Moses had written in a book – the law of Moses), until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee“.*
4. We notice that the book of the law was not placed inside the ark, but „*in the side of*“ („by the side of“ says Revised Standard Version; „beside“ says New King James) the ark. That is why the book of the law is not mentioned in 1 Kings 8:9 as being in the ark.
5. The book of the law, along with the pot of manna (Exodus 16:33-34) and Aaron’s rod, was kept by the side of the ark, not in it. All of these

items could properly be described as being hou – in the same place as  
– the ark.

## 1 KINGS 17:21

„And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again“.

Some have wondered about Elijah's prayer to God to „*let this child's soul come into him again*“.

1. The word soul in this verse is translated from the Hebrew word nephesh. According to Bagster's *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*, the word „nephesh“ means „breath“ or „anything that breathes“.
2. Man is a living, breathing creature – a nephesh – in whose nostrils is the breath of life. Elijah asked God to restore this „breath of life“ to the child who had died.

## 2 KINGS 16:2

„Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father“.

Some have wondered about how old Ahaz was when Hezekiah was born. This verse seems to say that Ahaz died at 36 and 2 Kings 18:2 tells us that Hezekiah was 25 at Ahaz’s death.

1. Although these verses seem to indicate that Ahaz was only 11 years old when his son Hezekiah was born, they really tell us something else. Using these verses and secular history, let us notice what was really recorded here.
2. During that period it was common for the kings of Judah to assume their sons into partnership in the government. An example of this is Jotham, the father of Ahaz.
3. In 2 Kings 15:33 we read that Jotham reigned 16 years in Jerusalem. We know from other historical sources that Jotham’s sole reign ended in 735 B.C. He then reigned jointly with his son Ahaz for an additional four years.
4. In 2 Kings 16:2 we read that Ahaz was 20 years old when he began to reign. We understand, however, that this is referring to his age at the beginning of his four-year joint reign with his father, Jotham (735 B.C.). Ahaz began his sole reign in 731 B.C. His rule ended 16 years later, in 715 B.C.
5. Ahaz was about 40 years old when he died. He was probably 15 years old when Hezekiah was born. Fathering a child at such a tender age would not have been unprecedented in the life of a young prince of Judah.

## 2 KINGS 18:2

„Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Abi, the daughter of Zachariah“.

Some have wondered about how old Ahaz was when Hezekiah was born. This verse tells us that Hezekiah was 25 at Ahaz's death and 2 Kings 16:2 seems to say that Ahaz died at age 36.

1. Although these verses seem to indicate that Ahaz was only 11 years old when his son Hezekiah was born, they really tell us something else. Using these verses and secular history, let us notice what was really recorded here.
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## 1 CHRONICLES 13:9-10

„And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God“.

The usual question here is why did God kill Uzza? Some turn to this verse to support their contention that God is a hard, harsh monster who zaps people dead with little or no justification.

1. Preliminary thoughts: God is love (1 John 4:8), and Christ gave His life to save people from their sins (John 3:16). Certainly, therefore, anyone who would see in this episode proof that God is harsh has the entire weight of the rest of the Bible against him, and simply misunderstands why and how God acts. God acts only in people's ultimate best interest.
2. David wanted to bring the ark back from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. In doing so, he had the ark carried on a new cart. As they were going, the oxen stumbled and Uzza put his hand on the ark to steady it – to keep it from falling. Because Uzza touched the ark, God killed him (1 Chronicles 13:1-10).
3. This is an example of disobedience that ended in disaster. The ark should have been carried on the shoulders of the Levites, not on a new cart (Numbers 7:9, Deuteronomy 10:8). In using a cart, the Israelites were following the example of the pagan Philistines who had returned the ark to Israel that way (see 1 Samuel 6:7). Also in Numbers 4:15, God warned the Levites that they were not to touch any of the holy things they were to carry lest they die.
4. The parallel account in 2 Samuel 6:6-7 explains that God smote Uzza for „his error“. The word error is rendered „rashness“ in the margin. It was a rash act to touch the ark of God that even the Levites were forbidden to touch. The ark was so holy that at one time God killed more than 50,000 Israelites for profaning it by opening it and looking inside (1 Samuel 6:19).

5. 1 Chronicles 15:2 shows that David later realized what he had done wrong. He learned after the death of Uzza how the ark should be transported: It was to be carried (with poles) on the shoulders of the Levites. In 1 Chronicles 15:12-14, David told the Levites to sanctify themselves so that they could carry the ark. Because they hadn't carried the ark at first, God made a breach upon them. They hadn't sought God after „the due order“.
6. When they did everything according to God's instructions, they were able to bring up the ark with joy (1 Chronicles 15:15, 25-26). The principle to learn is that we must do exactly as God commands – not use our own reasoning or water down His instructions. Also, we must deeply respect anything God has made holy – for example, the Sabbath and Holy Days.
7. We notice that when God smote Uzza even David became angry and seemed to resent God's actions (1 Chronicles 13:11-12). But God knows that when we begin to stray from His directions and begin to believe we can trust our own way (no matter how well-intentioned), the end of such actions will be for us to stray further and further from Him. That way ends in death (Proverbs 14:12).
8. We need to remember that Uzza is dead now but will be resurrected and given a chance for salvation. Probably the lesson his death teaches us makes him far more valuable to us, God, and himself than if he had lived a long, uneventful life. Truly, God knows best and treats all with love.



## 2 CHRONICLES 5:10

„There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt“.

Some wonder concerning the contents of the ark of the covenant. This scripture seems to contradict Hebrews 9:4.

1. 2 Chronicles 5:10 and Hebrews 9:4 do seem to contradict each other. One verse says that only the two tables of stone (inscribed with the Ten Commandments) were in the ark. See also 1 Kings 8:9. The other verse lists several additional objects which apparently were also in the ark. But, God’s Word does not contradict itself!
2. The original Greek word translated „wherein“ in Hebrews 9:4 is „hou“. From *Strong’s Concordance* and other sources, we find that „hou“ means „at which place“. „Hou“ is a general word which does not necessarily mean „wherein“, „within“, or „in“. It simply means „in the same location as“.
3. With this in mind, let us notice Deuteronomy 31:24-26: *„And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book (not the Ten Commandments which God had written on two tables of stone, but the civil law which Moses had written in a book – the law of Moses), until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee“.*
4. We notice that the book of the law was not placed inside the ark, but „*in the side of*“ („by the side of“ says Revised Standard Version; „beside“ says New King James) the ark. That is why the book of the law is not mentioned in 1 Kings 8:9 as being in the ark.
5. The book of the law, along with the pot of manna (Exodus 16:33-34) and Aaron’s rod, was kept by the side of the ark, not in it. All of these

items could properly be described as being „hou” – in the same place as – the ark.

## 2 CHRONICLES 30

Some have attempted to use this chapter to prove that Ephraim and Manasseh were not taken captive by the Assyrians.

1. The Passover mentioned in this chapter, however, took place before the general captivity. It is only natural that these two tribes would be there. A brief rehearsal of what happened will make this clearer.
2. The Temple was restored and cleansed in the first month of the first year of Hezekiah's reign (2 Chronicles 29:3-36). The Passover was observed in the second month of his first Year (2 Chronicles 30:2). Now, when did the general captivity of Israel take place? Answer: Years later – not until Hezekiah's sixth year! See 2 Kings 18:10.
3. 2 Chronicles 30:11 might make it appear that the whole tribe of Manasseh humbled itself to God. But, this verse does not say that. We find that only a few humbled themselves. In the King James Version, the word divers is used. Any good English dictionary shows that it means „various“. The reference is not to the entire tribe.
4. Similarly, 2 Chronicles 30:18 does not show that all of Israel attended the Passover. It merely refers to those who were there. And, they did not remain in Judah, but returned to their own homes (2 Chronicles 31:1). We need to remember, again, all of this took place before the captivity.

## **JOB 19:26**

„And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God“.

This verse seems to indicate that Job will be resurrected in the flesh.

1. There is an unfortunate translation of this verse in the main text of the Authorized Version of the Bible. In many Bibles, however, the correct rendering is given in the margin *„though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh I shall see God“*.
2. The Revised Standard Version renders this verse: *„and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then FROM my flesh I shall see God“* (Job 19:26, Revised Standard Version).
3. This verse is not saying that Job will be resurrected in the flesh. He will be made immortal when he is raised from the dead, in spirit form, and shall see God.

## PSALMS 22:1

„To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?“

Some wonder whether or not the Father really forsook Jesus.

1. It is important to understand that God DID forsake His Son while He hung on the cross.
2. Except for Jesus Christ, all humans have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin, the breaking of God's law, requires the penalty of death: *„For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord“* (Romans 6:23).
3. Sin also cuts one off from God: *„Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him“* (John 9:31, New King James Version).
4. Isaiah wrote: *„Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear“* (Isaiah 59:1-2, New King James Version).
5. Nevertheless, when one does repent – change, turn around, go the right way and overcome – God will hear and answer that person's request.
6. Did Jesus sin? Is that the reason the Father cut Himself off from His only begotten Son who poured out His blood and finally died on the cross? No, not at all.
7. Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. Notice: *„For even hereunto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you would follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth“* (1 Peter 2:21-22).

8. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly took on our sins and, by His shed blood and death. Suffered the penalty of sin for us.
9. While He was on the cross, Jesus bore the sins of all of humanity, paying the penalty for them. Therefore, Jesus was cut off from God while on the cross because sin separates man from God. If God the Father was going to accept Jesus' one supreme sacrifice as payment for the sins of all mankind, He had to turn His back on the sinbearer – Jesus. He had to forsake Jesus and let Him pay the full penalty for our sins.
10. God so loved the world that he was willing to cut Himself off from His perfect, loving, and obedient Son so that the Son could bear the sins of the world. How great and wonderful God's love is toward us!
11. But, let us not forget, God forgives and applies Christ's sacrifice to only those who have truly repented, those who are willing to turn from their evil ways, the very ways which made Christ's supreme sacrifice necessary. Christ came to wave man from his sins – not in his sins.
12. Why did Jesus ask the question He asked? Didn't He know that God had to turn His back on Him and forsake him while He was carrying the sins of the world? Certainly, Jesus fully realized that God had to forsake Him if the world were going to receive an atonement for its sins. This was one of the reasons Jesus came into the world (John 3:16-17). Why, then, did He ask the question in Psalms 22:1? This verse says: *„My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?“*

The answer is that by so doing He fulfilled prophecy.

13. David too, in a time of trouble, cried out, *„My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?“*

These words, spoken by a man after God's own heart hundreds of years before the crucifixion, prophetically applied to Christ. They foreshadowed the utter anguish Jesus felt when God the Father forsook Him.

14. Why did God forsake him? Because of our wickedness, our rebellion, our rotten, filthy habits that are contrary to God's holy and just and good laws.

## PSALMS 23:1

„A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want“.

Some wonder about the prophetic aspects of this beautiful Psalm.

1. The Psalm begins, *„The Lord is my shepherd“* (Psalm 23:1). David, the author of this song, refers to God as a shepherd guarding His flock. He said that God was his Protector and Provider, the One he looked to for all his needs. Even Christ Himself, when He was human, said, *„I can of mine own self do nothing“* (John 5:30). Because we are weak, corruptible, mortal human beings, we have to depend entirely upon God for all our being.
2. The song continues, *„I shall not want“* (Psalms 23:1). *„Want“* here means lack. David was confident that he would lack nothing to support his body and life, that God would provide all his needs. This is echoed in Psalms 34:9-10.
3. David went on to write, *„He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me besides the still waters“* (Psalms 23:2). David compares himself to a lamb contentedly grazing while the shepherd watches over it. The New Testament refers to God’s people as lambs. Jesus Himself is called both a shepherd and the Lamb of God.
4. Continuing, *„He restores my soul“* (Psalms 23:3). David knew he was a sinner. But he also knew that God had redeemed him and given him life. David elsewhere expressed his great joy at having had his sins forgiven (Psalm 51).
5. David’s next thoughts were, *„He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake“* (Psalms 23:3). What is righteousness? *„All your commandments are righteousness“*, answers David in Psalms 119:172. When we obey and are blessed, God is glorified. But even the will to obey comes from God; no man can find the path to true righteousness without being led to it by God.



6. Looking forward, David wrote, *„Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me“* (Psalms 23:4).

David had such confidence in God that he had no fear even in the face of death! This peace of mind comes only from God. Paul said, *„For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind“* (2 Timothy 1:7).

7. David's next thoughts were, *„You prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over“* (Psalms 23:5).

God promises to bless us even though enemies may surround us. Not only will He supply our needs, but He is able to supply *„exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think“* (Ephesians 3:20).

8. The Psalm concludes, *„Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever“* (Psalms 23:6).

David looked forward to a full life then and after that that in God's Kingdom for all eternity.

## PSALMS 119

Some wonder about the words and symbols found between the verses of Psalms 119.

1. These words are the names of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In this psalm each letter of the Hebrew alphabet is spelled out in English, and in many Bibles the Hebrew symbol is written before it. Here is the reason.
2. Psalms 119, like the majority of the psalms, was written to be sung as a song of praise to God. But, unlike most other psalms it was written in a unique style. It is divided into 22 sections or strophes, each composed of 8 lines or verses. In the first strophe (Psalms 119:1-8) the first word in each line in the original Hebrew begins with Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
3. In the second strophe (Psalms 119:9-16) the same style is used and each line begins with Beth, the second letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This system continued until all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet have been utilized.
4. As we can see, Psalms 119 in the original Hebrew is really an intricately written poem. The alphabet was used by translators to separate its 22 sections for the reader, because in the English translation this acrostic pattern is not possible to duplicate. Today, in English, we have an accurate translation of the original, even though it is impossible to duplicate the poetic Hebrew form.

## PSALMS 150:3-4

„Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs“.

Some misunderstand what the Bible says about the use of instrumental music accompanying singing in Church services. The Bible shows very plainly that the use of musical instruments is proper when praising God.

1. We read in Psalms 150:3-4: *„Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp. Praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs“.*

*In the days of King Hezekiah, the king „setteh Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps... for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets... And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded“ (2 Chronicles 29:25-28).*

2. Some claim that the teachings in the Old Testament do not apply to the Church today. However, that argument is false! Jesus Himself said that man ought to live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). He revealed that the entire Old Testament is God's Word (Luke 24:44). Paul wrote that the Scriptures (referring to the Old Testament) are *„profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness“* (2 Timothy 3:15-17).
3. Furthermore, the New Testament itself reveals that God is praised in heaven with instrumental music (Revelation 5:8, 14:2-3). Revelation 15:2-3 tells us that the resurrected saints will praise God to the accompaniment of harps.
4. These and other scriptures prove it is perfectly proper to praise God by singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments or by musical instruments alone.

## PROVERBS 8:22-25

„The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth:”

Some use these verses to prove Jesus was a created being.

1. This passage is clearly referring to wisdom personified (see Proverbs 8:1), not to God! Notice that God possessed wisdom in the beginning and used it in creating the worlds.
2. The Bible tells us plainly that Jesus (who was known as Melchizedek anciently) had no beginning of days nor end of life (Hebrews 7:1-3). He was not created, but was the creator of all things that were made by Him (John 1:1-3). He has always existed.
3. Revelation 3:14 is sometimes cited as evidence that Jesus was created. However, the correct meaning of the phrase „*the beginning of the creation of God*” is the Beginner of all creation. It refers to its originating instrument (see Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus is the Head and Governor of all creatures; He is the King of creation. For further evidence of this meaning, see the commentary by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown and the one by Adam Clarke.

## PROVERBS 23:19-31

These verses are quoted by those who believe it is wrong to drink alcoholic beverages. They say this passage proves it is wrong to drink wine, and, by extension, any drink containing alcohol.

1. This scripture does not say it is wrong to drink wine. It does say we should not tarry long at the wine (Proverbs 23:30). One who tarries long at wine becomes a winebibber, or, in plain English, a drunkard, and no drunkard will inherit God's Kingdom (Galatians 5:21).
2. Proverbs 23:31 says not to look upon the wine „when it is red... when it moves itself aright“. The term „red“ and „moves itself“ refer to wine when it is in the process of fermentation. This is before the wine is fully fermented. If at this time you „look on it“ so as to finally drink it, you will become sick and possibly even die. In fact, instances are recorded of winery workers becoming asphyxiated by merely leaning over the wine vats „looking on“ the fermenting wine and being overcome by the poisonous gasses, thus falling into the vats and drowning.
3. God's Word shows it is perfectly all right to drink wine in moderation. The first miracle Jesus performed was to turn water into wine (John 2:1-11). The Greek word translated wine in John 2:1-11 is „oinos“. It means fermented wine. The apostle Paul even advised Timothy to drink some wine for his stomach problems (1 Timothy 5:23).
4. God gave us wine and alcoholic beverages so we may learn to use them properly. We develop character by properly exercising wisdom and self-control with them. The proper use of alcohol is a great responsibility, but it is only the wrong use of it that is sin.

## PROVERBS 26:4-5

„Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.  
Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit”.

These verses contain a seeming contradiction. They might be pointed to by someone who wishes to show the Bible contradicts itself and therefore is not inspired. The questions here are whether there is a contradiction and whether we should „*answer a fool*” or not.

1. First of all, we need to realize that the Bible does not contradict itself. God's Word is truth (John 17:17), and the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).
2. These two verses are not contradictory. They complement each other. The last part of each proverb shows the set of circumstances under which each is to be used.
3. Proverbs 26:4 tells us not to answer a fool according to his folly lest we be like him. In this situation, to answer the fool's specific statement or question, you would be descending to his level and end up in a pointless argument.

An example of this is given in Luke 20:1-8, where the Pharisees asked Christ by whose authority He did certain things. The Pharisees were not there seeking to learn anything. To avoid being like the fools they were, Christ didn't answer their question. Rather, He asked them a question that they couldn't answer without condemning themselves. Since the Pharisees couldn't answer His question, the discussion was dropped.

4. Proverbs 26:5 tells us that under another set of circumstances we must answer the fool according to his folly – by a foolish answer, which exposes how ridiculous his statement, claim or question is – or he will be wise in his own conceit.

This case is well illustrated by Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 11:23. Certain men at Corinth claimed to be true apostles of Christ, but they were false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13). For Paul

to have remained silent at the time would have given tacit approval of these men who were leading the Church astray. They would have appeared wise in their own conceit.

Therefore in 2 Corinthians 11:23 Paul said: „*Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft*“.

These men had been boasting of their qualifications, and in this epistle Paul was exposing these men for what they were. Paul answered these false apostles' claims so they would not appear wise.

5. These scriptures do not contradict, but taken together they explain two different methods of handling the questions and statements of fools. You need wisdom to know just when and how to apply these principles, and wisdom comes from God.

## PROVERBS 31:6-7

„Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more“.

Some have wondered whether these scriptures put God's approval on drinking to forget one's problems.

1. In Proverbs 31:6-7 we read: *„Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more“* (NKJV).
2. This does not say that those who are feeling sorrowful should get drunk to forget their woes.
3. The Bible strongly disapproves of drunkenness (Ephesians 5:18, 1 Corinthians 6:10). Proverbs 31:4-5 states: *„It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted“*.
4. These verses warn that overdrinking can distort judgment.
5. Proverbs 31:6-7 says that under unusual and extreme circumstances, it is an act of mercy to give malefactors or someone in unusual pain enough alcohol to ease anguish. (The word translated *„poverty“* in Proverbs 31:7 can also be translated as *„misery“* and *„misfortune“*). Notice that Proverbs 31:8-9 also concern acts of mercy.



## **ECCLESIASTES 9:5**

„For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten“.

Some wonder about some of the recent claims of people who say they experienced „life“ after they had supposedly died.

1. Though many of these happenings are understandably astounding and seem to contradict what the Bible says about death, the whole idea of this so-called „life after life“ experience is based on the premise that these people died.
2. According to the medical profession, these individuals were clinically dead. However, medical science has not yet agreed on what constitutes actual death in a human being. Real death, according to the Bible, is total and complete unconsciousness – without memory, feeling, knowledge, or perception (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Psalms 6:5). Therefore, it is evident that those who were revived to relate their experiences were not actually dead, but simply in an unconscious state.
3. Furthermore, science has discovered that the human brain and nervous system are actuated by electrical signals and impulses. The brain is dependent on a steady supply of blood and oxygen to function properly. When circulation and respiration are impaired or interrupted for even a few minutes, the brain begins to malfunction, and will eventually cease functioning altogether.
4. It is thought by some researchers that the strange lights, sensations, perceptions, and the like, associated with „coming back from death“ may be attributable to the electrical malfunctions of the brain and nervous system associated with the trauma of nearly dying.

## ISAIAH 45:7

„I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things“.

Some misunderstand the „evil“ created by God.

1. This verse does not say God creates SIN. The Hebrew word „ra“ (rah), translated as „evil“ in the King James Version, means calamity (New King James Version), adversity, affliction, wickedness, unhappy, or unfortunate, NOT sin. Jeremiah 25:7 says, „*that you might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt (evil)*“. See definition of Strong's word number 07451.
2. Jesus Christ, the God of the Old Testament, was without sin (Galatians 2:17, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 3:5). Those who sin are of the devil and those who do not sin are born of God (1 John 3:8-9). God is righteous (Ezra 9:15, Nehemiah 9:8, Revelation 16:5).
3. There are two meaning to this verse:
  - a. God created free moral agency. God set before us life and death, blessing and cursing; we are to CHOOSE life (Deuteronomy 30:19, 28:1-2, 15; 11:13-17, 26-28; Leviticus 26). In the garden of Eden, God also created the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We have free moral agency to choose how we want to live.
  - b. In context, this is a prophecy about Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1), who would become ruler of the Medo-Persian empire and let the Jews return to Jerusalem. God would help Cyrus overthrow Babylon (Isaiah 45:1-2). God did this for Jacob's and Israel's sakes (Isaiah 45:4). Why? So they would know that there was no other god; that God created light and darkness, made peace, and sent adversity or punishment.
4. This prophetic meaning is made clear in Daniel 9:8-14 where Daniel prayed to God from Babylon about the Babylonian captivity. The Jews

and Israel had sinned and rebelled against God (Daniel 9:8-9). They had not obeyed His voice and had transgressed His Law (Daniel 9:10-11).

5. Therefore, God brought a great adversity upon them (Daniel 9:12-14). God did this that they might turn from their iniquities and understand His truth (Daniel 9:13). God is righteous in all His ways, even in bringing punishment on Israel so they would heed and obey His voice and enjoy the blessings that come from following His Law (Daniel 9:14).
6. God made us His begotten children with His word of truth and wants us to be the firstfruits of His family (James 1:18). He, therefore, would not entice us to sin and turn away from Him and thereby not qualify to be a part of His family (James 1:13).

James 1:13 could better be translated as: „*Let no man say when he is enticed to sin, `I am enticed of God` ; for God cannot be enticed to sin with evil, neither does He entice any man. But every man is enticed (tempted) to sin, when he is drawn away by his own desires (lust)*“.

7. This is consistent with Isaiah 45:7. In this world we have the choice of whether to follow and worship God as he commands and receive the blessings that result, or to follow the ways of this world and the enticements of Satan and our own lusts to receive the adversity or affliction (evil) that results from breaking God's laws. It is our choice.

## ISAIAH 59:2

„But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear”.

Some have wondered whether or not God hears the prayers of sinners.

1. All people have sinned and cut themselves off from God (Romans 6:23, Romans 5:12). The prophet Isaiah wrote, *„But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear”* (Isaiah 59:2, New King James Version).
2. God does not hear sinners (John 9:31, first part), and will have no fellowship with them (2 Corinthians 6:14, 1 John 1:6). He hears only those who are righteous (John 9:31, last part). But there must be a way for sinners to come to God – or else we could never become righteous. How can sinners seek God?
3. Isaiah answers, *„Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near”*. But how do we call upon God? How do we seek Him? The answer is, *„Let the wicked forsake his (own) way, and the unrighteous man his (own) thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon”* (Isaiah 55:6-7, New King James Version).
4. That is how a person can come to God. He must forsake the way he has been living and begin to obey God. Once he has repented of going the wrong way, that person is no longer a sinner in God's sight. God hears and gives His Holy Spirit to the person who obeys Him (Acts 5:32). When we *„keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight”*, God will hear (1 John 3:22).

## ISAIAH 66:24

„And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh“.

Some use this verse to show that the Bible says there are „immortal worms“.

1. This verse does not say that worms live forever or that the fire will burn forever. It also does not mean that people burn forever in hell fire but are never destroyed. Let us notice that Isaiah 66:24 clearly says that people „*shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of men that have transgressed against Me (God)*“. They will be looking at dead bodies as the Israelites looked at the carcasses of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:30).

Isaiah 66:24 refers to the Valley of Hinnom without mentioning it. Mark 9:43, 45, 47 mention „Gehenna“ and „Gehenna fire“, referring to the Valley of Hinnom – a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem – as a type of fire at the end of this age when the incorrigible will be burned up, destroyed, forever.

2. The Hebrew word „tolaw“, translated „worm“, means „grub“ or „maggot“. This is the same meaning of the Greek word „skolex“, translated „worm“ in Mark 9:44, 46, 48. „Worm“, in these verses, cannot refer to people but to the worms that eat flesh (Job 19:26, 21:26; Acts 12:23). These verses always say „their (the peoples') worm“. The worms (maggots) are in the CARCASSES of thieves and sinners thrown into the Valley of Hinnom in Jerusalem and those that are destroyed when they fight against Christ when He returns to the earth.
3. Maggots lived on, and ate, the decaying bodies of people and animals thrown into the Valley of Hinnom that caught on ledges and did not fall into the burning fire of garbage, trash, and bodies in the bottom. They will also live on, and eat the bodies of those that will fight against Christ at His return. There are two meanings to this phrase „*where their worm dies not*“.

- a. The maggots are larva of flies that lay their eggs on the bodies. There larva do not die, but become flies. The flies then lay more eggs and they die. The flies die, not the maggots.
  - b. As long as dead bodies and trash were thrown into the Valley of Hinnom, there would always be flies laying eggs and maggots eating the bodies. There would always be worms, they would not die, until there was nothing there for them to live on. As long as there will be dead bodies when Christ returns, there will be maggots eating them.
4. The fire that can never be quenched is Gehenna fire, typified by the fire burning trash, filth, and bodies in the Valley of Hinnom. A fire that cannot be quenched is one that cannot be extinguished or put out. This does not mean it will burn forever, though. The fire will burn out when there is nothing left to burn.
  5. God warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 17:27) that He would kindle a fire there that would not be quenched. That fire destroyed the houses of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:13), but it is not still burning. It was not quenched, put out, until all combustible material had been consumed.
  6. Gehenna fire, as the fire in the Valley of Hinnom, cannot be quenched (as long as there is something to burn). It will destroy the bodies of the wicked (Revelation 19:19-20) and continue until there is nothing left to burn. The Valley of Hinnom is not burning today as it once was.

## EZEKIEL 1:1

„Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I *was* among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God”.

Some have wondered about the strange sights and visions described in the first chapter of the book of Ezekiel.

1. Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in Babylon. There he was given „visions of God" (Ezekiel 1:1).
2. Ezekiel saw a great whirlwind (Ezekiel 1:4) in the midst of which were four angelic creatures (Ezekiel 1:5) carrying a platform which looked like glass or crystal (Ezekiel 1:22). On that expanse of beautiful, crystalline material (which was probably gold so fine it was transparent, Revelation 21:21) was a throne! (Ezekiel 1:26).
3. Ezekiel saw God seated on the throne. He described God's glory this way: *„I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about... This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:26-28; also see Revelation 1:13-16).*
4. These verses clearly reveal that what Ezekiel saw was the throne of God.
5. What about the cherubim and the wheels under the throne? Their function is to transport God wherever He wishes to go (Ezekiel 1:24-25). The Bible shows elsewhere that God does not always remain in His heaven, but has at times come down to the earth (Psalms 18:10, Ezekiel 10:1-22). When He comes in all His glory, He comes sitting on His throne, and the angelic creatures under the throne carry Him about at lightning speed (Ezekiel 1:13).

## EZEKIEL 10:1

„Then I looked, and, behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubims there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne“.

Some wondered about the strange sights and visions described in the 10th chapter of the book of Ezekiel.

1. Ezekiel was among the Jewish captives by the river Chebar in Babylon. There he was given „visions of God“ (Ezekiel 1:1).
2. Ezekiel saw a great whirlwind (Ezekiel 1:4) in the midst of which were four angelic creatures (Ezekiel 1:5) carrying a platform which looked like glass or crystal (Ezekiel 1:22). On that expanse of beautiful, crystalline material (which was probably gold so fine it was transparent, Revelation 21:21) was a throne! (Ezekiel 1:26).
3. Ezekiel saw God seated on the throne. He described God's glory this way: *„I saw as the color of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward and from the appearance of his loins even downward, I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about... This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (Ezekiel 1:26-28;* also see Revelation 1:13-16).
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## EZEKIEL 13:18-23

„And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe to the women that sew pillows to all armholes, and make kerchiefs upon the head of every stature to hunt souls! Will ye hunt the souls of my people, and will ye save the souls alive that come unto you? And will ye pollute me among my people for handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread, to slay the souls that should not die, and to save the souls alive that should not live, by your lying to my people that hear your lies? Wherefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against your pillows, wherewith ye there hunt the souls to make *them* fly, and I will tear them from your arms, and will let the souls go, *even* the souls that ye hunt to make them fly. Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I *am* the LORD”.

Some wonder about the meaning of „pillows“ and „kerchiefs“.

1. This chapter concerns the time just before the day of the Lord (Ezekiel 13:5). It deals with the false religious leaders of the present-day House of Israel (the United States and Great Britain).
2. The first part of Ezekiel 13:1-16 mentions the false prophets, the men who are deceiving the people. But, we find that more and more women are becoming preachers and missionaries. This prophecy would not be complete if it did not include the ever-increasing group of false „prophetesses“.
3. These false prophetesses prophesy (or, as the meaning should be, „preach“) out of their own hearts (Ezekiel 13:17). They are NOT preaching God's message, neither has God sent them. What kind of message are they preaching which causes God to denounce them? It is exactly the opposite of the message God's true ministers are preaching. God has commissioned His ministers to lift up their voices like a trumpet and show Israel (our people today) their SINS (Isaiah 58:1). The message of God's ministers is one of impending doom and destruction IF the people will not respond and repent of their sins

(Ezekiel 3:19; Ezekiel 4:2-3; Ezekiel 5:2-4; Ezekiel 5:8-10, Ezekiel 5:12-17; Ezekiel 6:11-14, Ezekiel 12:10-16).

4. Though all false ministers are an abomination in God's sight, the fact that women choose for themselves the office of religious leadership – usurping authority over men – is particularly distasteful to God (1 Corinthians 14:33-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-12).
5. If we examine the message of these false ministers, we will be able to understand the message of the false prophetesses – because they both preach the same thing. They refuse to show the people their sins. They have „*daubed the wall with untempered mortar*“. In other words, Ezekiel is saying they have „whitewashed“ the people and have failed to convict them of their sins. Because of this, the wrath of God will be poured out upon these false ministers. They have preached a message of peace, when there is no peace (Ezekiel 13:10)!
6. These false ministers are actually „*hunting for souls*“ (Ezekiel 13:18). They traverse the far reaches of this earth in their missionary efforts to „save souls“. But God asks them: „*will you hunt the souls of my people, and will you save the souls alive that come unto you?*“ In other words, they will not have the power to save them from the destruction which Almighty God has decreed will come (Jeremiah 14:12-14) and which they say is not coming.
7. The reference to „*pillows*“ and „*kerchiefs*“ is obscure. Some believe „*pillows*“ is better translated „fillets“ or „headbands“, and that „*kerchiefs*“ refer to „long veils“. A long veil held by a headband describes quite well part of the garments worn by members of some female religious orders. Other feel that „*pillows*“ and „*kerchiefs*“ are symbolic of the soft, feminine nature of the religion preached by these false prophetesses.
8. However, a number of commentators believe the Hebrew indicates that these terms are not literal – that the „*pillows*“ actually refer to a figurative covering these women try to place over God's hands to conceal His power to rebuke sin, and that the „*kerchiefs*“ represent the veil of spiritual blindness they place over their followers. Some

Hebrew scholars argue against the translation „magic bands“ found in some more modern English versions, saying that this is not at all supported by the original language.

9. In their activities these women actually pollute God among the people with (the Hebrew can be translated either „for“ or „with“) *„handfuls of barley and for pieces of bread“* (Ezekiel 13:19). This can mean that they either use food to attract „converts“ or actively solicit donations for their preaching. But, they do not teach their followers that the cause for their plight lies in their failure to keep God's laws. God reveals His severe punishment on these false women religionists (Ezekiel 13:20-23).

## DANIEL 10:21

„But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince“.

Some wonder whether Michael, the archangel, is the individual who later became Jesus Christ.

1. Michael is not Christ, He is the spirit being, „*your prince*“ (Daniel 10:21, 12:1), sent to serve Israel. Michael and the other princes over the nations are all subject to Christ, who is Supreme Ruler under the Father.
2. The chief princes among God's created spirit beings have great power and authority over the nations. But what is the limit of their authority? How far does their authority and power extend? In Jude 8-9 we read: „*These filthy dreamers (evil men)... despise dominion (authority), and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil... about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord (Christ – who is Michael's superior) rebuke you*“.
3. While evil men have little or no respect for those in authority, Michael, who is an archangel, showed respect to the office of authority of Satan the devil. By this scripture we can see very clearly that Michael does not have greater rank than Satan. If he did, he would have given the devil a command – he could have done the rebuking himself, instead of saying, „The Lord rebuke you“. But Christ does have greater rank.
4. Matthew 4:10 records Christ's statement to Satan: „*Get thee hence, Satan*“. Christ gave Satan a sharp command. He was in authority over Satan because He created him as the cherub Lucifer (Ezekiel 28:15). Christ is the One through whom the Father created all things (Colossians 1:15-16, John 1:1-3).
5. It is obvious that Michael could not have been Christ. Rather, he is an angelic being who is in authority over other lesser angelic beings in God's Government. He is one of the leaders among God's faithful angels.

## DANIEL 12:11-12

„And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days“.

Some don't understand the mysterious 1,290 and 1,335 days mentioned in these verses.

1. Daniel was told that his prophecies would be sealed until the end of the age, but then God would reveal the meaning to His servants (Daniel 12:9-10). We are now very near the time when these prophecies will be fulfilled, and God is now revealing what they mean.
2. These time periods refer to events that will happen to the people of God in this generation. Each period begins with a significant event. And, both the 1,290-day and 1,335-day periods end with the return of Jesus Christ. But, we should first notice the main subject of Daniel 12. It is the time of the end.
3. Daniel wrote, *„When the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished“* (Daniel 12:7, New King James Version).

This refers back to Daniel 12:1, which states that Michael the archangel will stand up for God's people during a time of trouble *„such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time“*.

4. This is the beginning of the Great Tribulation spoken of by Christ in Matthew 24:21-22. The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord will last 3½ years – *„a time, times, and half a time“* (Daniel 12:7, Revelation 12:14).
5. With these things in mind, let us look again at Daniel 12:11: *„And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days“* (New King James Version).

This verse seems to indicate that the Jews in the modern nation of Israel may restore the twice-daily sacrifice (please see Exodus 29:38-39). However, it does not necessarily imply that a temple will be built in our time in Jerusalem. (This verse was fulfilled, at least in type, when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple during his assault on Jerusalem in 167-164 B.C.)

6. Since this verse also states that the *„daily sacrifice is taken away“*, the indication is that the armies of the *„beast“* of Revelation 17, upon entering Jerusalem, will ban this ritual. Should this be the case, there would be 1,290 days, just a little over 3 ½ years, until the appearance of the Messiah.
7. Daniel adds, *„Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days“* (Daniel 12:12, New King James Version). This is a blessing pronounced upon the people of God who endure until the 1,335 days, that is, to the period beginning about 1,335 days before Christ’s coming.
8. Since no one knows the day of Christ’s coming (Matthew 24:36, Acts 1:7), we may not know in advance the exact time when the 1,335 days begin. Apparently, however, at the beginning of the 1,335 days (Daniel 11:28-30), a type of persecution will begin, and sometime prior to the start of the 1290 days, efforts of God’s Work to proclaim the Gospel will fulfill that portion of Matthew 24:14, and shortly thereafter there will be a famine of the word (Amos 8:11-12).
9. Forty-five days later, or 1,290 days before the return of Christ, the beast’s armies will surround Jerusalem. Those who are worthy will have been warned and taken to a place of refuge God has provided for them (Revelation 12:14-16).
10. When God’s Church is in a place of protection, the 1,260 days (*„a time, times and half a time“*, or 42 months) of the Great Tribulation will begin. At the end of the 1,260 days, Jesus Christ will return to this earth.

11. So we have 1,335 days before the return of Christ, after 45 days the 1,290 days begin, after 30 days the 1,260 days begin. All of these three periods end at the same time. In these end times, we have also understood the following:

The 1290 days of Daniel 12:11 begins with the placing of the abomination and stopping of sacrifices in Daniel 11:31.

The 1260 days begins with the start of the Great Tribulation which is also when „*the power of the holy people is completely shattered*“ (Daniel 12:7, NKJV). In the sequence in Daniel 11, this happens *after* Daniel 11:31 and by the time of Daniel 11:39.

Thus, the start of the 1335 days of Daniel 12:12 must happen prior to Daniel 11:31.

In Daniel chapter 11, the only two mentions related to „*holy*“ prior to Daniel 11:31 are Daniel 11:28 and Daniel 11:30 and seem related to what is finalized in Daniel 12:7.

The 1335 days must begin with Daniel 11:28, 29, or 30.

Because of the sequence of Matthew 24 and Daniel 11, the proclamation portion of Matthew 24:14 seems to be fulfilled prior to Daniel 11:31 (which Jesus referred to in Matthew 24:15).

Since the „*people who understand shall instruct many*“ in Daniel 11:33, the famine of the word of Amos 8:11-12 would not seem to have truly happened prior to this.

Hence, since Daniel 11:33 is *after* Daniel 11:30, Amos 8:11-12 does not seem to be fulfilled until after the start of the 1335 days.

1,335 days to 1,290 days = duration 45 days

1,290 days to 1,260 days = duration 30 days

1,260 days to the Return of Christ = duration 3 ½ years

## HOSEA 4:12

### GOD FORBIDS "WATER WITCHING"

„My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God“.

Some wonder about the practices of water divining, also known as „water witching“ and „water dowsing“, as practices all over the world.

1. Water divination is the craft of seeking underground water by means of a divining rod, commonly a forked stick which is held by the twigs, one in each hand with the stock pointing outward or upward. As the diviner walks over the ground, the stick will suddenly twist in his hands and point downward, supposedly indicating the presence of underground water. At times there is water; at other times there is none.
2. Hosea prophesied that divining rods would be used in our time. He wrote, „*My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them*“ (Hosea 4:12). According to the *Critical and Experimental Commentary*, by Jamieson, Faussett and Brown, „*staff*“ here refers to a divining rod.
3. What is the origin of this practice? How did it come to be used so extensively in so-called Christian nations? In his book titled *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science*, Martin Gardner admits: „The employment of various shaped rods for divination purposes goes all the way back to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians“.
4. In the Middle Ages, it was associated with the power of Satan, although many churchmen made use of divination rods. The forked twig, for finding minerals, apparently did not appear until the 15<sup>th</sup> century when it was used by German prospectors in the Harz Mining region. When German miners were imported to England in the following century, they brought the practice with them. It was in England that the use of the twig was transferred from minerals to the search for water.
5. God condemns such practices. He says, „*Thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone... that useth divination*“ (Deuteronomy 18:9-10).



And God adds, „I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people” (Leviticus 20:6).

6. There are a few guidelines which can help one find a source of water. A follower of Christ should first ask God in prayer to aid him in locating the right place to drill. Then he should analyze the lay of the land and drill in the most suitable area. Asking the advice of an experienced well driller – one who does not consult „witches” – should also be helpful.
7. Christ’s followers cannot accept this practice for two reasons:
  - a. the practice has no known scientific basis and,
  - b. it involves divination.

Since the spirit forces are involved in this activity, then those who serve the only true God cannot have any part in it (see: Deuteronomy 18:10-12, Hosea 4:12 and 1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

## **JONAH 1:17**

„Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights”.

Some wonder how it was possible for Jonah to survive three days and three nights in the belly of a whale. Skeptics say that no whale (or big fish) could swallow a man in the first place, and, even if he did, the man would certainly never survive three days and three nights in his belly, as the Bible claims.

1. This is one of the Bible stories most ridiculed by people who consider themselves sophisticated and intellectual. „Christian liberals” have attempted to avoid this problem by saying that the story of Jonah was only an allegory and was never meant to be understood as actual history. However, whenever the Bible writers used allegories or parables or other symbolic stories, they always either said so or else made it evident in the context.
2. The book of Jonah is certainly written as though it were actual history. Jonah was a real prophet who is mentioned also in 2 Kings 14:25. None of the ancient Jews or early Christians ever doubted the authenticity and historicity of the book of Jonah and its story.
3. Most importantly, Jesus Christ accepted the account as true. He said that the people of Nineveh repented of their sins as a consequence of his preaching (Matthew 12:41). He even said: *„For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12:40).

Thus Christ actually compared Jonah's experience to His own coming death and resurrection, pointing out the miraculous nature of both. One cannot deny the actuality of Jonah's experience, therefore, without charging Jesus Christ with either deception or ignorance, either of which is equivalent to denying His deity.

4. There is little question that the event was a miracle, but this fact certainly does not disprove it! The account, in fact, says as much: *„Now the Lord*

*had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jonah 1:17).*

Later it says, *"And the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (Jonah 2:10).*

5. God was certainly able to accomplish this if He wished; to deny the possibility of miracles is atheism. The actual occurrence of this particular miracle is adequately attested by the very fact of its record in the Holy Scriptures, and is doubly confirmed by the testimony of Christ.
6. The „*great fish*“ may have been either a whale or a shark or even a fish specially prepared by the Lord for this purpose. (The Hebrew and Greek words that are used merely mean „a great aquatic animal“.) Some species of whales and some species of sharks are quite capable of swallowing a man whole. Among these are the sperm whale, the white shark, and the whale shark, all of which have been found with whole animals as large or larger than a man in their stomachs.
7. As a matter of fact, there are some cases recorded in whaling history even of men swallowed whole by these great animals! In at least two well-documented cases, the men were later rescued and survived. (Helpful books might be: Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954, pp. 296-298; G.C. Aalders, *The Problem of the Book of Jonah*, London: Tyndale Press, 1948, page 6; Harry Rimmer, *The Harmony of Science & Scripture*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1936, chapter 5).
8. As to whether a man could survive „three days and three nights“ under such conditions, there are three possible answers that could be suggested in defense of the biblical narrative.
  - a. At least one man in modern times (James Bartley, in 1895) is known to have survived a day and a half in a whale before being rescued. There is always some air in the whale's stomach, and, as long as the animal it has swallowed is still alive, digestive activity will not begin. Thus Jonah's experience could possibly have happened entirely within the framework of natural law.

- b. It is more likely, however, that the event involved a divine miracle, as the Scripture strongly implies. The „*great fish*“ was prepared and sent by God, as was the intense storm that threatened the ship on which Jonah was travelling. The storm ceased as soon as Jonah was cast overboard (Jonah 1:15). In like manner, it was quite probable that God preserved Jonah's life miraculously all through the horrifying experience.
- c. The third possibility is that Jonah actually suffocated and died in the great fish and then God later brought him back from the dead. There are at least eight other such „resuscitations“ recorded in the Bible, as well as the glorious bodily resurrection of Christ – of which Jonah's experience in particular was said by Christ to be a prophetic sign.

This resuscitation is implied also by Jonah's prayer, when he said: „*out of the belly of hell* (i.e., „sheol“, the grave or place of departed spirits) *cried I, and you heard my voice*“ (Jonah 2:2).

- 9. In any case, it was a mighty experience, evidently well-known and certified in his day, probably contributing in significant degree to the fact that all the people of Nineveh repented and turned to God (Jonah 3:5) when Jonah returned „from the dead“, as it were, to preach to them.
- 10. Even in Jesus' day, it was so well known that He could use it as a „sign“ of His own impending death and resurrection, which were to constitute God's crowning proof of the deity of His Son and the great work of salvation which He would accomplish on the cross for all who would receive Him.

*„God now commands all men everywhere to repent: Because He has appointed a day, in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained; whereof He has given assurance unto all men, that He has raised Him from the dead“* (Acts 17:30-31).

## **JONAH 2:1**

„Then Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fish's belly,“

Some wonder whether the fish that swallowed Jonah was a whale.

1. The original Hebrew wording of Jonah 1:17 is accurately translated in the King James Version as „*a great fish*“. The Old Testament translation produced by the Jewish Publication Society also refers to this creature as „a great fish“.
2. Some controversy arises over the King James translation of Matthew 12:40. This verse says Jonah was „in the whale's belly“. But, this was only an assumption on the part of the translators. The New King James Version correctly renders this phrase as „in the belly of the great fish“.
3. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* makes the following comments about the word whale: „Probably the fish which swallowed Jonah was some large kind of shark, or fish especially provided“.
4. The evidence from the Scriptures supports this conclusion – that it was some kind of large fish, and not a whale, which swallowed Jonah.

## MICAH 4:5

„For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever“.

Some wonder about the meaning of „*people will walk every one in the name of his god*“.

1. The context shows that the time setting of this verse is after Christ has returned to earth and put an end to war. We notice Micah 4:3. Strong nations will be rebuked and implements of war turned into tools of agriculture. No longer will nations fight one another, nor will they learn to wage war any more. As nations learn the way of peace, true prosperity will blossom all over the Earth (Micah 4:4).
2. True and right education will be disseminated from Christ's headquarters at Jerusalem. People will worship the true God in their mother tongues, and the Israelis in their tongue (modern Hebrew). However, all nations and races will be taught one pure language in order to communicate with one another (Zephaniah 3:9). The indication is, then, that native languages will exist side by side with one international language – as is the case in many lands today.

## ZECHARIAH 8:19

„Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace“.

Some wonder about the fast mentioned in this scripture.

1. The fasts mentioned in this verse were of human origin. They were instituted to serve as reminder of four sorrowful events which befell the Jewish nation during the days of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.
2. The „*fast of the fourth month*“ was observed during the month of „Tammuz“ (Jews corrupted the original name of the fourth month, so its true name is unknown; it is named after a pagan deity); it commemorated the time the city of Jerusalem was broken up (Jeremiah 52:6-7). The „*fast of the fifth*“ was observed on the tenth of Ab, when the Temple and the houses were burned (Jeremiah 52:12-13).
3. The „*fast of the seventh*“ refers to the third of Etanim (the Jews also gave it a pagan name of Tishri), when Gedaliah was slain by Ishmael (Jeremiah 40:8, 41:1-3, 15-18).
4. The „*fast of the tenth*“ was kept on the tenth of Tebeth, when the king of Babylon turned against Jerusalem (Ezekiel 24:1-2). This information can be verified in the Jewish Talmud.
5. As Zechariah 8:19 shows, these humanly appointed fasts will be turned into feasts or occasions of gladness when God restores all Israel to His way of life. At last, the people will seek God (Zechariah 8:20-23) and will be greatly blessed. They will no longer wish to perpetuate the memory of tragic events.

## MALACHI 4:5-6

„Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse“.

Some wonder whether Malachi 4:5-6 means that the prophet Elijah will reappear on Earth before Christ's Second Coming.

1. This prophecy is dual – it has two fulfillments! It was first fulfilled by the man who prepared the way for Christ's human ministry, John the Baptist (Matthew 17:10-13).
2. The angel who announced his coming birth applied the passage from Malachi directly to John: *„And he (John the Baptist) shall go before him (Christ) in the spirit and power of Elias (Elijah), to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord“* (Luke 1:17).
3. Clearly, John was not Elijah reincarnated (the Bible nowhere teaches reincarnation). But, John was given Elijah's office – he performed a similar ministry. Elijah, of course, was the man who, with power from God, witnessed to a rebellious nation and commanded the people, *„If the Lord be God, follow him“* (1 Kings 18:21).
4. When John began preaching repentance and baptizing in the wilderness, the priests and Levites came from Jerusalem and asked him if he were Elijah. John answered, *„I am not“* (John 1:19-23). But, Jesus Himself, said that John was in fact the prophesied „Elijah“ of that day (Matthew 11:7-15).
5. The second stage of this prophecy was to be fulfilled in the last days – *„before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord“* (Malachi 4:5). At the close of this present evil age, the message of „Elijah“ is again to be thundered to disobedient Israel as a witness and to prepare a people for Christ's Second Coming.



6. The Church of God is doing this through the „*open door*“ as God provides it; it is proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in every part of the world in power and in love (please see Matthew 5:13-16, 24:14 and Revelation 3:8).

## MATTHEW 1:1

„The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham“.

Some question the Bible because of the differences between the genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

1. These two chapters, both giving genealogies of Christ, at first appear to be contradictory. Actually, they complement each other.
2. The genealogy in Matthew 1 is clearly that of Joseph, Mary's husband. Matthew recorded it for legal purposes. He was writing to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Jews' custom in keeping records was to trace descent through the father. Legally, the Jews of Jesus' day looked on Jesus as a son of Joseph (John 6:42).
3. Also, Joseph's lineage was given to emphasize the fact that Jesus had been born of a virgin. Because of a curse that God placed on one of Joseph's ancestors, Christ could never sit upon the throne of David if Joseph had been His natural father.
4. Jechonias (Matthew 1:11-12), called Coniah in Jeremiah 22:24-30, was so evil that God cursed him and his descendants and said, *„Write this man down as childless... for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah“* (Jeremiah 22:30, New King James Version).

Jechoniah, as his name is spelled in the Old Testament, had children (1 Chronicles 3:17) but was childless as far as having any descendants on the throne of David, ruling the separate nation of Judah.

5. Unlike Joseph's lineage, there was no block to the throne of David ruling over Judah in Jesus' genealogy through Mary. Her ancestor was David's son Nathan, not Solomon or one of David's own children (Luke 3:31). To fulfill His promise to establish David's throne forever, God honored Nathan by making him the ancestor of the promised King who would sit on David's throne through eternity (Luke 1:31-33).

6. But how could Mary transmit David's royal inheritance – the right to the throne – to her son, since all inheritances had to pass through male descendants? According to Israel's law, when a daughter was the only heir, she could inherit her father's possessions and rights if she married within her own tribe (Numbers 27:1-8, 36:6-8). Mary had no brothers who could be her father's heirs. Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary, and thus inherited the right to rule on David's throne, even over Judah. This right then passed on to Christ.
7. Both genealogies had to be recorded to establish Christ's right to rule on David's throne. Joseph's genealogy shows that Christ was a legal descendant of Jeconiah and thus legally could not sit on the throne of David in the nation Judah by inheriting the right solely through Joseph.
8. Further, the genealogies prove the virgin birth: The curse on Jeconiah's line would have passed on to Christ if He were Joseph's natural son, but He wasn't – He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and was the Son of God.
9. Jesus was Mary's son descended from Nathan. Jesus can inherit rule over Judah because of Mary's marriage to Joseph, whose genealogy shows he was Heli's son-in-law. Jesus was, therefore, a Jew.
10. The word Jew is shortened form of the old English word Judean, referring to the descendants of the patriarch Judah. In the New Testament genealogies, both Mary and Joseph are listed as descendants of Judah, through the line of David (Matthew 1 and Luke 3). Jesus was not only a descendant of Judah – He was not only a Jew – but He was of the Davidic – the kingly – line of Judah. Numerous verses refer to Jesus as the son of David.

## MATTHEW 1:18

„Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost”.

Some have assumed that the „Holy Spirit” and the „Holy Ghost” mentioned in the King James Version of the Bible are two different spirits.

1. This is not true. The word „ghost” is an unfortunate translation that should be avoided. In the inspired original Greek only one expression is used – meaning „Holy Spirit”. In every case the English words „Ghost” and „Spirit” come from one Greek word „pneuma”, meaning „spirit” – not some nebulous „ghost”.
2. The Greek word pneuma, unfortunately translated „Ghost” so many times, is properly translated „*Spirit*” in Luke 11:13, Ephesians 1:13, Ephesians 4:30 and 1 Thessalonians 4:8, and in many other scriptures when referring to God's Spirit.
3. This Greek word pneuma, translated „Ghost”, is properly translated „Spirit” sometimes in the same scripture: Luke 4:1, John 1:33, John 7:39, Acts 2:4 and 1 Corinthians 12:3, for example.
4. When the King James Version of the Bible was first printed in 1611 – over 1400 years after the New Testament was first written in the Greek language – the English words „ghost” and „spirit” were both used to mean the same thing. Thus it was quite natural that the translators should have used both words in translating the one Greek word pneuma into English. This inconsistent usage has given many the false impression that a Holy Ghost and a Holy Spirit exist as two separate spirits. The New King James Version of the Bible, officially titled the Revised Authorized Version, does just that. It consistently translates the Greek expression hagion pneuma as „Holy Spirit”.
5. The idea of two different spirits is utterly untrue. The word „ghost” has become obsolete as far as general English usage goes. But many have foolishly insisted upon continuing to use the word „ghost” in referring to God's Spirit. They think of God's Holy Spirit as some

misty, spooky being. The only proper way to clarify the subject is to use the expression „Holy Spirit“ in all cases that refer to the Spirit of God, instead of translating one expression two different ways and giving unsuspecting Bible students the false impression that two spirits, a Holy Ghost and a Holy Spirit, are meant.

## MATTHEW 1:20

„But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost“.

Some use this verse to support that the Greek word „gennao“ means conception. „Gennao“ has been translated as „conceived“.

1. Conceived comes from the Greek „gennao“, meaning born in her. Matthew 1:20, *„But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, „Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit“.*
2. Born out of, not born into her. Greek and English are incompatible and there is no exact parallel in English. In Latin it is translated „Natum Est“. At conception you are pregnant. It is idiomatic in Greek.

## MATTHEW 2:1

„Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem“.

Some people believe that the Magi, or wise men from the East, were astrologers.

1. God condemns astrology (Deuteronomy 4:15, 19, 17:2-5; Isaiah 47:13-14). Also, there is no reason to believe that pagan astrologers would want to give honor to the Son of a God they did not worship. Obviously, then, the Magi were not astrologers. But who were they?
2. The Bible talks of two kinds of magi or magians. Of all the ancient records of magi, the earliest is found in Jeremiah 39:3 and Jeremiah 39:13. The King James Bible has „Rabmag“; the word is left untranslated because the translators did not understand its meaning. Rabmag has been correctly deciphered as „chief magi“. These were pagan physicians, priests, and learned men in the company of the Babylonians. The best authorities – ancient and modern – all tell us that magi comes from mag or mog, meaning „priest“ or „great one“, from the old Persian language of Pahlavi. From these magi descend a long line of evil and perverted priests and sorcerers – from Haman the Agagite (book of Esther) to Barjesus or Elymas the sorcerer (magian) of Acts 13.
3. The other kind of magi are mentioned in Daniel 2:48. Here we read, *„Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many gifts, and made him ruler of the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men (magi) of Babylon“.*
4. One of God's most righteous men was made leader of the Babylonian magi! Since Daniel remained in this position for a long time, this Bible example proves there was at least one righteous magus – Daniel.
5. Now who were the Magi of Matthew 2? And where did they come from? The Old Testament has two expressions for the East. Anything on the east side or eastern is termed „what is before“ (meaning the near east). Anything far to the east, or distant as the rising sun, is

termed „rising of the sun“ (meaning distant east). So Matthew also uses two Greek expressions for areas east of the Holy Land. First, Matthew says the Magi are from „the east“ (or „eastern parts“ – Greek ton anatolon), or the distant East. Second, the Magi saw the star in „the east“ (Greek te anatole) – west of the Magi, but east from the Holy Land's viewpoint, in the „Near East“. (See Upham's *Star of the Wise Men*).

6. One great empire east of the Euphrates – biblically „the distant east“ – conquered the lands east of the Euphrates area, had Babylon as its capital, and included the areas of Persia, Bactria and so on. It was the Parthian Empire. It ruled the whole area, and was the empire of the East – the land of Magi!
7. The Parthians rose to power around 250 B.C. in and around the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. That was the very land into which the House of Israel – not Judah – was exiled. The exiles in this land were members of the Ten Tribes of Israel. The Parthian Empire included exiles from the lost Ten Tribes of Israel – many of whom remained in the land of their captivity until about A.D. 226. Certain of the ancient magi could claim Abraham as their father (see McClintock and Strong's *Cyclopedia*, article „Magi“).
8. Thus, historical and biblical evidence reveals that the Magi of Matthew 2 were not astrologers whose observations of heavenly bodies led them to the Christ Child. Instead, they were representatives of the tribes of Israel in exile who were led to their King by an angel! In the Bible, stars sometimes symbolize angels (see Job 38:7 and Revelation 1:20 for examples).



## MATTHEW 2:11

„And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh“.

Some Bible commentators see the gift of myrrh to the infant Jesus as pointing towards Christ's own death, burial and resurrection. What is the significance of myrrh?

1. Myrrh is a bitter gum and costly perfume which exudes from a certain tree or shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia, or is obtained by incision made in the bark. As an antiseptic it was also used for embalming.
2. Unlike the Egyptians, who embalm their dead, the Jews applied myrrh and other spices to preserve the bodies. Preservation of the body, and therefore the application of myrrh, was considered a prerequisite to resurrection.
3. Because myrrh was well known as a spice used in the burial ritual, some Bible commentators see the gift of myrrh to the infant Jesus as pointing towards Christ's own death, burial and resurrection.
4. When Mary anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair, Judas objected at the extravagant use of expensive perfume (John 12:2-4).
5. Jesus, however, used the incident as an opportunity to allude to His own death and burial: *„It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me“* (John 12:7-8).
6. After Jesus had been crucified, Nicodemus brought about 34 kilograms of myrrh and aloes to use in preparing Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39). The manner of preparation of Christ's body for burial was unusual in itself, but the large quantity of myrrh and aloe was.

7. The action of Mary and Nicodemus, each of whom anointed Jesus with expensive myrrh which symbolized preservation and resurrection to the Jews, take on greater meaning.
8. Myrrh in the Greek language is „Smyrna“. Smyrna was an Ionian city of Asia Minor, on the Aegean Sea, 65 kilometers north of Ephesus.

## MATTHEW 2:23

„And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene“.

Some cannot find the scripture where Christ „shall be called a Nazarene“.

1. Actually, there is no direct prophecy recorded in the Old Testament about Christ being a Nazarene. Apparently, this was an oral prophecy which had been passed down only by word of mouth. Notice the word „*spoken*“ in Matthew 2:23.
2. Isaiah 11:1, however, contains an interesting play on words. The word branch here is from the Hebrew „nezer“. This word is very similar to the Hebrew word for Nazarene. Perhaps the Jews at that time understood this verse to refer to someone from Nazareth.

## MATTHEW 3:11

„I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire“.

Some point to this verse to say that we should seek the „baptism of fire“ mentioned here.

1. We need to notice the context: John was not speaking to the followers of Christ. He was reproofing the Pharisees and Sadducees for their self-righteous attitudes (Matthew 3:7-9). He told them to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8).
2. John explained that he was baptizing with water unto repentance (Matthew 3:11), but Christ would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
3. We notice Matthew 3:12. This fire is described as an unquenchable fire that would burn up the chaff.
4. Malachi 4:3 describes the results of this same fire. The wicked are to be ashes – completely burned up – under the feet of the righteous. This is speaking of the second death, as described in Revelation 20:14-15.
5. By their attitude the Pharisees and the Sadducees were seeking the „*baptism with fire*“, but we should not seek it.
6. This scripture describes three types of baptism by immersion:
  - a. Water
  - b. Holy Spirit
  - c. Fire

## **MATTHEW 5:18**

„For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled“.

We have heard a great deal about the Dead Sea Scrolls. What significance do they have?

1. The year is A.D. 68. As the Roman legions close in on Jerusalem, a group of Jewish scribes flee the city, not to save their lives, but their treasure – a library of sacred scrolls. The scribes hide the scrolls in earthenware jars in hard-to-reach caves of the desert.
2. The year is 1947. A Bedouin shepherd searches for a lost goat near Wadi Qumran in southern Judea. He throws a rock into a cave and hears pottery break. The discovery of the scrolls sparks an intensive search of the region. Archaeologists and Bedouins find 10 complete scrolls and thousands of fragments – „the world’s greatest jigsaw puzzle“, according to one scholar. It takes 10 years alone to piece together the fragments.
3. Among the find is a complete scroll of the biblical book of Isaiah. The collection also includes fragments of virtually every book of the Old Testament.
4. The year is 1991, more than 40 years after the find. Over half the scroll library remains unpublished. Many wonder what is taking so long. Is it a conspiracy? Academic dishonesty? An unreasonable desire for perfection on the part of the scholars? Theories abound, as do books about the theories. The scrolls’ real significance is much less sensational, though still of interest and importance to scholars.
5. Before their discovery, the earliest text of the Old Testament dated to the Middle Ages. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are at least 1,000 years older, perhaps dating back to the third century B.C. The scrolls also give insight into the historical background of the Gospels.

6. As more scrolls are published, scholars will produce various theories about the doctrines of the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees – the three groups Jesus Christ confronted during this earthly ministry. Thus, the full import of the Dead Sea Scrolls remains to be seen. Referring to their significance, Professor Norman Golb of the University of Chicago said, „The real debate is only now beginning“.

## MATTHEW 5:29-30

„And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell”.

Some claim this verse is to be taken literally.

1. This passage is also found in Mark 9:43-48. Christ did not intend that this instruction be taken literally. The eye, the hand, or the foot cannot sin of and by themselves. Sin originated in the mind. A person who is totally blind, for example, or one who is missing a limb can still sin.
2. Jesus was simply using parts of the body to illustrate an important principle. He was explaining that a follower of Christ should not tolerate sin as an integral part of his life. If, for example, an individual has a sinful habit, he ought to totally eradicate that habit even though the process may be as painful as losing an arm or a leg. What Christ is saying is that it would be far better to give up a sinful pleasure than to lose out on salvation (also see Colossians 3:5-17).

## MATTHEW 5:34

„But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne”.

Some have questions about whether it is permissible for a follower of Christ to swear by an oath.

1. The answer is that he should not! The Bible is very clear on this point: *„But above all things, my brethren, swear not... but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation”* (James 5:12).
2. Jesus Himself said, *„I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes', and your 'No', 'No'. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one”* (Matthew 5:34-37, New King James).
3. This scriptural instruction is not meant to imply that oaths by themselves are sin. To emphasize that we mortal human beings are often powerless to fulfill even our strongest intentions, God commands us not to swear by His name in any oath. Failing to fulfill an oath would be taking God's name in vain.
4. Therefore, a follower of Christ should simply say „Yes” or „No”, according to what one honestly believes to be true, even in legal matters. For example, the law of the United States permits affirmation; that is, saying „Yes” or „No” – without raising the hand to swear.



## MATTHEW 5:39

„But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also“.

Some have questions concerning the subject of self-defense.

1. Jesus said, *„Resist not evil... whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also“* (Matthew 5:39). Does this mean we must never defend ourselves?
2. The Bible makes it clear we are to live by God's law of love in every aspect of our lives. It is certainly not right for a follower of Christ to fight back with the purpose of inflicting bodily injury, even if provoked.
3. Nonetheless, the use of restraining force may at times be necessary and advisable. For example, if someone tried to strike you with a club, it would not be wrong to restrain the attacker if you were able.
4. The best defense is to avoid circumstances which are dangerous or threatening. In case of emergency, we should quickly ask God, in prayer, for protection and deliverance. God hears those who are faithful to Him (Hebrews 11:6 and 1 John 3:22).
5. But, what of „turning the other cheek“? Does that mean that followers of Christ are to be pushovers and doormats? Certainly not! Jesus Christ was not. Jesus had the wisdom to know when to avoid confrontations and when to challenge injustice and evil. He forced the money changers out of the temple. Yet, He submitted to the most horrible verbal and physical abuse and finally allowed Himself to be crucified (thereby fulfilling His commission). But, through it all, Jesus set us an example of the type of attitude we ought to have, no matter what the circumstances.
6. The apostle Paul wrote: *„Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord“* (Romans 12:19).

7. What should a follower of Christ do in the face of evil and injustice? The answer is, *„Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good“* (Romans 12:21). If we have a godly attitude and a proper personal relationship with God, we can have total confidence that He is watching over us and will protect us from harm and evil according to His will (see Psalms 91).

## MATTHEW 6:9-13

Some wonder whether it is proper to pray the Lord's Prayer of Matthew 6:9-13? Is it „*vain repetition*“ as mentioned in Matthew 6:7?

1. A valuable key in Bible study is to compare the same passage in different versions of the Bible. Where one translation is awkward or unclear, another could be more precise.
2. The King James Version translates Matthew 6:7, „*When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking*“.
3. The New International Version is more specific when translating Matthew 6:7, „*Do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words*“.
4. Instead of condemning the use of a written or prepared prayer, Christ was condemning meaningless prayer. Pagans would often repeat the same word or phrase for hours to work themselves into a trance. Or they used long, magical incantations to rouse their gods to action.
5. Christ was explaining that God the Father wants to help us, so we don't have to convince Him through nagging. He confirmed this in Matthew 6:8, „*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him*“.
6. Thus, Christ was not prohibiting the formal reciting of the prayer He gave. On the other hand, there is no biblical evidence He encouraged its use either.
7. Luke's version of this account explains that Christ was teaching His disciples how to pray (Luke 11:1). Here we see Christ's intent. We are to use the prayer as a model for our personal prayers.

## MATTHEW 7:1

„Judge not, that ye be not judged“.

Some use this verse to claim that nobody has the right to judge another person.

1. First, we should look at this verse in context. Matthew 7:3-5 clearly shows that we should now consider (point out) the sins of a brother UNTIL we examine ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31; 2 Corinthians 13:5) and work on our own faults.
2. The Greek word „krino“ translated as „judge“ in Matthew 7:1 can also be translated as „condemn, punish, avenge, damn, determine, esteem, call into question, or think“. Matthew 7:2 shows there are different meanings possible. The Moffatt version renders this verse as *„for as you judge so you will be judged, and the measure you deal out to others will be dealt out to yourselves“*.
3. We are instructed to use judgment (discernment) in many matters in our lives. We are to judge the sin and sinful actions of a person. We are not to judge the person.
  - a. We are to judge in the smallest matters of things pertaining to our lives (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). It is to our shame if we cannot judge in these matters (1 Corinthians 6:4-5).
  - b. Referring to the discernment of spiritual matters, Paul said, *„He that is spiritual discerns (judges) all things and is discerned (judged) by no man“* (1 Corinthians 2:15).
  - c. Paul prayed that our love may abound in knowledge and judgment that we might approve (test, discern) things that are excellent so we will be sincere and without offense until Christ returns (Philippians 1:9-10).
  - d. Paul told the Corinthians to judge (test, discern) what he said (1 Corinthians 10:15).

- e. We are told to examine (test, try, judge) ourselves (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31; 2 Corinthians 13:5), and to judge righteous judgment (Proverbs 24:23, John 7:24).
4. We are not to judge the righteousness, character, or heart of others. This attempts to anticipate God's final judgment of them.
- a. Romans 2:1, *„You are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are that judges (condemns); for wherein you judge (condemn) another, you condemn yourself; for you that judge (condemn) do the same thing“*. Those who condemn another cannot escape the judgment of God (Romans 2:3).
  - b. If we condemn another, judge his character, we are in danger of the lake of fire.
5. Don't condemn is also the meaning of Matthew 7:1, *„Condemn not, that you be not condemned“*. This verse is not referring to discernment as is made clear in Luke 6:37.

Those who qualify to enter God's Kingdom will then be able to judge the righteousness, character, or heart of others (Revelation 20:4). The saints shall, in the future, judge the world and angels (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). We are not to make those kinds of judgments now. We can only, and should, make evaluations or discernments or judgments about how well we are living God's way.

6. We, and especially the ministry, are expected to judge or discern when someone sins to help him overcome sin.
- a. Matthew 7:2-5 shows that if we examine ourselves and are right before God, we should help a brother by pointing out his sin (Matthew 7:5). We should do this with compassion and meekness (Romans 15:1) and we will be judged the same way by God (Romans 15:2, Galatians 6:1).

- b. We should help others to grow and overcome by pointing out their sins in meekness and humility (Galatians 6:1-2, James 5:19-20, 1 John 5:16).
  - c. If a brother sins against us we should discuss it with him for both our good and his (Matthew 18:15-17).
7. When we are properly judged and chastened for our weaknesses and sins, it is for our own good so we won't be condemned with the world, if we heed. God gave the elders specifically for perfecting the saints by pointing out the wrong way of life and teaching them the right way.

## MATTHEW 7:6

„Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you“.

Some wonder if Christ implied that people are „swine“.

1. This is an analogy Jesus used to show how people who have not had their minds opened by God to receive spiritual understanding will often react when they hear the true Gospel. In other words, Jesus was teaching His disciples not to try to convert those who are not yet being called (John 6:44). Such people are likely to respond by treating God's truth like dirt. Just as a pig would trample fine pearls into the mud because it doesn't know any better and cannot appreciate such worth, the person whose mind is not yet receptive cannot grasp the awesome value of the truth. To them, the truth would be meaningless and would be discarded. They would just trample it underfoot, so to speak.
2. While we would never attempt to force God's truth on any person, we should certainly *„be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks... a reason of the hope that is in (us), with meekness and fear (gentleness and respect)“* (1 Peter 3:15). In other words, it is right to explain what we believe when someone sincerely asks us. Such interest may indicate that God is opening the person's mind.
3. Notice how, at another time, Jesus used pearls to express the value of the truth and of God's Kingdom. He said, *„The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking good pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it“* (Matthew 13:45-46).
4. God wants us to treat His truth like a priceless gem.

## MATTHEW 8:22

„But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead“.

Some have wondered about the meaning of the expression *„let the dead bury the dead“*.

1. The context of Christ’s statement reveals that He offered this man an opportunity to participate in His ministry and become a teacher of the Way that leads to eternal life (see Luke 9:59-60). When this man said that he had to first go and bury his father, Christ told him to let the „dead“ (those unaware of spiritual matters) bury their dead.
2. Was Christ telling this man not to attend his father’s funeral? No, that is not what Jesus meant. A funeral usually takes only a short time, and Christ continually showed that His followers are to have compassion and show proper respect for others. We read the short account of His having met a funeral procession during His ministry (Luke 7:11-15).
3. Why, then, did Christ answer this man in such a manner: He realized that the man was only making excuses. Probably, the young man’s father was an elderly man with not much time left to live. This man, leaning on his father’s condition, tried to put off the responsibility that was offered to him. Obviously, the man’s priorities were not based on faith and serving God first (Matthew 6:33). Had the young man wanted to, he could have found a way, without showing any disrespect, to have his father cared for and still serve God. That is why Christ told him to let the spiritually dead (those who were not being called, Ephesians 2:1) continue to live their lives as seemed best to them.
4. This account illustrates how we should not let undue concern over physical matters distract us from serving God once He has called us to do His Work (John 6:44, 65). We should keep in mind the parable of the sower in Mark 4:14-20.



## MATTHEW 10:28

„And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell“.

Some misunderstand this scripture because the word „soul“ has lost its true meaning. Once that is restored, Jesus' statement becomes clear.

1. In this verse we find these instructions: *„Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell“* (Matthew 10:28, New King James Version).
2. The English word „soul“ is translated from the Greek word psyche and from the Hebrew word nepshesh. Both words mean a living, breathing creature, referring to man or animal.
3. „Soul“ NEVER means something immortal inside of man or animal. The words „immortal soul“ appear nowhere in the Bible. In fact, the Bible shows that a soul can perish. Ezekiel twice wrote, *„The soul that sins, it shall die“* (Ezekiel 18:4, 20). The word „soul“ pertains to the life of any physical being or creature. „Soul“ simply means life.
4. The word translated „life“ in Leviticus 17:11 comes from the same Hebrew word translated „soul“. This verse can just as accurately be rendered, *„For the soul of the flesh is in the blood“*. Jesus gave His life (translated from the same Greek word for „soul“) as a ransom for us (Mark 10:45) by pouring out His soul (life's blood) in payment for sin (Isaiah 53:12). Again, „soul“ refers to the physical life of human beings or animals.
5. God can destroy the physical body and the soul (life). Matthew 10:28 tells us that no man can do both. Jesus said the same thing at another time: *„And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell (the lake of fire – the second or final death)“* (Luke 12:4-5, New King James Version).

6. Man can destroy a physical life. But that results only in the first death (Hebrews 9:27). God, on the other hand, has the power both to impart life and to take it away either temporarily or forever. He is able to kill in a way no man can. If God judges a person to be unworthy of His Kingdom, that person will be thrown into the lake of fire to be utterly consumed. This is the second death, from which there will be no resurrection (Revelation 20:14-15, Malachi 4:1). The body and life (soul) of the unrepentant will be destroyed forever.
  
7. So, then, what Jesus said was that we should not shape our lives by any threat men may pose against us. We should live our lives in total obedience to God and His Laws (see Acts 5:29). If men kill us, it will be only temporary. If God kills us, it will be forever.

## MATTHEW 11:12

„And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force“.

Some don't understand why Christ said „*violent take the kingdom of heaven by force*“.

1. Bible translators have interpreted this verse in several ways. That is because the Greek wording seems to allow for a variety of translations that give different meanings.
2. For example, the New International Version reads, „*From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it*“ (Matthew 11:12).
3. The New King James Version reads, „the kingdom of heaven suffers violence“, meaning it is being attacked. Both translations are possible.
4. Bible commentators have offered several explanations of this verse. We will discuss two of them:
  - a. The first interpretation refers to the zeal people need to enter the Kingdom. This explanation lends a positive connotation to the forceful people who lay hold of it. The commentators believe Christ was using a figure of speech to mean zealous people.

This solution fits in well with Matthew 11:16-17. Christ said: „*To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn'*“.

That generation rejected both Jesus and John. Each offered a different approach, but neither approach inspired a commitment on the part of the people. We have to make up our minds about our commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Some commentators believe the parallel version of this scripture in Luke 16:16 tips the scale in favor of this interpretation. „*The good*

*news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it*". But this wording in Luke's version is significantly different from Matthew's. These scriptures may not be two different versions of the same saying.

- b. Another explanation fits Matthew's verse into the context of John the Baptist and even foreshadows the arrest and murder of Christ.

D.A. Carson in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* offers a translation that, though not entirely correct in English usage, is acceptable in Greek: „From the time of John until now the kingdom is forcefully advancing, and violent men are pillaging it" (Matthew 11:12). This rendition implies Christ was speaking of religious persecution, not zeal. He was explaining that John the Baptist and other preachers of the Kingdom, including Himself, would suffer at the hands of violent people. As many of His disciples would eventually be martyred, perhaps Christ was preparing them for their fate.

A solution that allows for both interpretations is to use Luke 16:16 to explain the need for zeal and Matthew 11:12 for the possibility of persecution.

## **MATTHEW 11:18**

„For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil“.

Some don't understand why John the Baptist did not drink alcohol.

1. The archangel Gabriel instructed Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, that the child would be named John and that he would drink neither wine nor strong drink (Luke 1:15).
2. John the Baptist also received the Holy Spirit in his mother's womb, a very rare occurrence. He was set apart or separated for use by God, possibly by a Nazaritic vow (Numbers 6:1-3). He also ate locusts and wild honey and wore a camel's hair coat (Matthew 3:4, Mark 1:6), possibly to visibly set himself apart as part of the Nazarite vow.
3. The parallel account in Luke 7:24-30 gives us more information. All the people that heard John the Baptist, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John (Luke 7:29). The Pharisees and lawyers, however, rejected the counsel of God against them, and were not baptized by John. Therefore, they were trying to justify themselves by accusing Christ.

## MATTHEW 11:19

„The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children“.

Some use this verse to show that Christ abused alcohol.

1. Many places in the New Testament tell us that drunkenness or drinking MUCH wine, not drinking in moderation, is a SIN (Luke 21:34, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 6:10; Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Peter 4:3).
2. We also know that Christ was tempted (tried, tested) in all things as are we, but He was without sin (Hebrews 4:15, 9:28). Therefore, Christ could not have been given to drunkenness or to much wine. If He had sinned only once, we would not have a savior and we would be lost.
3. The parallel account in Luke 7:24-30 gives us more information. All the people that heard John the Baptist, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John (Luke 7:29). The Pharisees and lawyers, however, rejected the counsel of God against them, and were not baptized by John. Therefore, they were trying to justify themselves by accusing Christ of being a glutton and a winebibber (Matthew 11:19).

## MATTHEW 16:18-19

„And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven“.

Some misunderstand what Jesus mentioned in these verses to Peter.

1. To understand what Jesus meant in this passage, let us begin reading in Matthew 16:13. When He came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples who the people thought He was. They gave various answers. Jesus then asked who they thought He was.
2. Peter, more outspoken than the others, answered that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Then Christ said to him, „*You are Peter* (the Greek word is petros, which means 'little rock'), *and upon this rock* (Greek word petra, which means 'very great rock', referring to Christ Himself) *I will build my church*“. Christ is the great „Rock“ upon whom the Church is built (Deuteronomy 32:3-4, 15-18; 1 Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:6).
3. Christ told Peter that He (Christ) was about to found the New Testament Church, guide it (Ephesians 5:23), be with it always (Matthew 28:20), and that the grave would never prevail against it. The Church would continue to exist, doing His Work down through the ages as a little flock, till the end time, when it would reach the whole world with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 24:14). The Church would never die out, but would remain until Christ returned to the Earth. The gates of hell (hades or „the grave“ in the Greek) would not prevail against His Church, since Christ – not Peter – was to be the LIVING HEAD over it (Ephesians 1:22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18).
4. Matthew 16:19 states, „*Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose on Earth shall be loosed in heaven*“. The Church was invested with certain powers and responsibilities.

5. God's elders, however, have been given the authority to bind only that which is in agreement with God's Laws and which, in reality, would be bound by God. The decision of God's elders are based on the Scriptures. In this way, they are led to make the right judgements in accordance with God's will. But, notice also that this verse neither says nor implies that God's elders have the power to forgive sin. Only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7).
6. From the scriptural teaching, however, elders of God are able to discern when God has forgiven a person and when He has not. For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 Paul knew that this man was not forgiven because he was not repentant.
7. Yet, after the man repented, Paul said that he was to be admitted again to the fellowship of the Church (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) because his sins were now forgiven.
8. To guide His elders in making the right decision, Christ gave them the „keys“ to the Kingdom of God. This is symbolic language, meaning that He gave them the knowledge of how to enter the Kingdom – the knowledge of the way of life which leads to salvation. Notice, in Luke 11:52, Christ reproved the lawyers of His day for suppressing the key of knowledge – hiding the Way which leads to salvation and entrance into God's Kingdom. Christ revealed that Way – the key to right living – to His elders and His Church.



## MATTHEW 16:28

„Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom“.

This verse seems to indicate that some of the apostles would live until Christ's return.

1. Matthew 16:28 is a parallel account to Mark 9:1.
2. The answer is found in Matthew 17:1-9. This is the account of the transfiguration of Jesus Christ witnessed by three of His disciples – Peter, James and John. These men had stood by Christ as He made the promise of Matthew 16:28.
3. Christ didn't „come into His Kingdom“ during the lifetime of these disciples – that is, as far as literally establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. But they did see Him „come in His Kingdom“ in vision – in the vision of Christ's transfiguration.
4. Six days after Christ made the transfiguration of Matthew 16:28, He took Peter, James, and John up into a high mountain to pray. He was going to keep His promise. They were to see a glimpse (as it were) of Christ „coming in His Kingdom“ – returning to this earth at His Second Coming in all the power and glory of the Almighty Creator of the universe!

## MATTHEW 18:20

„For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them“.

Some use this verse to show that God’s government is not necessary, or that it should be a democracy.

1. Matthew 18:1 shows Christ was giving instructions to His disciples, those who would be apostles when the New Testament church began (Acts 2).

In context, these scriptures show the hierarchy of authority in God’s church, not a democracy. If a brother sins against you (Matthew 18:15-18), the hierarchy is:

- a. Go privately to your brother to discuss the matter with him (Matthew 18:15).
  - b. Take one or two neutral, respected witnesses with you to discuss the matter (Matthew 18:16).
  - c. Finally, go to the ministry with the matter (Matthew 18:17).
2. Matthew 18:18 gives the ministry the authority to make judgements about matters based upon God’s law, as does John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19. No one has the authority to add to or subtract from God’s law (Deuteronomy 4:2, 12:32; Revelation 22:18-19).
  3. God’s government in the Church is from the top down. The following New Testament examples clearly show church government is not a democracy:
    - a. God the Father is the head of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3).
    - b. Christ was raised above all principality and power by His head, God the Father. All things were placed under Christ’s feet. He is head of all things to the Church (Ephesians 1:20-22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18).
    - c. Christ is the spiritual rock (petra), foundation, and chief cornerstone of God’s Church (Matthew 16:18, 1 Corinthians

10:4, 3:11; Ephesians 2:20). Christ then gave human authority over the original Church to Peter (petros), a pebble.

- d. There are many members of the body with different skills and abilities, performing different functions. God has set the members in the body as it pleased Him, there was no voting (1 Corinthians 12:18).
  - e. Paul appointed and ordained elders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5). He also gave instructions on how to appoint elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:2-12, Titus 1:5-9).
  - f. Peter, the head apostle, decided the matter of circumcision of the Gentiles after there had been much discussion (Acts 15:7). There was no voting.
4. God also established an ordering of responsibility in the ministry (1 Corinthians 12:28-30, Ephesians 4:11).

Church government is not a democracy.

## MATTHEW 19:6

„Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder“.

Some have a question concerning whether or not God's Word requires a legally recognized marriage ceremony.

1. We should first understand that God regards marriage as a holy union in which a man and a woman are joined together for life as „*one flesh*“ by a sacred vow (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:4-6). They are no longer separate, but are united and committed to walking through life together rather than independently. Therefore, it is right to formalize the union of a man and a woman in marriage by a wedding ceremony.
2. After instructing the first man and woman, God Himself joined Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. God's elders follow this example. They remind each couple of its responsibilities as taught in the Holy Scriptures before asking God to join them as husband and wife (see Ephesians 5:21-22 and 1 Peter 3:1-7, for example). Marriages performed by other legally authorized officials are also recognized by God.
3. Jesus performed His first public miracle at a formal wedding (John 2). By that wedding, a public statement or announcement was made, and all the community celebrated the couple's coming together in an honorable way.
4. Jesus also spoke of a great, formal wedding to take place at His return when, symbolically, He will marry the Church (see Matthew 22:1-13, Matthew 25:1-10, and Revelation 19:7-9). Notice that this will not be a secret or a common-law type of arrangement! The Holy Scriptures thus clearly reveal that it is God's will that a marriage be formalized by a legal ceremony to officially inform the community of the marriage.
5. State laws in respect to marriage are supported by Scripture. God tells us we are to obey the laws of the land when they do not conflict with His own (Romans 13:1-7, Acts 5:29). In this way, the appearance and suspicion of evil are avoided (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

God also tells us we are to set a good example for others (Matthew 5:14-16).

6. A marriage ceremony serves to protect the rights of each mate and to minimize fornication, adultery, bigamy, and kindred evils in the society at large. When there has been no formal ceremony, it can be a temptation to treat a union casually. If we treat with contempt or flippancy that which God established for our good, we can be sure He is not pleased! Marriage is a very special occasion, and it is certainly right and fitting that it be celebrated with a formal ceremony.

## MATTHEW 19:16-19

„And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and *thy* mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself“.

Some have noticed that in these verses Jesus mentioned only six of the Ten Commandments. Does this mean that He did away with the others?

1. Not at all! David said all of God's commandments are sure and stand forever (Psalms 111:7-8).
2. Christ did not need to quote all of the Commandments. His hearer knew them. All He needed to do was mention several to show which set of commandments He was referring to as the supreme rule of conduct – so the person would know He was speaking of the Ten Commandments and not the commands of the Jewish Sanhedrin.
3. Let us notice the particular Commandments Christ did mention: *„You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother: and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself“*.

These explain man's responsibility to man.

4. Christ's hearer needed to be reminded of his duty to his fellowman – of how to love his neighbor. This rich young man's refusal to use his great wealth for the good of others proved he did not love his neighbor (Matthew 19:22).
5. Now, let us notice the Commandments Christ did not refer to directly: *„You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make to yourself any graven image... nor serve them... You shall not take name of the Lord your God in vain... Remember the Sabbath day, to keep in holy... You shall not covet“* (Exodus 20:3-8, 17).

Since these Commandments are not mentioned, does this mean it is all right to worship other gods, curse, break the Sabbath, and covet? Of course not! The Jews understood this.

6. Jesus inspired James to write that we must keep every point of the Law – not just one or two, or even half of them. Anyone who offends in one point is guilty of all (James 2:10). To break any of the Ten Commandments is to be guilty of sin (1 John 3:4).

## MATTHEW 19:17

„And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments“.

This verse seems to indicate that Christ was not „good“.

1. Why did Christ say, „*Why you call me good? There is none good but one, that is, God*“? A careful reading of this passage and the parallel accounts in Mark 10 and Luke 18 reveals that Jesus perceived this man’s real attitude to be insincere.
2. We must remember that the society of Jesus’ day had rejected Him (Mark 8:31), and since this young ruler (Luke 18:18) was a leading member of the socio-religious community, he did not really acknowledge Christ’s authority but was just mouthing the words „Good Master“. Therefore, Jesus chided him for appearing to honor his office when, deep down inside, this „young ruler“ did not recognize Christ’s authority – as may be seen by the ensuing verses (Matthew 19:20-23).



## MATTHEW 19:23-24

„Then said Jesus unto his disciples, „Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God““.

These verses are used by some to teach that those rich in this life will not be in the Kingdom of God.

1. Christ said it was difficult for a rich man to enter God's Kingdom. He was referring to the example of the rich young man who turned down the opportunity to become one of Christ's disciples because he did not want to give up his wealth (Matthew 19:16-22).
2. In Mark 10:24, Christ emphasized that it was trusting in riches that would keep a rich man out of the Kingdom. Paul showed that the love of money could keep a man from entering into the Kingdom of God (1 Timothy 6:10).
3. Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare (1 Timothy 6:9). They become lustful. The more they get, the more they want. Soon they are more intent on getting riches than on striving to enter into the Kingdom of God. Wealth becomes their god (Colossians 3:5).
4. God is not opposed to wealth. His desire is that we prosper (3 John 2). Many of God's servants were wealthy. Joseph (Genesis 39:2), Job (Job 1:3), Abraham (Genesis 3:2), were wealthy, but they did not put their trust in riches nor seek their own blessings. They obeyed God and were blessed materially by Him, and they will be in God's Kingdom.
5. In our day and time, followers of Christ are to flee the lust of wealth and concentrate on living a godly life and striving to lay hold of eternal life. A follower of Christ can't serve both God and Mammon (wealth) (Matthew 6:24).

6. It is physically impossible for a camel to go through the eye of the needle, but with God all things are possible (Matthew 19:26). With your riches you can serve better. It is only through God's miraculous help that a rich man – or anyone else – can enter God's Kingdom.

## MATTHEW 19:30

„But many *that are* first shall be last; and the last *shall be* first“.

Some have puzzled over the meaning of „the first shall be last and the last shall be first“.

1. The statement that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, found in Matthew 19:30, Matthew 20:16, Mark 10:31, and Luke 13:30, has more than one meaning.
2. One application is that those who are first in status, importance, and the like, in this life will not necessarily have the same standing in God's Kingdom. God often calls the weak of the world (those who are considered by the world to have lesser standing), and it is these individuals who are first in God's sight and who will have the first or top positions in His Kingdom. We need to bear in mind 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.
3. Another application is found in Luke 13:24-30. The Jews of Christ's day were the first to be called. Even though God sent His own Son to them, many did not accept Him. When the Gospel was given to the gentiles, however, many of them believed it and became obedient to God. By this example, therefore, we see that some who were first to be shown God's truth will be the last to enter the Kingdom. On the other hand, some who received the „crumbs from the table“ (Matthew 15:27) will be among the first to be made rulers in God's Family.

## MATTHEW 24:15

„When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (who so readeth, let him understand)“.

Many misunderstand what is meant by the „*abomination of desolation*“.

1. Daniel's original prophecy (Daniel 12:11) has more than one fulfillment. The first took place in 167 B.C., on the 25<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Kislev (November-December in the Roman calendar). With the help of his army, Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes erected an altar to the Greek god Zeus on the temple mount in Jerusalem and offered swine upon it.
2. The „*abomination of desolation*“ Jesus mentioned was the desecration of the temple and the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies in A.D. 70. But, there is yet to be another fulfillment.
3. A short time before Christ returns, (Roman-Catholic European) armies will once again surround Jerusalem and an „*abomination*“ will be set up in the city. At that time, those in Jerusalem are told to flee to the mountains (Matthew 24:16, Luke 21:20-21).

## MATTHEW 24:19-20

„And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day“.

Many don't understand the „*time of fleeing*“.

1. These verses are part of a prophecy that was fulfilled in type in A.D. 69 when Christ's followers fled just before the final siege of Jerusalem began, just prior to its total destruction in A.D. 70. Jesus knew that those with small children and nursing babies would have it especially hard. (The „*woe*“ in [Matthew 24:19](#) is said compassionately, as compared to [Matthew 23:13](#), where it is said as a thing deserved.)
2. Winter and the Sabbath are mentioned because they are unfavorable times for fleeing. The inclement weather of winter could impede one's progress. Attempting to escape on the Sabbath would draw the undue attention of the invading armies, since both Jews and true Christians are supposed to rest on that day.
3. The time is coming again, during the Great Tribulation, when Jerusalem will be surrounded by (European Roman-Catholic) armies. The people of God will again have to flee to a place of safety to avoid the terrible bloodshed that is prophesied to occur ([Revelation 12:14](#)).
4. It can be frightening to look at the Great Tribulation without also seeing the coming New world.

## MATTHEW 24:21

„For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be“.

Many are confused over the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. They wonder whether the Great Tribulation is the same event as the Day of the Lord.

1. The Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are not the same. Concerning the coming Great Tribulation, Jesus said: *„For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened“* (Matthew 24:21-22, New King James Version).
2. Then Jesus said: *„Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heaven will be shaken“* (Matthew 24:29, New King James Version)
3. The prophet Joel records these same heavenly sights: *„The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord“* (Joel 2:31, New King James Version).
4. Taken together, Matthew 24:29 and Joel 2:31 show that the heavenly signs occur after the Great Tribulation and before the Day of the Lord. Clearly, then, the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord are two separate events. The Great Tribulation is Satan’s wrath unleashed upon the world, primarily against the descendants of Israel and those who obey God (Revelation 12:7-17). The Day of the Lord is God’s intervention in world affairs to rescue humanity from self-destruction.
5. The Day of the Lord begins with God’s intervention in human affairs and continues for more than a thousand years while Christ rules on earth.

## MATTHEW 24:32

„Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer *is* nigh“.

Some have asked whether there is a verse in the Bible which states, „You can't tell winter from summer except by the budding of the trees“.

1. There is no scripture which makes this statement. However, the idea may stem from a misapplication of Matthew 24:32: *„Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near“*.
2. This verse does not mean that the seasons would become indistinguishable. Christ simply used the budding of the fig tree to illustrate a point about His second coming.
3. Just as we know spring is here and summer is near when the trees put out new leaves, so we will know Christ's return is near when we see the events He mentioned occur. Notice Matthew 24:33: *„So likewise you, when you see all these things (those things described in Matthew 24:4-29), know that it (the day of Christ's return) is near, even at the doors“*.

## MATTHEW 24:40-41

„Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left*“.

Some teach that these verses refer to a secret rapture.

1. To be properly understood, these verses must be read in their context. This chapter records some of what Jesus told His disciples about His second coming. Among other things He said, „*Then* (at the time of Christ's return) *shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left*“ (Matthew 24:40-41). The meaning is that when Christ comes again there is to be a separation made between those who will and those who will not enter God's Kingdom at that time.
2. At the second coming, the saints are to be instantly changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-53) and taken up to meet Christ in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) to begin ruling the earth (Revelation 20:4). Those who are not „taken“ will be given the opportunity for salvation at a later time.
3. Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36 do not refer to a secret rapture.



## MATTHEW 25:41, 46

„Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal“.

Many use this verse to prove the wicked will suffer eternal punishment.

1. The word translated „everlasting“ in verse 41 is „aionionin“ in Greek. This word comes from the root aion, which can mean „eternal“ but often means „age“. In Matthew 25:41, the correct translation into English should be „age-lasting“ fire.
2. During the Millennium – „the age“ of Christ’s rule with the saints on the earth – the valley of Hinnom will be kept perpetually burning. The incorrigibly wicked, those who set their wills in persistent rebellion against God’s Laws, will be thrown into that fire as a stern witness to the rest of the world (Isaiah 66:24).
3. The everlasting punishment spoken of in Matthew 25:46 is what the Bible elsewhere calls „*second death*“ (Revelation 20:14, 21:8). Death for all eternity is eternal punishment. The Bible nowhere teaches eternal punishing. The wicked will be burned up and will become ashes under the feet of the righteous (Malachi 4:3). We also notice that in Matthew 25:46 the punishment of the wicked – everlasting death – is contrasted with the eternal life given to the righteous.

## MATTHEW 26:17

„Now the first *day* of the *feast of* unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?“

Many have wondered about the Passover day mentioned in this verse.

1. In the King James Version, we notice that the words „day“ and „feast of“ are in italics. This indicates that these words do not appear in the original Greek. Italicized words were added by the translators either for clarity in English or because they thought the word was necessary. Properly translated, Matthew 26:17 should read, „Now (on) the first (day) of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?“

The addition of „day“ is required by the Greek; the addition of „feast of“ is not required.

2. The specific day referred to in this passage is the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month, Passover day. This conversation took place as that day began. We should remember that God begins and ends days with sunset (Leviticus 23:32). In other words, they talked at sunset at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Later that evening, Jesus introduced the Christian Passover (Matthew 26:20).
3. The day of the Passover is the final occasion on which all leavened bread is to be put out of the home in preparation for the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follow sunset on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month (Exodus 12:18-19). The day of the Passover consequently came to be considered one of the days of Unleavened Bread.
4. The day referred to is thus the day before the 15<sup>th</sup>, when the Feast of Unleavened Bread officially began. Because the translators were confused on this point, they wrongly inserted „feast of“ in the Authorized Version.
5. The first century Jewish historian Josephus confirms this. He tells us that the Passover was on the 14<sup>th</sup> day and preceded the Feast of

Unleavened Bread, which lasted for seven days, that is, from the 15<sup>th</sup> day to the 21<sup>st</sup> day of the first month of the sacred year. In common speech, he says, the entire eight-day spring festival was called „the days of Unleavened Bread“ (*Antiquities of the Jews*, Book 2, chapter 15, paragraph 12; Book 3, chapter 10, paragraph 5).

6. Luke 22:1 shows that the word „Passover“ was also used to refer to the entire period. The two terms were then used interchangeably.
7. Matthew 26:17, then, refers to the day immediately preceding the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Today, we refer to it as Passover day.

## MATTHEW 27:5

„And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself“.

Some cannot explain the apparent contradiction between Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18. Did Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, hang himself or just swell up and burst open?

1. We should first understand that God had His Word recorded in such a way that it could be misunderstood. Through one of the prophets we find that the Bible is written „here a little, and there a little“ (Isaiah 28:10). Each part is true, but the whole truth about a particular subject may not be found in any one verse or chapter. This is one reason Paul said that the Word of God must be rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15).
2. By putting the two accounts of Judas' death together, we get a clearer idea of what happened. Both events are true. But both events did not happen at the same time.
3. Matthew wrote that Judas „*hanged himself*“ (Matthew 27:5). Luke explained what happened later – after Judas' body began to decompose. The corpse slipped from the rope and burst when it fell.

## MATTHEW 27:9

„Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;“

Some are unable to find the words of this prophecy in the book of Jeremiah.

1. Let us notice very carefully what this Matthew 27:9 says: *„Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued...“* Jeremiah spoke these words. If he wrote them, they are not included in the book of Jeremiah.
2. The fact that a similar prophecy is found in the book of Zechariah (Zechariah 11:12-13) has led some to believe that the word „Jeremiah“ in Matthew 27:9 should be „Zechariah“. In all authoritative texts, however, the original Greek word is „Jeremiah“.
3. The simple explanation, then, is that Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, and Zechariah, writing at a later time, was inspired to record it. God’s Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35).

## MATTHEW 27:32

„And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross“.

Some are not sure whether Christ was crucified on a cross or a stake.

1. When we understand what the original Greek word for „cross“ meant in New Testament times, the answer to the question „Was the cross a cross or a stake?“ becomes clear.
2. The New Testament word cross is a translation of the Greek word „stauros“ (Strong’s concordance (number 4716)). This word has two meanings:
  - a. An upright stake, especially a pointed one. Any upright wooden stake firmly fixed in the ground. A „stauros“ could serve a variety of purposes as, for example, a pole in a picket fence.
  - b. A cross: A well-known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; to it were affixed among the Romans, down to the time of Constantine the Great, the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors and abettors of insurrections, and occasionally in the provinces, at the arbitrary pleasure of the governors, upright and peaceable men also, and even Roman citizens themselves.
3. Unfortunately, the word „stauros“ also represented a pointed stake used for impalement of human beings. This was an ancient form of punishment used to publicly display the bodies of executed criminals.
4. The Assyrians, for example, used impalement to execute deserter, captured enemies and rebels. Sometimes they displayed the corpses or heads impaled on stakes.
5. However, the Greek words „stauros“ (stake) and „stauroo“ (crucifixion) do not convey the exact technical form of execution. That is, to be

executed by crucifixion was not the same as being hung on a simple upright stake.

6. The distinction is important because the official mode of execution in the Roman Empire changed. However, the same Greek words were used to describe it because a stake was still used. The execution stake, once used to impale a victim, became a vertical pole with horizontal crossbar placed across it at some point. At some uncertain time in history, then, the crossbar came into existence. Simple impalement became crucifixion.

7. By New Testament times, the Romans were using several different cross forms for crucifixion.

a. One was the so-called St. Anthony's cross, shaped like a T.

b. Another was what is called the Latin cross, in which a horizontal crossbar intersected the upright beam somewhere along the upper half.

One of these two cross forms most likely was used for the execution of Jesus Christ.

8. There is an indication that Jesus' cross had a crossbar. His cross had an additional piece of wood with an inscription nailed to it. *The International Standard Encyclopedia* says, „From the mention of an inscription nailed above the head of Jesus it may safely be inferred that this was the form of the cross on which He died“.

9. All four Gospel writers mentioned this inscription (Matthew 27:37, Mark 15:26, Luke 23:38). John wrote: „*Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS*“ (John 19:19).

10. Earliest tradition held that the Latin form was the shape of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. The theologian Irenaeus (A.D. 120) assumed Jesus was crucified on a stake with a crossbar that traversed the vertical beam below the top (*Against Heresies*, 2.24.4).

We have few detailed descriptions of a crucifixion. Secular writers avoided giving details of something too ghastly to discuss.

11. That means we cannot come to any final conclusion as to the precise form of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. But as stated, either the Latin or the T-shaped cross are the best candidates.
12. Archaeology does give us one vital clue as to the kinds of crosses used in Jesus' time by the Roman authorities. In June 1968, a tomb or depository for the bones of the dead was discovered on Ammunition Hill, north of Jerusalem. It contained the bones of a young man who had obviously been crucified, probably between A.D. 7 and A.D. 66. The remains included the victim's two heel bones fastened together by a nail. His arms – not his hands – were nailed to the crossbar. The weight of the young man's body was borne by a plank nailed to the upright beam. This would have supported his buttocks. The victim's legs had been broken, as were the legs of the two criminals crucified with Jesus Christ ([John 19:32](#)).
13. „If Jesus died in similar fashion“, says the *New Bible Dictionary*, „then his legs were not fully extended as in traditional Christian art“. Also, the victim's feet were probably only inches above the ground. If this is so, we need to revise our mental image of Jesus' crucifixion on this point as well.
14. Based on such archaeological discoveries, the *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* states, „It seems that the Gospel accounts of the death of Jesus describe a standard Roman procedure for crucifixion“.



## MATTHEW 27:46

„And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?“

Some wonder whether or not the Father really forsook Jesus.

1. It is important to understand that God DID forsake His Son while He hung on the cross.
2. Except for Jesus Christ, all humans have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin, the breaking of God's Law, requires the penalty of death: *„For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord“* (Romans 6:23).
3. Sin also cuts one off from God: *„Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him“* (John 9:31, New King James Version)
4. Isaiah wrote: *„Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear“* (Isaiah 59:1-2, New King James Version).
5. Nevertheless, when one does repent – change, turn around, go the right way and overcome – God will hear and answer that person's request.
6. Did Jesus sin? Is that the reason the Father cut Himself off from His only begotten Son who pour out His blood and finally died on the cross? No, not at all.
7. Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. Notice: *„For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth“* (1 Peter 2:21-22).

8. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly took on our sins and, by His shed blood and death, suffered the penalty of sin for us.
9. While He was on the cross, Jesus bore the sins of all of humanity, paying the penalty for them. Therefore, Jesus was cut off from God while on the cross because sin separates man from God. If God the Father was going to accept Jesus' one supreme sacrifice as payment for the sins of all mankind, He had to turn His back on the sinbearer – Jesus. He had to forsake Jesus and let Him pay the full penalty for our sins.
10. God so loved the world that He was willing to cut Himself off from His perfect, loving, and obedient Son so that the Son could bear the sins of the world. How great and wonderful God's love is toward us!
11. But, let us not forget that God forgives and applies Christ's sacrifice to only those who have truly repented, those who are willing to turn from their evil ways, the very ways which made Christ's supreme sacrifice necessary. Christ came to save man from his sins – not in his sins!
12. Why did Jesus ask the question He asked? Didn't He know that God had to turn His back on Him and forsake Him while He was carrying the sins of the world? Certainly, Jesus fully realized that God had to forsake Him if the world were going to receive an atonement for its sins. This was one of the reasons Jesus came into the world (John 3:16-17). Why, then, did He ask the question in Psalms 22:1? This verse says: *„My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words or my roaring?“*

The answer is that by so doing He fulfilled prophecy.

13. David too, in a time of trouble, cried out, *„My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words or my roaring?“* (Psalms 22:1).

14. These words, spoken by a man after God's own heart hundreds of years before the crucifixion, prophetically applied to Christ. They foreshadowed the utter anguish Jesus felt when God the Father forsook Him.
15. Why did God forsake Him? Because of our wickedness, our rebelliousness, our rotten, filthy habits which are contrary to God's holy and just and good Laws.

## MATTHEW 27:52-53

„And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many“.

Some don't understand whether the saints who rose from their graves shortly after Christ's resurrection were made immortal.

1. The Bible records a number of resurrections to human life: 1 Kings 17:17-24, Luke 7:11-17, and Acts 20:9-10 are examples. This scripture is the only record in the Bible of a multiple resurrection. Let us notice the incident again: *„And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his (Christ's) resurrection... and appeared unto many“* (Matthew 27:52-53).
2. These saints were revived to a normal, physical life. And, like all those humans before and after them, they all died once again.
3. Christ is the only one ever resurrected to immortal life. The Bible reveals that no one will follow Him into immortality until the resurrection at His second coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, 1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

## MARK 4:11-12

„That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and *their* sins should be forgiven them. And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?“

Some assume that whenever Jesus spoke in parables He did so to make His teachings more understandable to the multitudes who heard Him.

1. The popularly held concept that in His day Jesus tried to save everyone and that He instructed His Church to do the same and that whenever Jesus spoke in parables He did so to make His teachings more understandable to the multitudes who heard Him. However, Jesus gave no such reason. When His disciples asked Him about one of His parables, He said, *„Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without (the unconverted multitudes), all these things are done in parables“* (Mark 4:11).
2. Why? To make what He said easier to comprehend? No, just the opposite! He often used parables so that *„seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them“* (Mark 4:12).
3. Often, when He employed parables, Jesus intentionally left the multitudes in their deception. He spoke in parables to cloud His message, not to make it easily understood. He Himself said so. Certainly, He told His Church to carry His message to all nations, but only as a witness (Matthew 24:14). Nowhere did He say that His true servants are to try to convert the nations.
4. *„For you see your calling, brethren“*, Paul wrote to the Greeks in Corinth, *„how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called“* (1 Corinthians 1:26). Simply put, everyone on earth is not now able to come to God to be converted. Jesus declared, *„No many can come to me, except the Father which has sent me draw him“* (John 6:44).

5. The Father of whom Jesus spoke has not been drawing the majority of people. This is obvious from the condition the world is in. Jesus pointed out that the majority of humanity is walking in the way of destruction and that now only a few are finding the way to eternal life (Matthew 7:13-14).
6. Although God is not calling every person now, by the time His plan is finished, everyone who has ever lived will have had the opportunity to understand and to accept or reject eternal life.

## MARK 7:19

„Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?“

Some Bible versions have set off the last part of this verse as Mark's comments, implying that Jesus declared all foods clean.

1. The meaning of Mark 7:19 is made clear by the context. Jesus was NOT addressing the question of clean and unclean meats (which are discussed in Leviticus 11). Rather Jesus was pointing out that the Pharisees had ADDED many rituals and commandments to God's Laws that were NOT commanded by God. One of these rituals had to do with how one must wash his hands and arms in a special ceremonial way before eating.
2. Jesus said that such rituals of men do NOT purify the heart – the seat of man's emotions and thoughts. The dirt that one might possibly – though unlikely – ingest, having not washed his hands in the ceremonial manner, cannot defile a person. What comes out of the person such as evil thoughts like adulteries, fornication, and other sins are what defiles him or her (Mark 7:20-23). Any dirt from unwashed hands does not enter the heart but the stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods (Mark 7:19).
3. Jesus was saying that whatever enters the stomach is processed by the human digestive system, and what is left – even some particle of dirt – is eliminated from the body as a waste. It has nothing to do with the question of clean and unclean meats, for that was not a controversy then.

## **MARK 8:22-25**

Some are wondering why Christ did not heal the blind man immediately.

1. No doubt Christ realized this man's faith needed to be strengthened. He could have healed him with one touch.
2. But, because the blind man's faith apparently was weak, Jesus did certain physical things (spit on his eyes and laid His hands on him) which were intended to increase the man's faith in His ability to heal. These physical actions seemed more substantial to the blind man than words alone and, therefore, helped his faith. To further increase his faith, Jesus partly healed him. With this physical evidence that his sight was being restored, his faith increased even more. Jesus then healed the man's eyes totally.



### MARK 8:33

„But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men“.

Some are wondering why Jesus called Peter „Satan“.

1. Mark 8:33 reads (in more modern English): *„But when he had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful (or not setting your mind on) of the things of God, but the things of men'“.*
2. We should realize that Jesus did not mean that Peter was Satan. Rather, He was rebuking the one who influenced Peter to speak to Him in that manner. He was rebuking Satan the devil.
3. Jesus went to the source and rebuked the one responsible for Peter's contrary attitude (Ephesians 2:2). Of course, Peter himself needed to learn a lesson that he must not allow human reason, which can be influenced by Satan, to contend against the will and purpose of God.

## **MARK 9:43-48**

Some claim this verse is to be taken literally.

1. This passage is also found in Matthew 5:29-30. Christ did not intend that this instruction be taken literally. The eye, the hand, or the foot cannot sin of and by themselves. Sin originated in the mind. A person who is totally blind, for example, or one who is missing a limb can still sin.
2. Jesus was simply using parts of the body to illustrate an important principle. He was explaining that a follower of Christ should not tolerate sin as an integral part of his life. If, for example, an individual has a sinful habit, he ought to totally eradicate that habit even though the process may be as painful as losing an arm or a leg. What Christ is saying is that it would be far better to give up a sinful pleasure than to lose out on salvation (also see Colossians 3:5-17).

## MARK 9:44

„Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched“.

Some use this verse to show that the Bible says there are „immortal worms“.

1. This verse does not say that worms live forever or that the fire will burn forever. It also does not mean that people burn forever in hell fire but are never destroyed. Mark 9:43, Mark 9:45 and Mark 9:47 mention „Gehenna“ and „Gehenna fire“, referring to the Valley of Hinnom – a garbage dump outside of Jerusalem – as a type of fire at the end of this age when the incorrigible will be burned up, destroyed, forever.
2. The Greek word „skolex“ translated „worm“, means grub or maggot. In Mark 9:44, Mark 9:46 and Mark 9:48 this word has the same meaning as the Hebrew word „tolaw“, translated „worm“ in Isaiah 66:24. „Worm“, in these verses, cannot refer to people but to the worms that eat flesh (Job 19:26, Job 21:26, Acts 12:23). These verses always say „their (the peoples') worm (maggot)“. The worms (maggots) are in the CARCASSES of thieves and sinners thrown into the Valley of Hinnom in Jerusalem and those that are destroyed when they fight against Christ when He returns to the earth.
3. Maggots lived on, and ate, the decaying bodies of people and animals thrown into the Valley of Hinnom that caught on ledges and did not fall into the burning fire of garbage, trash, and bodies in the bottom. They will also live on, and eat the bodies of those that will fight against Christ at His return. There are two meanings to the phrase „*where their worm dies not*“.
  - a. The maggots are larva of flies that lay their eggs on the bodies. These larva do not die, but become flies. The flies then lay more eggs and they die. The flies die, not the maggots.
  - b. As long as dead bodies and trash were thrown into the Valley of Hinnom, there would always be flies laying eggs and maggots

eating the bodies. There would always be worms, they would not die, until there was nothing there for them to live on. As long as there will be dead bodies when Christ returns, there will be maggots eating them.

4. The fire that can never be quenched is Gehenna fire, typified by the fire burning trash, filth, and bodies in the Valley of Hinnom. A fire that cannot be quenched is one that cannot be extinguished or put out. This does not mean it will burn forever, though. The fire will burn out when there is nothing left to burn.
5. God warned the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 17:27) that He would kindle a fire there that would not be quenched. That fire destroyed the houses of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 52:13), but it is not still burning. It was not quenched, put out, until all combustible material had been consumed.
6. Gehenna fire, as the fire in the Valley of Hinnom, cannot be quenched (as long as there is something to burn). It will destroy the bodies of the wicked (Revelation 19:19-20) and continue until there is nothing left to burn. The Valley of Hinnom is not burning today as it once was.

## MARK 9:48

„Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched“.

Some believe that Jesus referred to sinners as worms and said that those people would never die but would live on in agonizing torment. Those who say this fail to notice that Jesus did not call wicked people „worms“, but spoke of „their worm“. The original Greek word means „grub“ or „maggot“.

1. Jesus was referring to a local method of garbage disposal in order to emphasize the permanent consequences of sins not repented of. The margins of some Bibles show that the words „hell fire“ in Mark 9:47 should be translated „Gehenna fire“. Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, is located outside Jerusalem. Trash, refuse, animal carcasses, and even the dead bodies of despised criminals were thrown there to be destroyed by the fires which were kept burning on the valley floor. If some animal or vegetable matter caught on one of the ledges below the rim, it would be devoured by maggots.
2. Jesus' point was that whatever was thrown into the valley never came out again; just as nothing and no one exterminated the maggots or extinguished the flames in the valley of Gehenna, so there will be no escape from the certain fate which God has decreed for all unrepentant sinners – death in the „*lake of fire*“ (Revelation 20:14).
3. Some of these same principles apply to Isaiah 66:24. The meaning is not that unrepentant sinners or worms live forever. In fact, just the opposite is true. If the worms which infest a dead body are not killed, the rotting flesh will be consumed until it is gone. The maggots go through a process known as pupation and turn into flies. Those flies, in turn, deposit additional eggs, and the process is repeated until nothing is left for them to feed on. Similarly, any fire which is not quenched – not deliberately put out – will last only as long as there is fuel to keep it burning and then go out. The whole point is that sin not repented of has absolute and permanent results – eternal oblivion!

## MARK 10:18

„And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God*“.

Some think that Jesus Himself refuted in this verse that He could be God.

1. In these verses Christ asks the young man, „*Why do you call me good? No one is good – except God alone*“.
2. Christ was questioning the young man to discern if he knew to whom he was talking – God in the flesh. A loose paraphrase could be, „You call me good. Does this mean you recognize me for who I am – God?“
3. This verse also seems to indicate that Christ was not „good“. Therefore, why did Christ say, „*Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God*“ (Matthew 19:17)?
4. A careful reading of this passage and the parallel accounts in Matthew 19:17 and Luke 18 reveal that Jesus perceived this man's real attitude to be insincere.
5. We must remember that the society of Jesus' day had rejected Him (Mark 8:31), and since this young ruler (Luke 18:18) was a leading member of the socio-religious community, he did not really acknowledge Christ's authority but was just mouthing the words „Good Master“.
6. Therefore, Jesus chided him for appearing to honor his office when, deep down inside, this „young ruler“ did not recognize Christ's authority – as may be seen by the ensuing verses (Matthew 19:20-23).

## MARK 11:14

„And Jesus answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever. And his disciples heard *it*“.

Some wonder why Jesus cursed the fig tree.

1. At a distance, Jesus saw a fig tree with leaves, and being hungry, He approached it hoping to find some fruit, for figs will quite often appear earlier than the leaves. Upon reaching the tree, all He found was leaves; the tree had produced no fruit. Mark, the author of the book, added the comment that „*the time of figs was not yet*“ (Mark 11:13).
2. This statement is somewhat puzzling – until we understand the growing and fruiting cycles of fig trees. Let us notice the following interesting information about the fig season in the Holy Land: „It has been asked, 'How could our Lord expect to find ripe figs in the end of March?' Answer: Because figs were ripe in Judea as early as the Passover. Besides, the fir tree puts forth its fruit first, and afterwards its leaves. Indeed, this tree, in the climate which is proper for it, has fruit on it all the year round, as I have often seen“ (Clarke's Commentary).
3. Fruit tree growers know that ordinarily a small amount of fruit ripens prior to the main crop. It is referred to as the first ripe fruit or the firstfruits. When Jesus approached the tree, it was the time of the firstfruits of figs, but it was not yet time for the main harvest. Mark 11:13 must mean that the particular tree on which Christ expected to find figs was barren, because it had no figs on it at all. It did not fulfill its purpose, and, as any diligent orchardist would do, Jesus simply eliminated an unproductive tree, not with an axe or a saw, but by faith. Please compare Luke 13:6-9.
4. Jesus used this incident to teach His disciples – and all His followers today – that the outward appearance does not count with God. Instead, what really counts is whether or not one produces godly fruit in his or her life (Luke 13:6-9, Galatians 5:22-23, John 15:8, John 15:16).

## MARK 15:25

„And it was the third hour, and they crucified him“.

Some have wondered about the exact hour of Christ's crucifixion. This scripture seems to contradict John 19:14.

1. This can be confusing because of the different methods of reckoning time used by the Jews and by the Romans during that period of history. But, there is no real problem once we have the key.
2. The Jews began the numbering of the 12 hours of night from sunset; the 12 hours of day were numbered from sunrise. The Romans began their count from midnight and again from noon, the way it is commonly done today. Of the four Gospel accounts, only the book of John uses the Roman reckoning.
3. In modern terms, Jesus was crucified about 9 A.M. To the Romans this was nine hours from midnight. To the Jews it was three hours from sunrise, hence it is called the „*third hour*“ in Mark 15:25. Darkness covered the land at about 12 noon (to the Romans, 12 hours from midnight; to the Jews, 6 hours from sunrise, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44, Matthew 27:45). The darkness lasted until 3 P.M. (3 hours from noon in Roman reckoning; 9 hours from sunrise to the Jews).
4. John 19:14 also mentions the „*sixth hour*“. This is the Roman reckoning and here refers to the time around sunrise. This, of course, was about three hours before the crucifixion.
5. So, there is no contradiction. Each Gospel account adds to the others when we understand how they were written. We need to keep in mind Isaiah 28:9-13.



## MARK 15:34

„And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?“

Some wonder whether or not the Father really forsook Jesus.

1. It is important to understand that God DID forsake His Son while He hung on the cross.
2. Except for Jesus Christ, all humans have sinned (Romans 3:23). Sin, the breaking of God's Law, requires the penalty of death: *„For the wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord“* (Romans 6:23).
3. Sin also cuts one off from God: *„Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him“* (John 9:31, New King James Version)
4. Isaiah wrote, *„Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear“* (Isaiah 59:1-2, New King James Version).
5. Nevertheless, when one does repent – change, turn around, go the right way and overcome – God will hear and answer that person's request.
6. Did Jesus sin? Is that the reason the Father cut Himself off from His only begotten Son who pour out His blood and finally died on the cross? No, not at all.
7. Jesus was perfect. He never sinned. Notice: *„For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth“* (1 Peter 2:21-22).

8. Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God, willingly took on our sins and, by His shed blood and death, suffered the penalty of sin for us.
9. While He was on the cross, Jesus bore the sins of all of humanity, paying the penalty for them. Therefore, Jesus was cut off from God while on the cross because sin separates man from God. If God the Father was going to accept Jesus' one supreme sacrifice as payment for the sins of all mankind, He had to turn His back on the sinbearer – Jesus. He had to forsake Jesus and let Him pay the full penalty for our sins.
10. God so loved the world that He was willing to cut Himself off from His perfect, loving, and obedient Son so that the Son could bear the sins of the world. How great and wonderful God's love is toward us!
11. But, let us not forget that God forgives and applies Christ's sacrifice to only those who have truly repented, those who are willing to turn from their evil ways, the very ways which made Christ's supreme sacrifice necessary. Christ came to save man from his sins – not in his sins!
12. Why did Jesus ask the question He asked? Didn't He know that God had to turn His back on Him and forsake Him while He was carrying the sins of the world? Certainly, Jesus fully realized that God had to forsake Him if the world were going to receive an atonement for its sins. This was one of the reasons Jesus came into the world (John 3:16-17). Why, then, did He ask the question in Psalms 22:1? This verse says: *„My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words or my roaring?“* The answer is that by so doing He fulfilled prophecy.
13. David too, in a time of trouble, cried out, *„My God, my God why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, and from the words or my roaring?“* (Psalms 22:1).

14. These words, spoken by a man after God's own heart hundreds of years before the crucifixion, prophetically applied to Christ. They foreshadowed the utter anguish Jesus felt when God the Father forsook Him.
  
15. Why did God forsake Him? Because of our wickedness, our rebelliousness, our rotten, filthy habits which are contrary to God's holy and just and good Laws.

## MARK 16:2

„And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun“.

Some wonder whether the phrase „*when the sun had risen*“ is found in the original Greek?

1. Due to the fact that the original manuscripts of the books of the New Testament were copied over and over again, numerous variant readings may appear in New Testament manuscripts. It is the task of textual critics to ascertain just what the original reading is at every point in the New Testament text.
2. The New Testament of the King James Version, William Tyndale's Bible, Luther's German Bible, Olivetan's French Bible, the Geneva Bible (English), and many other versions were translated from the Greek Text of Stephens, 1550. This text, along with the Elzevir Text of 1624, is commonly called the „Textus Receptus“, or the Received Text. It is the „Traditional Text“ that has been read and preserved by the Greek Orthodox Church through the centuries.
3. According to the Received Text, which is recognized by the Church of God to be reliable, the Greek words „*anatello to helios*“, meaning literally „*having risen the sun*“, appear in the original Greek.
4. In the Nestle Greek text, which is the most modern revised form, the same Greek words „*anatello to helios*“ are noted. Some translations of this text render this phrase, in Mark 16:2, „*as the sun rose*“ or „*at the rising of the sun*“. The latter phrase is used, for example, in the Serbian Bakotich translation of the Bible.

## MARK 16:9-20

Some wonder if the last twelve verses of Mark's Gospel are inspired and actually part of Scripture.

1. Yes, they are. One of the most controversial points in religious circles is whether Mark 16:9-20 is actually part of Scripture. Although it appears in the King James Version, many other translations either label this section as an appendix or leave it in the footnotes, as in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. The Moffatt Translation, together with the Godspeed and others not only has the long ending found in the King James Version, but it also has another shorter ending.
2. The longer ending to Mark's Gospel is quoted extremely early in Church history. Mark 16:19 is quoted as a part of Mark's account by Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (Book III, 10, 6) between A.D. 182 and 188. There are allusions to these disputed verses in even earlier writings, although not as true quotations. Not only did Irenaeus accept it as a part of Mark's Gospel when arguing with „heretics“, but says Hastings: „No writer before Eusebius is known to have rejected them, and their presence in all later manuscripts shows that the successors of Eusebius, in spite of his great authority, did not follow his judgment in the matter“.

Eusebius was the court favorite and the church historian in the days of the „first Christian“ Roman Emperor Constantine. In fact, he was Constantine's biographer devoted to the Arian heresy. Constantine himself had never really converted to Christianity, but remained a pagan „Pontifex Maximus“ (supreme priest) to the end of his life. (His title „Pontifex Maximus“ was assumed by the Roman popes).

3. The above facts point plainly to the great antiquity of the longer ending as preserved in the common English versions. The same ending has been preserved as the part of the Serbian translation of the Scripture.
4. If these last verses of Mark's Gospel are left out, the book does not come to an orderly conclusion, as does every other book in the Bible.

Human writings are filled with error, but the Bible is complete, inspired and wholly preserved through the power of God. These verses are an inspired part of the Word of God.

## MARK 16:18

„They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover“.

Some wonder if this verse is a promise of protection, or a command, to those individuals God has called to preach the Gospel.

1. Mark 16:15 applies to those people God has called to preach the Gospel. Mark 16:18 shows it is a promise of protection.
2. An example of this occurred when the apostle Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake while gathering firewood (Acts 28:1-6). It is important to realize that he was not purposely handling the snake. Rather, this incident was an unexpected accident. And God miraculously protected His servant according to His promise!
3. Deliberately handling poisonous snakes or drinking deadly liquids expecting God's protection is definitely contrary to Christ's teachings. In Matthew 4:5-6, Satan tried to persuade Christ to throw Himself down from a pinnacle merely because He had a promise of protection. However, Christ rebuked Satan because he had misapplied the scripture. Christ said to Satan, as He says to anyone who delights in misapplying God's promise of protection, „*Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God*“ (Matthew 4:7).

Therefore, the practice of deliberately handling deadly snakes or drinking poisonous liquids is definitely wrong!

## LUKE 1:17

„And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord“.

Some wonder about the meaning of John the Baptist coming *„in the spirit and power of Elijah“*.

1. About 450 years before Christ was on this earth, God spoke through the prophet Malachi: *„Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord“* (Malachi 4:5).
2. When the angel Gabriel described John the Baptist in Luke 1:17, he referred to this prophecy. When we compare John the Baptist to Elijah, we gain insight into the meaning of Malachi's prophecy and the angel's statement. Elijah's fascinating story is found in 1 Kings 17 through 2 Kings 2. Elijah had lived for a time in the wilderness near the Jordan River. Part of his mission was to lead a religious revival against mighty odds – the wicked King Ahab.
3. *„Is that you, O troubler of Israel?“* Ahab once shouted at Elijah. Quick to retort, Elijah replied, *„I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals“* (1 Kings 18:17-18).
4. Elijah led a dynamic, powerful work. So did John the Baptist. John ate locusts and wild honey, wore a rough garment of camel's hair and, like Elijah, lived in the wilderness near the Jordan. There he preached repentance and baptized in the river. He prepared the people to receive Christ. John also confronted the king. He boldly warned Herod about his adulterous marriage with his brother's wife: *„Is it not lawful for you to have her?“* (Matthew 14:4).
5. In temperament, devotion and zeal for God, Elijah and John were similar. Even the Pharisees noticed the similarities enough to ask John if he were Elijah. From the prophecy in Malachi, they knew to expect Elijah before the coming of the Messiah. It seems, however, the Pharisees expected the literal, resurrected Elijah, not a symbolic one.



6. This would explain why, when the Pharisees asked John if he were Elijah, John replied, „*I am not*“ (John 1:21). John knew they meant the resurrected Elijah. The Pharisees could not understand the prophecy metaphorically, as Jesus explained it (Matthew 11:13-14).
  
7. Notice that the phrase is „*in the spirit and power of Elijah*“. This implies someone like Elijah, not Elijah himself. This statement clarified for the people of the day that Malachi's prophecy was fulfilled by a symbolic Elijah, not the literal one.

## LUKE 2:7

„And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn“.

Some are looking for proof that Jesus was born in the autumn, not on December 25.

1. There is much evidence available. Of course, no one knows the exact date of Christ's birth. It appears that God does not want people to celebrate that event.
2. One clue to the season of Christ's birth is found in Luke 2:8. The sheep were still in the fields at night. In those days, winters were more severe in the Holy Land, with frequent snowfall. Flocks were kept in shelters from about mid-October to mid-March. For details, see the note on Luke 2:8 in *Clarke's Commentary*.
3. Another clue is the fact that John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (Luke 1:26-27, 36). We know that John was conceived about mid-June and was therefore born in late March because John's father, Zacharias, was serving in the Temple during the priestly course of Abia when the angel appeared to him (Luke 1:5). Thus, Jesus' birth must have occurred in early autumn.
4. Additional evidence is the fact that Jerusalem and the surrounding towns were very crowded with visitors at the time Jesus was born - His parents had to take accommodations in a stable. People filled Jerusalem at the time of the annual Holy Days. The autumn festivals occur in the seventh month of the sacred year (see Leviticus 23:23, Trumpets; Leviticus 23:27, Day of Atonement; Leviticus 23:34, Feast of Tabernacles; Leviticus 23:36, The Last Great Day), corresponding to our September-October. This was also the time of year when taxes were collected (Luke 2:1-5). We find in Luke 2:41 and John 7:1-10 that it was the custom for Jesus' parents to travel to Jerusalem for the annual Holy Days.

5. So, we see that there are a number of convincing proofs that Jesus was born in the early autumn, not in the dead of winter when the pagans celebrated the „birth“ of their sun god!

## LUKE 2:51

„And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart“.

Many have questions concerning Christ's life between the ages of 12 and 30. There are claims that He spent that time studying with the Essenes.

1. At the time Herod ordered all the young boys in Bethlehem to be slain, Joseph took Mary and Jesus and fled into Egypt. When the danger was past, they returned to their own country and settled in a town in Galilee: *„And he (Joseph and his family) came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene (one who comes from Nazareth)“* (Matthew 2:23).
2. From Nazareth they would all travel to Jerusalem each year for the Passover. On one of those occasions, when He was 12, Jesus stayed behind in the Temple. Afterward, *„he went down with them (His family), and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them“* (Luke 2:51).
3. So, Jesus evidently spent at least some of those years in Nazareth. Otherwise, He would not have been known as a Nazarene.
4. After He was 30, Jesus preached in the synagogue in His home town: *„And he came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up“* (Luke 4:16). What was the reaction of the townspeople? *„And all... wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?“* (Luke 4:22).
5. The people knew Him! This is confirmed when, on a similar occasion, in astonishment they said, *„Whence has this man this wisdom, and these might works? Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?“* (Matthew 13:54-56). The people knew His whole family. This was Jesus' own country (Matthew 13:54, Luke 4:24).

6. There is an excellent chapter in Steven Collins' book *The "Lost" Ten Tribes of Israel... Found!* which speaks about those 18 years between ages of 12 and 30. One thing is for sure: there is no biblical evidence that Jesus studied with the Essenes. In fact, the Essenes did not agree with His teachings.

## LUKE 3:23

Some question the Bible because of the differences between the genealogies of Matthew 1 and Luke 3.

1. These two chapters, both giving genealogies of Christ, at first appear to be contradictory. Actually, however, they complement each other.
2. The genealogy in Matthew 1 is clearly that of Joseph, Mary's husband. Matthew recorded it for legal purposes. HE was writing to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah, and the Jews' custom in keeping records was to trace descent through the father. Legally, the Jews of Jesus' day looked on Jesus as a son of Joseph (John 6:42).
3. Also, Joseph's lineage was given to emphasize the fact that Jesus had been born of a virgin. Because of a curse that God placed on one of Joseph's ancestors, Christ could never sit upon the throne of David if Joseph had been His natural father.
4. Jechonias (Matthew 1:11-12), called Coniah in Jeremiah 22:24-30, was so evil that God cursed him and his descendants and said, *„Write this man down as childless... for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah“* (Jeremiah 22:30, New King James Version).

Jechoniah, as his name is spelled in the Old Testament, had children (1 Chronicles 3:17) but was childless as far as having any descendants on the throne of David, ruling the separate nation of Judah.

5. How, then, could Christ be a descendant of David and qualify to sit on the throne? Enter the genealogy in Luke 3.
6. This genealogy is actually Mary's. According to Jewish usage, Mary's genealogy was given in her husband's name. The original Greek merely says Joseph was „of Heli“ (Luke 3:23). In fact, since Joseph's father was Jacob (Matthew 1:16), Joseph was the son-in-law of Heli.
7. Unlike Joseph's lineage, there was no block to the throne of David ruling over Judah in Jesus' genealogy through Mary. Her ancestor was

David's son Nathan, not Solomon or one of David's own children (Luke 3:31). To fulfill His promise to establish David's throne forever, God honored Nathan by making him the ancestor of the promised King who would sit on David's throne through eternity (Luke 1:31-33).

8. But how could Mary transmit David's royal inheritance – the right to the throne – to her son, since all inheritances had to pass through male descendants? According to Israel's law, when a daughter was the only heir, she could inherit her father's possessions and rights if she married within her own tribe (Numbers 27:1-8, 36:6-8). Mary had no brothers who could be her father's heirs. Joseph became Heli's heir by marriage to Mary, and thus inherited the right to rule on David's throne, even over Judah. This right then passed on to Christ.
9. Both genealogies had to be recorded to establish Christ's right to rule on David's throne. Joseph's genealogy shows that Christ was a legal descendant of Jeconiah and thus legally could not sit on the throne of David in the nation Judah by inheriting the right solely through Joseph.
10. Further, the genealogies prove the virgin birth: The curse on Jeconiah's line would have passed on to Christ if He were Joseph's natural son, but He wasn't – He was begotten by the Holy Spirit and was the Son of God.
11. Both Mary and Joseph are listed as descendants of Judah, through the line of David (Matthew 1 and Luke 3). Jesus was not only a descendant of Judah – He was not only a Jew – He was of the Davidic – the kingly – line of Judah. Numerous verses refer to Jesus as the son of David.

## LUKE 5:36-39

These verses are difficult in the sense that their meaning can be obscured and unclear, rather than that they are used to support some false concepts. The usual question is: what does this parable of the garments and the wine bottles mean, and what does it have to do with fasting?

1. Jesus was answering a question. *„Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?“* (Luke 5:33). Jesus used this parable to help answer the question.
2. *„No man puts a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new makes a rent and the piece that was taken out of the new agrees not with the old“* (Luke 5:36).

It doesn't make sense to put a new piece of cloth on an old garment to repair it. After washing, the new cloth will shrink and tear the old.

3. *„And no man puts new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish“* (verse 37). *Strong's Concordance* shows the Greek word here translated „bottles“ really means „wineskins.“ It would be ridiculous to put new wine into an old wineskin. An old wineskin has already stretched and the fermentation of new wine would burst it.
4. The new cloth and the new wine symbolize the new way of life Christ was bringing. We must change our total approach to God – our methods and purposes in fasting, prayer and obedience – when we are converted. *„Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new“* (2 Corinthians 5:17).
5. Jesus gave these two examples as a lesson in incongruities. It would make as little sense for His disciples to fast while He was there as it would to put out new cloth on an old garment or new wine in an old wineskin. We can't fit God's truth into our old way of life. For instance, if we try to mix the truth of the Sabbath with our old way of life and concepts learned so we may be like one of the churches of this world. It will indeed seem „hard“ and „burdensome“ to obey God and will cause a „rent“.



6. The main reason for fasting is to get closer to God. Jesus' disciples didn't fast. They didn't need to fast and to get closer to Him because He was already with them. *„And he said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days“* (Luke 5:34-35).
  
7. *„No man also having drunk old wine straightway desires new: for he says, the old is better“* (Luke 5:39). Christ had already explained why His disciples didn't fast at that time. This last analogy was to show why the Pharisees and John's disciples did fast. These men were not ready to accept the example of Christ and His disciples as being right. They didn't want to drink the „new wine“ – the new way of life that Christ was bringing – because they felt the „old wine“ of their customs, doctrines and practices were better.

## LUKE 11:29

„And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet“.

Many wonder what Christ meant when He said He would give the „sign of (the prophet) Jonah“ to a wicked generation.

1. Thousands of people came to see Christ, but few to really listen to Him. Instead, they came to see something exciting like a healing or the feeding of 5,000. They couldn't care less about Christ's message. Jesus scolded these sightseers: *„This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah“* (Luke 11:29, NIV).
2. Few miracles in the Bible are more celebrated than Jonah's being swallowed by the great fish. Because of this one great sign, the Ninevites knew God was with Jonah and heeded his message.
3. Christ, on the other hand, performed hundreds of miracles – perhaps thousands. The crowds had no excuse for not repenting.
4. *„The men of Nineveh“,* Jesus said, *„will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here“* (Luke 11:32).
5. The Gospel writer Matthew expanded on this point by including, *„For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth“* (Matthew 12:40).
6. Even the miracle of the resurrection would not change the hearts of those cynical to Christ. Thus, the sign of Jonah was a reference to Jonah's ministry, including his being swallowed by the great fish, his preaching to the Ninevites and their repenting.
7. Christ alluded to this dramatic story to make a powerful point: For those who disobey His message, no sign is great enough to convince them to repent. For those with a heart willing to change and to grow, one sign is enough – the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## LUKE 14:26

„If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple“.

Some wonder what Christ meant when He said that if „*anyone does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple*“.

1. First, let us notice that Jesus Christ included more than just parents. Luke 14:26 reads: „*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple*“ (New King James Version).
2. Jesus says His followers are even to hate their own lives. „*Hate*“ in Luke 14:26 must be understood in its relative sense, because „*no man even yet hated his own flesh*“ (Ephesians 5:29) and we are to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39). In Luke 14:26 we should understand „*hate*“ as „*love less by comparison*“.
3. At another time, Jesus charged His disciples: „*But I say unto you who hear, Love your enemies*“ (Luke 6:27).

He also said: „*And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them*“ (Luke 6:31-32, New King James Version).

In other words, Jesus clearly commands us not only to love those who love us – which should include our relatives – but also to love our enemies who hate us.

4. Since the Bible does not contradict itself (John 10:35), what did Jesus mean when He said „*hate*“ in Luke 14:26? The Greek word for „*hate*“ in this verse is „*misei*“. Its Greek root can mean „*to love less, to postpone in love or esteem, to slight*“ (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).
5. What Jesus is saying, then, is that anyone who follows Him must love Him MORE than family or relatives or even his own life. In comparison to the greater love we ought to have for Jesus Christ –

the One who died for us, our Savior and Redeemer – the love we have for human relatives must be less. Jesus said that the second great commandment is: *„Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself“* (Matthew 22:39).

6. But what is the first great commandment? It is quoted by Christ from Deuteronomy 6:5: *„Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind“* (Matthew 22:37-38).

Jesus is saying that we must never allow our love for others or our love for ourselves to interfere with or take precedence over our love for Him. This is made clear in Matthew 10:37-39: *„He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me... He that finds his life shall lose it: and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it“*.

7. Christ made it clear that we are to honor our parents (Mark 7:9-13, Matthew 19:17-19). One who has such love for God and His Way of life will not compromise principle. He will not put any human relationship before God. The lesson for the followers of Christ is to be sure our priorities are right.

## LUKE 16:9

„And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations“.

Some misread this verse to say that we in the Church of God should use our money to make friends among the people of this world (i.e., to make friends of the world through unrighteous mammon).

1. Notice the setting of the parable in which this statement occurs. Christ was talking to His own disciples (Luke 16:1). After giving the parable, He then began to expound its meaning to them (Luke 16:8).
2. Through this analogy Christ was showing them that the unconverted are wiser on many occasions than the converted, and the converted ought to correct this by doing a particular thing.
3. In Luke 16:9 He shows us how to correct this lack of wisdom by making to ourselves friends with or by means of (proper translation from the Greek) the mammon of unrighteousness. That, „when you fail“ (or, more correctly in the Greek, „when you die“) those (friends) who have been converted through the aid of our tithes and offerings may receive us into God's Kingdom at the resurrection.
4. Christ was not telling His disciples to make friends of the world through unrighteous mammon, but to help convert some in the world through the proper use of mammon – tithes, offerings, etc.

## LUKE 16:16

„The law and the prophets *were* until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it“.

Some wonder whether or not this means that God's Law has been done away since the time of John.

1. No, that is not what Jesus meant at all. He explains it Himself in the very next verse: „*And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*“ (Luke 16:17).
2. Have the starry heavens or the planet earth passed away? Jesus said it would be easier for them to perish or be destroyed than for even one tiny part of God's Law to pass away.
3. On another occasion, Christ told a young man seeking the way to eternal life, „*If you will enter into life, keep the commandments*“ (Matthew 19:17). How clear that God's Holy Law is still in full force and effect!
4. What, then, did Jesus mean by the statement, „*The law and the prophets were until John?*“ When Jesus spoke of „*the law and the prophets*“, He was referring to the Old Testament.
5. The first five books of the Bible, written by Moses, are known as the „law“; the books of Joshua through Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the 12 minor prophets comprise the „prophets“. The third major section of the Old Testament was known as the „writings“ or „Psalms“. Notice Luke 24:27 and Luke 24:44. Jesus meant that, until the coming of John the Baptist, the Old Testament scriptures were all that was available. The New Testament had not yet been written.
6. John came as a forerunner of Jesus Christ. As the „*voice of one crying in the wilderness*“, he prepared the way before Him (Mark 1:2-8).
7. John thundered to the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and all the people of his day, „*Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*“ (Matthew 3:2).
8. John began to proclaim the Gospel, preparing the way for Christ Himself. And what Gospel – good news – did Christ preach? „*Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching*

*the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel"* (Mark 1:14-15).

Christ preached the same Gospel as John. This is why He said that from the time of John the Baptist, the Gospel, or good news, of God's Kingdom is proclaimed.

## LUKE 17:21

„Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you“.

Some say this verse means the Kingdom of God is not literal, but something merely „in the hearts of men“.

1. Let us notice the context of this verse. Jesus was talking to the Pharisees (Luke 17:20). In Matthew 23:15-19, He called them hypocrites and blind fools. A number of them will never be in God's Kingdom (Luke 13:27-28). Christ was not saying the Kingdom of God was in the hearts of those self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees.
2. The Kingdom of God cannot be in the heart of any human being. 1 Corinthians 15:50 shows that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God.
3. A kingdom has four parts: a king or ruler, subjects or people, territory and laws. These cannot be in the hearts of men.

These elements cannot be in the heart of a person. Certainly no one can read Daniel 2:3-45 and doubt that the Kingdom of God is a literal kingdom.

4. The Greek word translated „within“ in Luke 17:21 is „entos“. This word can also be rendered „among“ or, as the *Englishman's Greek New Testament* has it, „in the midst of“. The marginal references of many Bibles show „among“ as an alternate translation. Jesus Christ, as the representative of God's Kingdom, was standing among them or in the midst of them.
5. The Jews were looking for a Messiah to bring the Kingdom with power in their own day, and hence did not believe Christ was that Messiah. Christ's statement here was intended to tell them He was the Messiah and that they were overlooking Him in their spiritual ignorance.



## LUKE 17:34-36

„I tell you, in that night there shall be two *men* in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two *women* shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two *men* shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left“.

Many teach that these verses refer to a secret rapture.

1. To be properly understood, these verses must be read in their context. This chapter records some of what Jesus told His disciples about His second coming. Among other things He said, „*I tell you, in that night (at the time of Christ’s return) there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left*“ (Luke 17:34-35).

The meaning is that when Christ comes again, there is to be a separation made between those who will and those who will not enter God’s Kingdom at that time.

2. At the second coming, the saints are to be instantly changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-53) and taken up to meet Christ in the clouds (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) to begin ruling the earth (Revelation 20:4). Those who are not „taken“ will be given the opportunity for salvation at a later time.
3. Matthew 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-36 do not refer to a secret rapture.

## LUKE 21:24

„And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled“.

Some wonder what are the „times of the gentiles“?

1. Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 are all accounts of Jesus' teaching about how to recognize the signs of His coming and the end of this age. The „*times of the gentiles*“ are one of those signs which Jesus said would occur shortly before He returns.
2. Several other prophecies help us understand the „*times of the gentiles*“. Daniel 12:7, for example, tells us that in the end time a gentile power will succeed in occupying Jerusalem, as well as other portions of the Holy Land, for „*a time, times, and an half* (a time)“. These are the „*times of the gentiles*“ Jesus spoke of. But, what does this mean?
3. Revelation 11:2 clarifies this by telling us that this gentile power – the beast – will be allowed to trample on the city of Jerusalem for 42 months. During this same time, God's two witnesses will testify against this power in Jerusalem for 1260 days (Revelation 11:3). This all occurs at the same time as the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. The faithful people of God will be granted protection (Revelation 14:12) during the time that the beast exercise authority and rule (Revelation 13:5).
4. Therefore, we can know that the „*times of the gentiles*“ which Jesus spoke of are the final three and a half years of this age. They end when Jesus comes back to save the world and to set up His Government in Jerusalem!

## LUKE 22:19-20

„And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake *it*, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup *is* the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you“.

Many have thought these verses teach the followers of Christ to observe Easter.

1. The reason true Christians do not celebrate Easter, or teach others to do so, is that it does not commemorate Jesus' sacrifice in the way God says to commemorate it.
2. On the night before Jesus death, *„he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me'“* (Luke 22:19).
3. Likewise, He also took the cup after supper, saying, *„This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you“* (Luke 22:20).
4. Christ instructed His disciples to observe this simple, yet beautiful ceremony as an annual memorial of His sacrifice. Easter is a departure from what Jesus explicitly stated.
5. Though the bodily resurrection of Christ is of prime importance to the followers of Christ, the fact remains that Christ told us to commemorate His death.

## LUKE 22:36

„Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take *it*, and likewise *his* scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one“.

Some wonder concerning Jesus telling His disciples to buy swords.

1. Jesus clearly referred to literal weapons (Luke 22:36). But, was He implying that His disciples should use violence in defending themselves? This would have contradicted His earlier instruction against hurting others (Matthew 5:38-39).
2. Christ answers this question for us in Luke 22:37. Here is this verse in the Fenton translation: *„For I tell you, that which was written must be completed in Me: THAT HE WAS ALSO RANKED AMONG THE OUTLAWS; for indeed, what has been written about Me will have fulfillment“.*
3. The only reason Christ instructed His disciples to obtain swords was to make sure that the prophecy He quoted from Isaiah would be fulfilled. He was to be reckoned as an outlaw (Isaiah 53:12). Christ was not sanctioning the use of such weapons for self-defense or harming others in any way. In fact, when Peter did use a sword, Christ immediately rebuked him for it and healed the man who had been struck (Luke 22:51). Jesus Himself said, *„For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them“.*

## LUKE 23:43

„And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise“.

Many say that when Christ died, He went directly to heaven with the „thief on the cross“.

1. Jesus said that the repentant malefactor would be with Him in Paradise. If we can prove where Jesus went when He died, then we can prove whether the malefactor really went to Paradise that day.
2. Paul states: *„For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, how Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures“* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Jesus was buried – it does not say His body was buried, and that His soul went to Paradise. It reads that He – Jesus, Himself – was buried. He was dead for three days and nights.
3. John gives further proof where Jesus was. *„Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden: and in the garden a new sepulcher... There“* – in the tomb - the grave – *„laid they Jesus“* (John 19:41-42). It was Jesus who was laid in the tomb, not merely His body. Jesus was dead.
4. Peter also refers to this: *„He (the prophet David) seeing this before spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption“* (Acts 2:31). Jesus was not in Paradise; He was in hell. The word „hell“ ought to be rendered „grave“. The original Greek word used here was hades, meaning the „grave“. It does not mean a fiery, burning hell. The Bible uses another word for that.
5. Hell or the grave is not Paradise. Since Jesus did not enter Paradise the day of the crucifixion, then neither did the malefactor enter it. Christ has „preeminence“ in all things (Colossians 1:18). The malefactor, therefore, could not have preceded Christ to Paradise. Whenever the malefactor enters Paradise, Christ will be there too.
6. Some use 1 Peter 3:19-20 as supposed proof that Jesus was alive when He was dead – that He preached to spirits in prison during the

time He was in the grave asleep in death. But notice what these verses really say. Wicked angels who followed Satan are in chains of darkness, imprisoned for their own folly (Jude 6). When did Jesus preach to imprisoned spirits? Let us read it: „... in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing“ (1 Peter 3:20).

Jesus preached to the wicked angels in the days of Noah, not during the time He was in the tomb.

7. Where is Paradise? Paul wrote of one who was given marvelous revelations from God. In a vision he was „*caught up to the third heaven*“ – God’s throne. „*He was caught up into PARADISE*“ (2 Corinthians 12:1-5). Paradise is located in the presence of God’s throne.
8. The Bible further describes Paradise: „*To him that overcomes, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God*“ (Revelation 2:7, American Standard Version).
9. Revelation 22:1-2 refer to „*the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God*“. In this city we find „*a river of water of life... proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb... And on this side of the river and on that was the tree of life*“ (American Standard Version). The new Jerusalem contains the tree of life. The Paradise of God is the new Jerusalem.
10. Jesus said the malefactor would be with Him in this Paradise. The new Jerusalem is not yet finished. Jesus is still preparing a place for us in it (John 14:2). Not until after the Millennium will it be fully ready (Revelation 20:1-5). Not until then will it descend to earth – not until then will the malefactor enter Paradise.
11. In John 20:17 Christ told Mary Magdalene, four days later after Luke 23:42 had been fulfilled, that He had not been to heaven yet.
12. Then what did Jesus mean by saying, „*Today shall you be with me in paradise*“? The thief’s plea was, „*Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom*“ (Luke 23:42). The thief would not have said, „remember me“ either if much time wasn’t going to pass. The plain fact is that Jesus has not yet come in His Kingdom (Luke 11:2, 19:11; 1 Corinthians 11:26, 15:23, 49-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). Also, in

Luke 23:42 the emphasis is placed on Christ coming somewhere, not the thief going somewhere – such as heaven.

13. Also, most translators of Luke 23:43 are improperly punctuated. A comma placed before the word „today“ is incorrect! Punctuation was not used in the Greek which Luke wrote. It was ADDED centuries later. Here is, word for word, the order in the inspired original Greek: „Verily I say to you today, `With me shall you be in the Paradise““.

Jesus stressed the time of His promise – not the time He would be in Paradise. Christ used the word „today“ as if to say, „Right now while we are even dying on this stake I can tell you...“

14. The malefactor is still dead and buried. Jesus alone is the firstborn from the dead (Romans 8:29, Acts 26:23, 1 Corinthians 15:23). But the time is coming when this man shall be resurrected also and eventually shall enter the Paradise of God along with all the other saints to be with Christ.

## LUKE 24:44

„And he said unto them, These *are* the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me”.

Some want to know more about the authority of the books of the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms.

- I. Following is a list of the Old Testament books, in the order preserved by the Jews.
- II. The first five books, Genesis through Deuteronomy, are called the law of Moses and were written by Moses during the 40 years of wandering.
- III. The Prophets division is subdivided as follows:
  - a. The Former Prophets:
    1. Joshua is the logical author of the book of Joshua.
    2. Judges were written by the prophet Samuel, according to Jewish tradition.
    3. Samuel also wrote 1 Samuel 1-24 (1 Samuel 10:25, 1 Samuel 25:1). The remainder of 1 Samuel and all of 2 Samuel was written by Nathan the prophet and Gad (1 Chronicles 29:29).
    4. 1 Kings and 2 Kings were probably written by Jeremiah, compiling older records made by prophets contemporary with the events.
  - b. The Latter Prophets, subdivided into the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets:
    1. Isaiah,
    2. Jeremiah, and
    3. Ezekiel were all major prophets of God who wrote the books bearing their names.
    4. Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi were all prophets of God



who wrote smaller books (hence the designation as „minor“) bearing their names.

IV. The Writings or Psalms division had various authors. This section is subdivided as follows:

a. The Former Poetic (or Metric) books:

1. Psalms. David wrote about half of them; other authors include Asaph or his descendants, the sons of Korah, and Moses.
2. Proverbs 1-29 belong mostly to Solomon. Proverbs 30 and Proverbs 31 are respectively ascribed to Agur and Lemuel.
3. The author of the book of Job is not definite, though it was mostly likely Job himself.

b. The Megilloth or Festival books:

1. The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) was written by Solomon.
2. Jewish tradition attributes the book of Ruth to Samuel.
3. Lamentations was undoubtedly written by Jeremiah.
4. Ecclesiastes were written by Solomon.
5. Esther was probably written by Mordecai.

c. The Latter Restoration books:

1. Daniel,
2. Ezra, and Nehemiah wrote the books which bear their names.
3. 1 Chronicles and II Chronicles were written by Ezra.

V. Following is a list of the New Testament books.

a. The Gospels:

1. Matthew,
2. Mark,
3. Luke, and
4. John were written by the men whose names they bear.

b. The Acts, written by Luke.

c. The Epistles:

1. General Epistles: James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Jude were written by the men whose names they bear.
2. Epistles of Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon were all written by Paul.
3. Hebrews.

There has been much speculation regarding the authorship of the book of Hebrews, which dates from approximately A.D. 61-62. The most commonly accepted belief of biblical scholars is that the author was the apostle Paul. The subject matter of the book strongly supports this understanding, and we believe it is correct.

Timothy may have acted as a scribe for Paul and delivered the book to the Jerusalem church. It is also believed that Luke translated this book from Hebrew, its original language, into Greek.

d. The Revelation. This book was written by John.

## JOHN 1:14

„And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth“.

Many have wondered whether Jesus gave up his status as God when He became flesh. Did Christ divest Himself of all his former powers in coming to earth as a man – subjecting Himself to all the limitations of a human being?

1. John did not intend the meaning the above question assumes. In fact, he meant just the opposite. The miracle was that Jesus was both man and God. In John 1:14, *„The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us“*.
2. This verse does not mean the Word ceased to be God. Rather, it means the Word took on human flesh.
3. In the New International Version (NIV) and in the footnote of the New King James Version (NKJV) of John 1:18, this point is clear. *„No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only (that is, Jesus Christ), who is at the Father's side, has made him known“*.
4. The footnote of the NKJV reads, *„the only begotten God“* as an alternative reading for the *„the only begotten Son“*.
5. Many have questioned why the Scofield footnote of Philippians 2:5-7 refers to Christ as being *„emptied of his divinity“*. Certainly Christ had the prime limitation of a human being – the ability to die. But he still had attributes of God. For example, he healed. He resurrected Lazarus. He accepted worship. He forgave sins. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees felt this point was blasphemy, for only God can forgive sins. They simply did not understand that Christ was God in the flesh.
6. Thus, it would be accurate to say, *„Christ voluntarily divested (emptied) himself of the prerogatives of divinity and took upon himself the limitations of humanity“*.

## JOHN 2:13-16

Some have wondered about Jesus throwing the money changers and animal vendors out of the temple.

1. Every year thousands of pilgrims from around the Roman world crowded into Jerusalem for the Passover. Two of the reasons the pilgrims made the arduous journey were to offer animal sacrifices at the temple and to pay the annual temple tax of a half-shekel (equivalent to about a day and half's wage).
2. For the pilgrims' convenience, the priests allowed animal vendors and money changers to set up in the outer court of the temple, commonly called the Court of the Gentiles. Various biblical commentators believe the priests took a cut of the profits from the sales and exchange. This would have been an obvious conflict of interest.
3. Though John's account does not specifically say the priests shared in the profits, the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) allude to corruption. „*You have made it 'a den of robbers'*“, Jesus said (Mark 11:17).
4. Christ also directed His action and anger at something more fundamental: The temple was to be a place of worship for all nations, not a marketplace. Since the gentiles were restricted to the outer court, their place of worship was turned into a bazaar, certainly not conducive to prayer and meditation.
5. From a prophecy in Zechariah, many people knew the Messiah would cleanse the temple of these vendors. Zechariah spoke of the day of the Lord: „*When that time comes, no longer will any trader be seen in the house of the Lord of Hosts*“ (Zechariah 14:21, Revised English Bible).
6. Thus, when Christ boldly threw out the vendors, he was not only stopping inappropriate trade, he was showing Himself as the Messiah. Many people understood His actions in this light (John 2:18).

## JOHN 3:5

„Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God“.

Many wonder about the meaning of being „*born of water and of the Spirit*“.

1. What does the Bible say about being „*born of water*“? The apostle Paul explained that upon repentance one should be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Baptism pictures the washing away of past sins (Acts 22:16), the burial of the old self in a watery grave and rebirth to „*newness of life*“ (Romans 6:3-4).

The apostle Paul used water in an additional analogy about the process of conversion. He showed that Jesus Christ is sanctifying and cleansing His Church, the collective body of Christ's followers, with the „*washing of water by the word* (the Bible)“ – Ephesians 5:26. Why? So he might present it to Himself a clean Church that has no spiritual blemishes (Ephesians 5:27).

2. A true follower of Christ is continually washed and refreshed in the faith by reading and hearing the Word of God (as we see in John 15:3). This theme is found in a number of passages. We find it in Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 2 Corinthians 4:16, Ephesians 4:23, Colossians 3:10, Titus 3:5, Hebrews 10:22, 1 Peter 3:21, Revelation 1:5 and Revelation 7:14.
3. The crowning glory of each person's life will be his resurrection. Then the saints will be changed from mortal to immortal to become children of God (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).
4. In this passage, Jesus is explaining what it means to be born again or born from above. It is evident from other scriptures that both water and God's Spirit are involved.
5. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? It is through baptism and the laying on of hands that we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts

2:38). When we are led by the Holy Spirit, we are the children of God (Romans 8:14-15). The Holy Spirit gives us a godly perspective and manner of thinking, transforming our minds so we no longer reason from a worldly point of view (Romans 12:1-2 and Philippians 2:5). This, very briefly, is what Jesus referred to when He spoke of being „*born of the Spirit*“.

## JOHN 3:34

„For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him“.

Some have wondered why Jesus said that He had the Holy Spirit without measure or limit. Is it possible for the followers of Christ to have more of the Holy Spirit to help them overcome sin?

1. Another related question has to do with measuring something that is not physical. Is it possible to measure how much of the Holy Spirit a follower of Christ has? For some, this thought springs from the passage that explains Jesus Christ had the Holy Spirit without limit, in an unmeasurable quantity (John 3:34, King James Version). But He was God in the flesh, so we really cannot compare how he had the Holy Spirit with how His followers have it.
2. We do know one cannot earn the Holy Spirit; thus, one cannot earn varying amounts of it. It is a gift (Acts 2:38). God gives this gift to those who believe Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:5) and who obey Him (Acts 5:32). David prayed that God would not take the Holy Spirit from him (Psalm 51:11). Quantities are not discussed.
3. The Bible does speak of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Examples of this appear in the following scriptures: Luke 1:41-42, 67-68; Acts 2:1-4, 7:55-56. In these scriptures, this phrase means God inspired a person to perform a specific action. It does not refer to the quantity of the Spirit in the person.
4. Thus, having more or less of the Holy Spirit is not an issue in the above passages. The Bible indicates people either have the Holy Spirit or they don't.
5. So the question may not be: Is it possible for the followers of Christ to have more of the Holy Spirit to help them overcome sin? The pertinent question should be rephrased as follows: How can the Holy Spirit have a more dynamic effect in my life?

6. Let us review how we receive the Holy Spirit and how it works in our lives. In the New Testament, followers of Christ are called to change their way of life – to repent and be baptized. This conversion is accompanied by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jesus called our receiving the Holy Spirit being „born again“ (John 3:7). This phrase can also be translated „born from above“. In receiving the Holy Spirit, the followers of Christ are empowered to walk in a new way of life, not walking in sin.

7. In 1 John 5:4-5 we read: *„Everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God“.*

Through faith in Christ and His sacrifice we receive the Holy Spirit. Paul asked: *„I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?“* (Galatians 3:2-3).

More devoted obedience does not bring more of the Holy Spirit.

8. Though we must repent (the word repent in itself implies obedience), no amount of previous law keeping, nor subsequent law keeping earns us the Holy Spirit. It is a gift we receive through faith.

9. The apostle Paul summed up the whole experience in Ephesians 2:8-9. He wrote: *„For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works“.*

10. We should also keep in mind the following words of the apostle John: *„Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did“* (1 John 2:6).

11. Jesus Christ’s life was filled with examples of love and service to others. When you step out in faith with actions motivated by the Holy Spirit, it will not only benefit your life but, just as important, it will



benefit the lives of those people around you. Allow the Spirit to lead you in a life of service and good works.

12. So it is not a question of having more of the Holy Spirit, but rather one of allowing the Spirit to influence and guide more areas of your life. For example, instead of praying for more of the Holy Spirit, we should pray that God will direct us by His Spirit and that we will be willing to follow.

## JOHN 10:16

„As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep“.

Some have wondered about the identity of the „other sheep“ mentioned in this verse.

1. Christ said, *„And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd“* (John 19:16).
2. *„This fold“* refers to Judah – the Jews – who were living in Judea. Christ came to His own – to the Jews – and His own received Him not (John 1:11). Christ was born of the tribe of Judah, but the Jews rejected Him saying, *„We will not have this man to reign over us“* (Luke 19:14).
3. Who are the *„other sheep“*? They are the other tribes of Israel. Israel (Jacob) had more than one son – he had 12 sons. The *„other sheep“* then are the descendants of the other sons of Jacob. Christ referred to them (the other tribes of Israel) as *„the lost sheep of the house of Israel“* (Matthew 10:6). The Jews referred to the other tribes of Israel as *„the dispersed among the Gentiles“* (John 7:35).
4. Israel and Judah became two separate nations (houses) during the reign of Rehoboam, Solomon's son. The *„other sheep“*, or the lost tribes of Israel, were not in Judea.
5. Some have thought that the gentiles represent the *„other sheep“*. Yet, we must remember that only the descendants of Jacob (Israel) are referred to as *„sheep“* in all the Bible. The gentiles can obtain salvation through Christ (Ephesians 2:11-13), but nationally they are never referred to as *„sheep“*.
6. Christ concluded by saying, *„And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd“* (John 10:16). When will the house of Judah and the house of Israel be one fold and have one king and one shepherd?

7. The prophet Ezekiel gives the answer (Ezekiel 37:21-28). David will be that king with Christ, the chief shepherd (Ezekiel 37:24-25). Ezekiel 34:23-24 and Jeremiah 30:9 show that David is to be resurrected from the dead and made king. The resurrection from the dead occurs at Christ's Second Coming to this earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-15, 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, 50-52). Christ will then establish the new covenant with the House of Israel AND the House of Judah (Hebrews 8:8-10, Jeremiah 31:31-33, 50:4-5).
8. Thus, the „*other sheep*“ are the other tribes of Israel.

## JOHN 10:30

„I and *my* Father are one“.

Many don't understand that there is only one Godhead, or one God Family.

1. Jesus here revealed that there is one Godhead, or one God Family, and that its members work together with one mind and purpose.
2. That Family, however, is presently comprised of two individuals, God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is clearly stated in John 1:1: *„In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God“*. The „Word“ or „Spokesman“ was the One who later became Jesus Christ (see John 1:14).
3. Hebrews 1 also shows conclusively that Christ was and is now God: *„God... has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high“* (Hebrews 1:1-3).
4. God says of Christ, *„Let all the angels of God worship him“* (Hebrews 1:6). Only a member of the God Family is worthy of worship.
5. But, the God Family is not limited to God the Father and Jesus Christ: *„As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God“* (John 1:12).
6. Hebrews 2:7-8 shows that man, like Christ, was made for a while *„a little lower than the angels“*, but that he is to be crowned *„with glory and honor“*. Everything will be put *„in subjection under his feet“*, but *„now we see not yet all things put under him“* because the resurrection to immortality has yet to occur.
7. The Family of God, then, will eventually be expanded to include all who choose God's way. The true followers of Christ now are *„the sons of*

*God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Paul adds, „This mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:53). This plainly says that resurrected followers of Christ, like Christ Himself, will be immortal. When we are changed, our mortal bodies will become spirit bodies like His (Philippians 3:20-21).*

8. The Father and Christ are one – one united, holy Family. At the resurrection, we will become one with them.

## JOHN 13:15

„For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you“.

Many don't understand the meaning or the practice of the „foot washing“ ordinance instituted by Christ.

1. In telling us how the Passover of the New Testament, commonly called „Lord's supper“, was instituted Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the taking of unleavened bread and wine. But John relates another part of this ordinance.
2. The foot washing ordinance is found in John 3:4-5. Jesus *„rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet“*.
3. *„So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you“* (John 13:12-15).
4. Many would consider it too humiliating to wash the feet of someone else. But Jesus did it. Later, after His resurrection, Jesus instructed His disciples, *„Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you“* (Matthew 28:19-20).
5. The true followers of Christ are to be *„clothed with humility“*, as Jesus was (1 Peter 5:5). This part of the Passover service focuses on that truth. *„If you know these things“,* Jesus declared, *„happy are you if you do them“* (John 13:17).

## JOHN 17:14

„I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world“.

Some don't understand the paradox of being „in the world“, but not „of the world“.

1. Jesus Christ said of His disciples, and says of all of His true followers today, *„They are not of the world any more than I am of the world“* (John 17:14). Yet, paradoxically, He said of the same followers, *„I have sent them into the world“* (John 17:18).
2. In fact, Jesus sent His disciples into all the world as witnesses of the good news of salvation. And they were to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). In, all the way in, but not „of“. What a paradox!
3. Jesus calls on His followers to live in the world as *„the light of the world“* (Matthew 5:14). A light is something to be seen. A candle is put on a stand so it stands out and gives light. *„In the same way“,* Jesus said to His followers, *„let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven“* (Matthew 5:16).
4. True followers of Christ preach the Gospel by their walk, not necessarily by their talk. They certainly cannot hide out in self-created monasteries and accomplish the task Jesus has set before them. People must see Christ-like works if they are to glorify God.
5. Unfortunately, Christians sometimes confuse godliness with eccentric religious beliefs. They define their Christianity and spiritual uniqueness by odd, non-biblical beliefs. But quaint, external beliefs do not a Christian make. True Christians are true followers of Christ because they are different internally – in their minds! They show the world by their spiritual actions „in“ the world that they are not „of“ the world.

6. The apostle Peter's plea stressed this point. He wrote: *„Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God“* (1 Peter 2:12).
7. The apostle Paul echoed the same thought. He said that the true Christians should be *„children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation“* (Philippians 2:15).



## JOHN 19:14

„And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!“

Some have wondered about the exact hour of Christ's crucifixion. This scripture seems to contradict Mark 15:25.

1. This can be confusing because of the different methods of reckoning time used by the Jews and by the Romans during that period of history. But, there is no real problem once we have the key.
2. The Jews began the numbering of the 12 hours of night from sunset; the 12 hours of day were numbered from sunrise. The Romans began their count from midnight and again from noon, the way commonly practiced today. Of the four Gospel accounts, only the book of John uses the Roman reckoning.
3. In modern terms, Jesus was crucified about 9 AM. To the Romans this was nine hours from midnight. To the Jews it was three hours from sunrise, hence it is called „*the third hour*“ in Mark 15:25. Darkness covered the land at about 12 noon (to the Romans, 12 hours from midnight; to the Jews, six hours from sunrise, Mark 15:33, Luke 23:44, Matthew 27:45). The darkness lasted until 3 PM (three hours from noon in Roman reckoning; nine hours from sunrise to the Jews).
4. John 19:14 also mentions the „*sixth hour*“. This is the Roman reckoning and here refers to the time around sunrise. This, of course, was about three hours before the crucifixion.
5. So, there is no contradiction. Each Gospel account adds to the others when we understand how they were written. Let us keep in mind Isaiah 28:9-13.

## **JOHN 19:40**

„Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury“.

Some have wondered about cremation and the proper disposition of one's remains.

1. The Bible does not specify a particular mode of burial for a follower of Christ. Biblical examples show that the Hebrews living at the time of Christ favored a simple burial (John 19:40).
2. The practice of cremating one's remains does not violate any biblical command and has been used by various cultures throughout the centuries. Whether one chooses a traditional burial or cremation (for its lower cost or for other reasons) has no effect on the future resurrection of the deceased. The Bible promises that all who die will be resurrected. (Please see 1 Corinthians 15, Acts 24:15 and Revelation 20:12-14).
3. There are factors, however, that should be weighted if a follower of Christ is contemplating having his body cremated. The emotional effects on one's family and religious and cultural sensitivities are examples. The time following the death of a loved one is traumatic, and the most loving choice of burial would be one that is easiest on family and friends. Cremation may not be a considerate choice if it would cause the time of mourning to be more difficult for those concerned.

## JOHN 21:15-17

Many misunderstand why Jesus asked Peter three times whether he loved Him.

1. After Jesus' arrest, Peter denied Him three times (Luke 22:34, John 18:15-18, 25-27). Peter's conscience no doubt troubled him long after this incident. Also, the other disciples likely knew about Peter's denial.
2. In John 21 the resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples as they were fishing. To restore Peter to good stead with his conscience and with the other disciples, Jesus had Peter formally declare his love for Jesus three times; a sort of reversal of Peter's three denials. Jesus and Peter used two different words for love in their exchange of questions and answers. One way to translate these words is „truly love” and „love” as found in the New International Version:

„Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love (Greek, agapao) me more than these?'

„Yes, Lord', he said, 'you know that I love (Greek „phileo”) you”.

„Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?'

„He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you’.

„Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep’.

„The third time He said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love (not “truly love”) me?'

„Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you’”.

3. The significance of the use of these two different words for „love” might lie in Jesus wanting Peter to reflect on his – Peter's – answers. Jesus knew that, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter's love for Him would grow to the point that it became „true love” and that Peter would even sacrifice his life for Him (John 21:18-19, John 15:13).

## ACTS 1:2

„Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen“.

We notice that the New Testament often mentions apostles. What is an apostle?

1. The word apostle means „one sent forth“, in other words, a commissioned messenger or ambassador. The word places emphasis on the one who commissions the messenger rather than on the messenger himself. An apostle is then, one who is sent forth with authority, who faithfully represents the purposes and the intentions of the sender.
2. During his earthly ministry, Christ chose 12 apostles for special training. The title and function of apostle, however, was not limited to those 12. The New Testament lists 17 apostles by name:
  - a. Jesus Christ, the chief apostle (Hebrews 3:1).
  - b. The Twelve: Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zelote, Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot (Luke 6:13-16).
  - c. Paul (Galatians 1:1)
  - d. James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19).
  - e. Barnabas (Acts 4:36, 13:2, 14:14).
  - f. Matthias (Acts 1:26).
3. Although we have no checklist that defines an apostle, in scripture we find three common characteristics:
  - a. Apostles had received the Holy Spirit. In John 20:21 Jesus referred to the time when the disciples would receive the Spirit. He said:

*„Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you'. And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'".*

- b. They had seen the resurrected Christ and were with Jesus during his earthly ministry (Acts 1:21-22). Paul, as part of his conversion experience, also saw the resurrected Christ and used the incident as a defense for his apostleship (1 Corinthians 15:7-8).
- c. Apostles received a direct commission from the resurrected Christ to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. In Acts 2:1 Luke wrote that before Christ was taken up to heaven, He gave *„instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen".*

Part of these instructions included the great commission outlined in Matthew 28:16-20. Several years later, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) also received a special commission to become apostles.

*„Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2).*

- 4. In addition to preaching the Gospel, apostles seem to have had an administrative role for the care of the Church. Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:11 that Jesus Christ *„gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers".*
- 5. This list implies levels of responsibility in the Church, with apostles being the chief authority.
- 6. Occasionally Paul used the word apostle in a more limited sense than just discussed. The two cases are in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Philippians 2:25. Here local congregations had sent one or more persons on a specific mission. In both cases the Greek word apostolos, translated as fellow worker or messenger, implies they were representatives of the congregations, not holders of the apostolic office from Jesus Christ.

7. Today some Christian denominations use the title apostle for the person who holds the chief spiritual office in their church. These churches generally do not mean the term in the broadest, biblical sense – as eyewitnesses of the resurrection – but rather in the administrative sense.

## ACTS 1:18

„Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out“.

Some cannot explain the apparent contradiction between Matthew 27:5 and Acts 1:18. Did Judas Iscariot, after betraying Christ, hang himself or just swell up and burst open?

1. We should first understand that God had His Word recorded in such a way that it could be misunderstood. Through one of the prophets we find that the Bible is written „*here a little, and there a little*“ (Isaiah 28:10). Each part is true, but the whole truth about a particular subject may not be found in any one verse or chapter. This is one reason Paul said that the Word of God must be rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15).
2. By putting the two accounts of Judas' death together, we get a clearer idea of what happened. Both events are true. But both events did not happen at the same time.
3. Matthew wrote that Judas „hanged himself“ (Matthew 27:5). Luke explained what happened later – AFTER Judas' body began to decompose. The corpse slipped from the rope and burst when it fell.

## ACTS 2:46

„And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart“.

Some believe that Christians should preach the Gospel from door to door.

1. Some religious groups send their members from house to house engaging people in religious discussions. But is that really what God wants? The reaction of many householders indicates that they do not appreciate such surprise visits. Most people prefer to decide for themselves when and how to become involved in religious studies.
2. The Bible teaches that it is God who „calls“ a person to repentance and the Christ-centered Way of life. When God opens a person’s mind, the individual becomes interested in receiving guidance from a teacher he knows and respects. God has His own way of calling each person (John 6:44).
3. Misunderstanding of this subject arises because a number of scriptures are misinterpreted. Acts 2:46 and Acts 20:20 are examples. Let us notice what these passages really say: *„And they (the twelve apostles and other disciples), continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart“* (Acts 2:46).

We notice that these people were all in harmony. They continued daily *„with one accord“*. They were all of the same belief (Acts 2:44). This is simply talking about people who ate together in the way one might have close friends over to his or her home. The King James expression *„breaking bread“* refers to eating an ordinary meal. Acts 2:46 says nothing about preaching to strangers!

In this instance, many had come to Jerusalem from many nations to attend one of God’s annual feasts, Pentecost. Because they had no home in Jerusalem, the people who lived there invited them to come to their homes and eat.



4. Acts 20:20 can be correctly understood by reading it in context, beginning with Acts 20:17. The apostle Paul „sent to Ephesus, and called the ELDERS of the church” and said to them, „I... have taught YOU publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:17-20).

Paul’s practice was to teach the leaders of the church in their own homes. He was not going from house to house attempting to teach whoever opened the door. When Paul preached publicly, it was primarily in the synagogues of his day. In Ephesus, after the Jews no longer wanted to listen in the synagogue, he went to the school of Tyrannus and taught there daily (Acts 19:9).

In other words, Paul made himself available, teaching the Gospel to those who wanted to listen. He did not try to force himself onto an unwilling audience.

5. Today, as the Gospel is proclaimed, anyone is at liberty to accept it or reject it. We never attempt to force God’s truth onto anyone. Also, as in the New Testament examples, we go into the homes of people who specifically invite us to counsel them. We do not go uninvited into the home of people to try to persuade them to accept the truth or to try to get them to join anything.
6. Jesus instructed His disciples to avoid giving spiritual information indiscriminately (see Matthews 7:6). (Jesus was not calling people dogs or swine. He used this attention-getting analogy to show that the Gospel should not be given to those who are not receptive to it).
7. We might turn the question around and ask, „Should we invite into our homes just anyone who is going from house to house trying to get us to accept his or her form of doctrine?” Here is God’s instruction: „*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the truth of God’s Word), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed*” (2 John 10, King James Version).

We are not to go preaching from house to house. Neither are we to accept into our homes any peddlers of religion who might show up at

the door. This is the example of Jesus Christ and the early Church of God.

8. God loves all people and will offer salvation to every person (Matthew 18:14, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9), but He chooses the time to open each person's mind to receive the truth (John 6:44, 65).

## ACTS 3:19

„Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;“

Many don't quite understand the call to repent and the meaning of repentance, as repentance involves coming out of „the world“.

1. The apostle John helps us understand worldliness by clearly defining what part of the world – or „kosmos“ in the Greek – we are to hate. First of all John tells us, *„Do not love the world or anything in the world“* (1 John 2:15).
2. Christ's followers are true Christians because they are different internally – in their minds. Christ's followers show the world by their spiritual actions „in“ the world that they are not „of“ the world. Christ's followers „come out“ of the world by turning to God. They go through conversion, a process that involves what the Bible calls repentance (Acts 3:19).
3. To repent is to change one's direction of life. Once a person is willing to do this, baptism should follow. He or she then receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). This enables the individual to live a new, godly life (Romans 6:4).
4. Through conversion the follower of Christ is rescued out of the world. That is why Peter pleaded with his hearers to repent, telling them to *„save yourselves from this corrupt generation“* (Acts 2:40).
5. Repentance ensures salvation from sin and the gift of eternal life in the Kingdom of God (Romans 5:10, 6:22-23, 1 John 1:9, Daniel 7:27, Revelation 3:21). God wants all people to come out of this world; He wants all people *„to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth“* (1 Timothy 2:4).
6. God *„commands all people everywhere to repent“* (Acts 17:30). He wants everyone to make the choice that leads to eternal life. But God knows the world has a strong pull on human nature. Only a comparative few people will repent in this age before Christ's return.

While the call and invitation go out to the many, only the few allow themselves to be among the chosen (Matthew 22:14).

7. *„Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it“, Jesus Christ warned. „But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it“* (Matthew 9:13-14).
8. Human desires die hard. Some people never get started on the path of coming out of the world. Satan the devil uses their interest in worldly pursuits to keep them in the world (Mark 4:15). Others do begin to come out of the this world's ways, but lack staying power, *„When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away“,* Jesus said in Mark 4:17.
9. Other people allow *„the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things“* to ensnare them (Mark 4:19). Only the few come out of the world permanently and produce spiritual fruit (Mark 4:20).
10. The devil's world is an attractive place, with great pulling power. But Jesus Christ commands us to seek God and His Kingdom, not the world (Matthew 6:33). Coming out of the world is something the followers of Christ must continue throughout life. They cannot rely on a one time decision for Christ.
11. The followers of Christ can slip back into the world, if they are not spiritually aware. Peter talked of those who had *„escaped the corruption of the world“* but who were now *„again entangled in it and overcome“* (2 Peter 2:20).
12. But this need not happen as long as followers of Christ remember their true citizenship is in heaven. *„Set your minds on things above“,* Paul admonished the followers of Christ, *„not on earthly things“* (Colossians 3:2).

The followers of Christ who have repented have figuratively died to human ways. Their „*life is now hidden with Christ in God*“ (Colossians 3:3). They are no longer of the world's ways.

## ACTS 4:12

„Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved“.

Many use this verse to show that unless a person hears the name of Christ the person is lost. Are those who do not know Christ in this life lost?

1. This verse does not say that all those who have not known Jesus Christ in this lifetime are lost forever. It simply says that salvation is by no one else, that there is no other name under heaven than Jesus Christ by which men can be saved. This principle is also described in 1 Timothy 2:5, John 10:1, and John 10:7-9. The question is when they will be saved. These people are not yet lost forever. They are temporarily without hope until they have been called and given their first opportunity to be saved.
2. God wants everyone to have his chance at salvation (1 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Peter 3:9). Christ gave up His life to pay the death penalty for every man (Hebrews 2:9). God wants everyone to have eternal life, to have salvation (1 Corinthians 15:21-22). But, there is an order for salvation. Jesus Christ is first, then those who are Christ's at His coming, then everyone else (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; 1 Peter 4:17).
3. The majority of all people that have ever lived have been spiritually blinded and not given an opportunity for salvation (Deuteronomy 29:2-4, Romans 1:28-29, 11:5, 11:32). They have been deceived by Satan, the god of this world (Revelation 12:9, 20:10; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:3). Jesus Christ spoke in parables so that only those called by God in this age could understand (Matthew 13:10-15, Mark 4:10-12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40, Acts 28:26-27, Isaiah 6:9).
4. A future time is coming when God will remove the veil of spiritual blindness and gave all those that have not yet been called their first chance for salvation (Isaiah 9:2-7, 11:9, 25:7; Acts 2:17). Satan will be chained so he can no longer deceive people (Revelation 20:1-3) and God will cleanse the people and cause them to follow

His Laws (Ezekiel 36:25-27). This is when those who temporarily lost their chance at salvation will receive that chance.

5. For additional information, see 2 Corinthians 6:2 about when is the time of salvation.

## ACTS 7:6

„And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat *them* evil four hundred years“.

Some believe that this scripture contradicts Exodus 12:40 and Galatians 3:17 which mentions 430 years. Why is there a difference?

Genesis 15:13 states that Abraham's seed (Acts 7:6) – not Abraham – was to be „*a stranger in a land* (that is) *not theirs... and they shall afflict them 400 years*“.

This would be the length of time from the death of Abraham (76 years after the covenant was made – compare Genesis 25:7 with Genesis 17:1) through the 40 years' wandering to the division of the land when the children of Israel received their inheritance under the direction of Joshua. This occurred 6 years after they entered the land of Canaan (see Numbers 10:11 and Joshua 14:7-10).

The 400 years begins with the death of Abraham (1797 B.C.) and ends when Israel divided the Promised land (1397 B.C.)

- a. Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7). 76 years after the covenant was made.
- b. Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made (Genesis 17:1-2).
- c. Abraham's seed was oppressed 400 years (Acts 7:6) in a land not theirs (Genesis 15:13).
- d. The Promised land was divided in 1397 B.C. (Joshua 13:7). This occurred 45 years after Joshua spied out the land (Joshua 14:7-10). The spies were sent out in 1442 B.C., one year after leaving Egypt (Numbers 1:1, 13:1).

The 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 began with the confirming of the covenant God made with Abraham – when Abraham was 99 years old in



1873 B.C. Notice Genesis 17:1-10: „*And when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be you perfect... and Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations... and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you...*”

Genesis 21:1-5 continues the story. Sarah finally became pregnant at the „set time” (Genesis 21:2). This physical evidence fully confirmed the covenant, and Isaac, the son of the promise, was born in 1872 B.C. when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5).

Since Galatians 3:17 states that the law was given 430 years after the covenant was made, it is evident that the 430 years began when Abraham was 99 years old and ended the year of the exodus of his descendant out of Egypt in 1443 B.C. and their appearance at Sinai. The law was given on the day of Pentecost 1443 B.C., soon after Israel left Egypt.

The 430-year period begins with the confirming of the covenant (1873 B.C.) and ends with Exodus (1443 B.C.).

- e. Genesis 17:1-2 shows that Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made.
- f. Israel left Egypt 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham. Exodus 12:40 in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint Version (LXX) reads as follows: „The time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan (was) 430 years”.
- g. The dwelling period of Israel in Egypt extended from Jacob's bringing his family into Egypt during the famine to Israel's Exodus: 1682-1443 B.C., or 239 years.
- h. Galatians 3:17 shows that the law was given 430 years after God made the covenant with Abraham. Paul, therefore, accepted the LXX chronology. This chronology is also supported by the genealogy of Exodus 6:14-20 which allows only four generations

between Jacob and Moses, and there is reason to think that the genealogical table has been abridged.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 430 YEARS AND THE 400 YEARS:**

Birth of Abraham – 1972 B.C.

Covenant confirmed when Abraham was 99 years old – 1873 B.C.

Death of Abraham – 1797 B.C.

Exodus (Law given at Pentecost) – 1443 B.C.

Period between 1873 B.C., when covenant was confirmed with Abraham to the Law given at Pentecost in 1443 B.C. is 430 years.

Period of wandering of Israel from the Pentecost when the Law was given in 1443 B.C. to the entering into the Promised Land in 1403 B.C. is 40 years.

Period of 6 years during which Israel divided the land brings us to 1397 B.C.

From death of Abraham in 1797 B.C. to the year when division of the Promised land was completed in 1397 B.C. there are 400 years.

## ACTS 9:7

„And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man“.

Some claim that there is a contradiction with Acts 22:9.

1. Both Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 record the apostle Paul's conversion.
2. As Paul and a group of men were making their way to Damascus, Paul was suddenly surrounded by a light from heaven. He fell to the ground, blinded. Jesus Christ then spoke to Paul and told him what he must do. The others were dumbfounded: „*The men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one*“ (Acts 9:7, New King James Version).
3. The same event is mentioned a second time. Paul said, „*Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me*“ (Acts 22:9, New King James Version).
4. In the original Greek language, the word „akouo“ is used in these passages. This word, like many others, has several meanings depending on how it is used in a sentence. It can mean to hear or to understand. In the following passage, for example, the latter meaning is obviously intended: „*For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him*“ (1 Corinthians 14:2, New King James Version).

His listeners hear him, but don't understand.

5. This is what happened with Paul and those with him on the road to Damascus. Paul both heard and understood. The men with him heard the voice but did not understand it.
6. So the problem is only one of language. God's Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35). Acts 22:9 really should be translated this way: „Now those who were with me indeed saw the light and were

afraid, but they did not understand the voice of Him who spoke to me".

## **ACTS 10:12-13**

„Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat“.

This verse, among others, is pointed to by those who wish to prove that the New Testament allows the eating of unclean animals. Specifically, they say that this section proves that God by this vision showed Peter it is all right to eat all meats, clean and unclean.

1. Peter was in a trance (Acts 10:10). He saw the sheet filled with unclean creatures as a vision (Acts 10:17). He did not actually eat of any of those creatures.
2. Peter did not know what the vision meant (Acts 10:17). He did not assume that it meant it was fine for him to eat unclean meats from now on.
3. The meaning of the vision is given in Acts 10:28. God was showing Peter that he should call no man common (ceremonially defiled) or unclean. The Jews regarded gentiles as unclean and unfit for their company. God used this vision to show Peter that gentiles should not be shunned and considered unclean.

## ACTS 13:32-33

„And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee“.

This verse seems to indicate that Christ became the Son when He was raised up at the resurrection.

1. Was Christ the Son of God before being raised up in the resurrection? Of course! Acts 13:32-33: *„And we declare to you glad tidings; that promise which was made to the father. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You'“.*
2. In the New Testament, *„Today“* does not refer to the time the speaker is speaking. *„Today“* does not refer to anything at all, it is just included in the quote from Psalm 2:7: *„I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to ME, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You'“.*
3. Hebrews 1:5, *„For to which of the angels did He ever say: „You are My Son, today I have begotten You?“ And again: „I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?“*
4. Hebrews 5:5, *„So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: „You are my Son, today I have begotten You“. „This day have I begotten you“, is a formula for anointing. It implies „as dear to me as a son“, and also „innocent as one just begotten“.*
5. 2 Samuel 7:12-14, *„When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. „He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (Christ, of course, is the ultimate fulfiller). I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity (Christ certainly would not), I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men“.*

6. „*Begotten you*“ comes from „*gennao*“ in the Greek.
7. We are now the children, sons of God. 1 John 3:2, „*Beloved, now we are children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is*“.
8. Satan called Christ the Son of God in Matthew 4:3: „*Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, „If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread*“.
9. The demons knew Christ was the Son of God (Matthew 8:29). People knew Christ was the Son of God (Matthew 14:33). „*Then those who were in the boat came and worshipped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'*“.
10. John the Baptist knew Christ was the Son of God. „*I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God*“ (John 1:33-34).
11. The voice from heaven knew Christ was the Son of God. We notice in Matthew 3:17: „*And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'*“.  
  
Also notice Matthew 17:5: „*While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!'*“
12. Christ was set apart after the resurrection. 2 Corinthians 6:15-18: „*And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people'*“.

Therefore *„Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty“.*

13. Sonship refers to special position and office. We read in Revelation 21:7: *„He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son“.*
14. Romans 1:3-4, seems to indicate that Christ became the Son when He was raised up at the resurrection. *„Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead“.*
15. In Hebrew, the adjective is ascribed to the noun rather than qualifying it. For example, it speaks of a „man of sin“, „man of patience“, or „man of power“. In this case, Romans 1:4 is a Hebraism. It could be translated „Powerful Son of God“. Christ's powerfulness was declared by the resurrection. Christ was a flesh descendant of King David; the resurrection adds the power quality to the Sons of God.



## ACTS 14:22

„Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God“.

Some believe it would be showing a lack of faith to be „protected“ by insurance. What does the Bible teach about insurance?

1. As we know, insurance does not prevent accident, injury, fire, or death. It merely compensates one's family in the event of such a loss so that one can regain economic stability. God does not promise the followers of Christ, under any and all circumstances, a life free from early death, all hazards, and disasters. In fact, Scripture shows we should expect to have to cope with many and varied problems (Acts 14:22).
2. The Bible does teach us the principle of protecting ourselves by taking early precautions before calamity strikes. Solomon tells us, „*A cautious man sees danger and takes cover: a simpleton strolls on – and pays for it*“ (Proverbs 27:12, Moffatt translation). The Bible often warns us to guard against the day of evil. Insurance is simply a way of saving or laying up for our future – an important biblical principle (Proverbs 6:6-8). It is a kind of pool of resources in which people save and share the burdens of one another.
3. Insurance is a means by which a breadwinner can provide for his family in the event of his death or disability (please read 1 Timothy 5:8 and 2 Corinthians 12:14). There are also various types of insurance which protect others. God's Law clearly shows that it is our responsibility to compensate persons who are harmed or caused to suffer loss because of our negligence or carelessness (see Exodus 21 and Exodus 22). Having liability insurance helps us avoid possible financial collapse and provides for someone else who may be harmed by our actions.
4. Other types of insurance are required by law or in the course of doing business. Fire insurance on a dwelling may be required by lenders who finance mortgages.

5. Professional people and businesses may need insurance to protect themselves. When such laws or regulations do not contradict God's higher laws, we are to obey the laws of the land (Acts 5:29, Romans 13).
  
6. In conclusion, it is neither a lack of faith nor unscriptural to carry various kinds of insurance. Rather, insurance can help us properly love God, our neighbor, and ourselves in a true Christ-like manner. As in any decision, one should use prudence and wisdom in deciding the amounts and kinds of insurance to carry.

## ACTS 16:30-31

„And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house“.

Many say that followers of Christ don't have to keep the Law to be saved – merely believe on Jesus Christ.

1. Paul did not say all a follower of Christ needs to do to be saved is believe. He told the jailor to „*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved*“. But there is more to it than that.
2. To all men Jesus says in Luke 6:46, „*Why call me 'Lord, Lord' and do not the things which I say?*“ In connection with Acts 16:30-31, we can see that Christ expects us to do the things that He says if we really believe that He is our Lord and Savior. One of the things Jesus said was, „*If you will enter into life keep the commandments*“ (Matthew 19:17).
3. James magnifies this point by showing that faith and works go hand in hand – works are the automatic result of faith. Faith without works is dead (James 2:20, 26). We show our faith by our works (James 2:18).
4. Again, the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 2:13, „*For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified*“.

No one is a follower of Christ unless he has God's Spirit in him (Romans 8:9) and God gives His Spirit only to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

5. The attitude of the jailor was not one of „all I have to do is believe“. Rather, it was „what must I do to be saved?“ Paul could see that he was willing to obey God – willing to do whatever was required.

Believing on Jesus Christ, on His message, His Word, His authority, was only one of the conditions to salvation. Paul didn't say that was all that was necessary. Acts 16:32 clearly shows Paul went on to

teach him what real repentance was – turning from sin – obedience to God! And after that, he was baptized (Acts 16:33)!

6. Paul didn't teach faith without works. Rather, he taught faith with works – a belief that leads to positive actions.

## **ACTS 17:26**

„And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;“

Some question whether interracial marriage is sin.

1. The Bible does not comment on this matter in the form of a law or commandment. Therefore, the Church of God does not view interracial marriage as sin.
2. The Bible teaches that all racial groups are children of Adam and Eve, made of one blood (Acts 17:26), and have equal status in the eyes of God and the Church, and equal promise of salvation and eternal life in the family of God.
3. The absence of a „Thou shalt not“, however, does not mean that God approves interracial marriage in every situation. Jesus told His followers that we are to be the light of the world – which means to lead exemplary lives – so that others might see the good results of living God's way (Matthew 5:14-16). Therefore, we ought to strive as much as possible not to offend the values and traditions of our society and culture. If a follower of Christ does something that is perceived as immoral, whether or not it actually is immoral, he diminishes his ability to serve God effectively as a witness to others by his example. Paul explains the need for followers of Christ to conduct themselves in such a way as not to bring reproach on the name of Christ for any reason (Titus 2:6-8). What may be lawful may not always be expedient (1 Corinthians 6:12, 10:23).
4. Marriage is one of life's greatest joys when wise choices have been made and the couple are compatible and able to grow in love together. A wise marriage is one in which two people are well suited for each other. The more compatible the couple is, the fewer obstacles they will have to overcome in their relationship. A couple should therefore consider compatibility in as many areas as possible, including

personality, intellect, cultural background, race, upbringing, character, financial habits, even views on matters such as child rearing. In short, a wise marriage is one in which each partner complements, rather than competes with, the other.

5. Sociological studies show that four major areas – those of religion, race, culture, and age – are the most difficult barriers for married couples to overcome as they strive for happiness with their mates. These major areas should be very carefully considered in choosing a mate. Amos 3:3 reveals that two persons should be in agreement on important matters so they can live together with a greater prospect of success and happiness. (See also 2 Corinthians 6:14-17).
6. Anyone considering marriage should also be certain to take the wishes of his or her family into careful consideration. The feelings of a family and extended family normally have a significant and long-range effect on a person's marriage. This is not a matter that should be taken lightly. Thus, while interracial marriage is not a sin, the foregoing factors could render it an unwise decision.

## ACTS 20:7

„And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight“.

Some say that this scripture says take the „Lord's Supper“ every Sunday morning and that Paul observed Sunday.

1. Let us notice Acts 20:6. This was just after the Days of Unleavened Bread, when the New Testament Passover had been taken. Paul was holding a farewell meeting at Troas, ready to depart at sunrise. This scripture does not say Paul observed Sunday as a day of worship. If this were an example for us today, we would be starting the services on Saturday night – not on Sunday morning.
2. When was Paul preaching? It was not Sunday morning, but what we would call Saturday night. Paul preached to them until midnight (Acts 20:7) and there were many lamps burning. Also, services would have to continue till dawn (Acts 20:11).
3. It was after midnight before they broke bread, when they were all getting hungry. Let us notice carefully Acts 20:11: *„now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten“*.

This bread-breaking was not the „Lord's supper“, but merely the eating of a plain meal.

4. *„Break bread“* does not generally refer to the „Lord's Supper“, as some have mistakenly assumed. Let us notice Acts 27:34-35: *„Therefore I urge you to take nourishment... He took bread... and when he had broken it he began to eat“*.

Paul was a Roman prisoner in the midst of many Gentiles on board a ship (Acts 27:1-2). Obviously, Paul was not holding a religious service. The men ate for their health (Acts 27:33-34).

5. Notice also Acts 2:46: *„And breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness“*. Here they were breaking bread daily,

eating food, and Paul says if we eat to satisfy hunger at the „Lord's supper“, we do it to our condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:34, King James Version).

6. In Matthew 26:29 Jesus said He would not again take the New Testament Passover ordinance until after His second coming in His Kingdom. Yet, later, as He ate a meal, He broke bread and blessed it (Luke 24:30). They then used a kind of bread such as is used in many countries today; instead of slicing it, they broke it. „*Break bread*“ was a common term to indicate eating a meal.
7. Acts 20:3 does not describe a regular service. Let us notice the context. Paul was travelling from Greece to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-3, 16). Since he did not know when he would see the brethren, he wanted to teach them as much as possible. The people were more than willing to listen. So, after the Sabbath, Paul remained behind teaching the brethren, while his ship sailed around the peninsula (Acts 20:13). He remained talking with them till midnight and continued after a short meal until daybreak (Acts 20:11).
8. Then after Paul had stayed as long as he could, he left them to walk across the peninsula to meet the boat (Acts 20:13-14). Paul worked on that Sunday by taking this long walk of some 19 miles (30.50 km)!
9. There is nothing in the above scripture to indicate it was Paul's custom to observe Sunday. In fact, all through the book of Acts we see it was Paul's custom to observe the Sabbath (Acts 17:2, Acts 13:14-15, Acts 13:42-44).



## ACTS 20:20

„And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house“.

Some believe that followers of Christ should preach the Gospel from door to door to the unconverted.

1. Some religious groups send their members from house to house engaging people in religious discussions. But is that really what God wants? The reaction of many householders indicates that they do not appreciate such surprise visits. Most people prefer to decide for themselves when and how to become involved in religious studies.
2. The Bible teaches that it is God who „calls“ a person to repentance and the Christ-centered Way of life. When God opens a person’s mind, the individual becomes interested in receiving guidance from a teacher he knows and respects. God has His own way of calling each person (John 6:44).
3. Misunderstanding of this subject arises because a number of scriptures are misinterpreted. Acts 2:46 and Acts 20:20 are examples. Let us notice what these passages really say: *„And they (the twelve apostles and other disciples), continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart“* (Acts 2:46).

We notice that these people were all in harmony. They continued daily *„with one accord“*. They were all of the same belief (Acts 2:44). This is simply talking about people who ate together in the way one might have close friends over to his or her home. The King James expression *„breaking bread“* refers to eating an ordinary meal. Acts 2:46 says nothing about preaching to strangers!

In this instance, many had come to Jerusalem from many nations to attend one of God’s annual feasts, Pentecost. Because they had no home in Jerusalem, the people who lived there invited them to come to their homes and eat.

4. Acts 20:20 can be correctly understood by reading it in context, beginning with Acts 20:17. The apostle Paul „sent to Ephesus, and called the ELDERS of the church” and said to them, „I... have taught YOU publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:17-20).

Acts 20:17 shows that Paul was specifically speaking to the elders of the Church at Ephesus and not to the general public.

Paul’s practice was to teach the leaders of the church in their own homes. He was not going from house to house attempting to teach whoever opened the door. When Paul preached publicly, it was primarily in the synagogues of his day. In Ephesus, after the Jews no longer wanted to listen in the synagogue, he went to the school of Tyrannus and taught there daily (Acts 19:9). In other words, Paul made himself available, teaching the Gospel to those who wanted to listen. He did not try to force himself onto an unwilling audience.

5. This teaching from house to house in the book of Acts – Acts 5:42, Acts 20:20 – was done only among those already converted or on the way to conversion and desiring the truth. In those days the Gospel was taught by word of mouth from house to house of believers. Therefore, house to house preaching was the vehicle to spread the Gospel. Hospitality was the means.
6. Today, as the Gospel is proclaimed, anyone is at liberty to accept it or reject it. We never attempt to force God’s truth onto anyone. Also, as in the New Testament examples, we go into the homes of people who specifically invite us to counsel them. We do not go uninvited into the home of people to try to persuade them to accept the truth or to try to get them to join anything.
7. Jesus instructed His disciples to avoid giving spiritual information indiscriminately (see Matthews 7:6). (Jesus was not calling people dogs or swine. He used this attention-getting analogy to show that the Gospel should not be given to those who are not receptive to it).
8. We might turn the question around and ask, „Should we invite into our homes just anyone who is going from house to house trying to get us

to accept his or her form of doctrine?" Here is God's instruction: *„If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the truth of God's Word), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed“* (2 John 10, King James Version).

9. We are not to go preaching from house to house. Neither are we to accept into our homes any peddlers of religion who might show up at the door. This is the example of Jesus Christ and the early Church of God.
10. God's servants did not go door to door proselytizing to the unconverted. God loves all people and will offer salvation to every person (Matthew 18:14, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9), but He chooses the time to open each person's mind to receive the truth (John 6:44, 65).
11. Those who bring different doctrines should not be invited in, nor should we contribute to their efforts. They are to be avoided (2 John 10). We also don't want to receive those who change doctrine. This does not apply to a family member who left the Church.

## ACTS 22:3

„I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day“.

Some wonder why Paul called himself a „Jew“ when he said he was from the tribe of Benjamin.

1. The word Jew came to be applied in two ways. First, it referred to any descendant of the tribe of Judah. Jew is a nickname; it is merely a shortened form of Judah.
2. But the word Jew also referred to anyone who refused to join the rebellion when the 12 tribes of Ancient Israel split into two separate kingdoms (1 Kings 12:16-23).
3. As it turned out, all of the tribes except Judah, Levi and Benjamin formed the northern kingdom under king Jeroboam. Their national name became Israel. The three remaining tribes, under King Rehoboam, formed the southern kingdom, named Judah. Benjamin's alignment with Judah is shown in 1 Kings 12:21.
4. Paul descended from Benjamin (Romans 11:1). Nationally, however, he was a citizen of the kingdom or house of Judah. Thus, he was both a Jew and a Benjamite.

## ACTS 22:9

„And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me“.

Some claim that there is a contradiction with Acts 9:7.

1. Both Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9 record the apostle Paul's conversion.
2. As Paul and a group of men were making their way to Damascus, Paul was suddenly surrounded by a light from heaven. He fell to the ground, blinded. Jesus Christ then spoke to Paul and told him what he must do. The others were dumbfounded: *„The men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one“* (Acts 9:7, New King James Version).
3. The same event is mentioned a second time. Paul said, *„Those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me“* (Acts 22:9, New King James Version).
4. In the original Greek language, the word „akouo“ is used in these passages. This word, like many others, has several meanings depending on how it is used in a sentence. It can mean to hear or to understand. In the following passage, for example, the latter meaning is obviously intended: *„For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him“* (1 Corinthians 14:2, New King James Version).

His listeners hear him, but don't understand.

5. This is what happened with Paul and those with him on the road to Damascus. Paul both heard and understood. The men with him heard the voice but did not understand it.
6. So the problem is only one of language. God's Word does not contradict itself (John 10:35). Acts 22:9 really should be translated this way: *„Now those who were with me indeed saw the light and were*

afraid, but they did not understand the voice of Him who spoke to me".

## ROMANS 1:4

„And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead“.

Many wonder whether Christ was the son of God before His resurrection from the dead.

1. This verse is easy to misread in English because it contains a Hebraism. It states, „And declared (to be) the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead“.
2. What is being translated? In Hebrew you say: „man of sin“ or „man of patience“ or „son of power“. In Romans 1:4 „with power“ does not refer to how it is declared. It is not „declared with power“. It is declared to be „*the Son of God with power*“. The power of the Son of God is what is being declared. This expression means: powerful Son of God.
3. In the flesh Christ was a physical descendant of David, the resurrection added power to Him.
4. Another example should clarify the Hebrew construction translated into English:  
  
The battle declared a general with unusual strategic powers.  
  
The powers of the general were declared by the battle. Not that the „battle declared him a general“. He was a general before the battle.
5. The New Testament was written in colloquial Greek, thus the Hebraism was not interpreted; a literal Greek expression was given instead.

## ROMANS 3:28

„Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law“.

Many use this verse to try to prove that the Law has been done away, or at least that we don't have to keep the Law, since we are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.

1. We must remember that although people say you don't have to keep the law, they really don't mean this literally. Do they mean you can kill or steal or murder with impunity? No, of course not. What they do mean is that you can break the Sabbath, not tithe and not keep God's Holy Days, etc. We are to remember this when we explain such verses so, if need be, we can point out this inconsistent and hypocritical stance toward the Law.
2. Paul was saying that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law. He is not preaching that the Law is done away. Being „*justified*“ means to be brought into right standing before God. Romans 3:20 tells us that no man shall be justified by the deeds of the Law. „*For by the law is the knowledge of sin*“. The Law defines sin – it tells us what sin is – but it does not and cannot take away the penalty for previous violations. Obeying the law in the future does not pay for past guilt. If a man commits a crime, his obedience to the civil law in the future does not make him any less guilty of his past offense.
3. Romans 3:28 does not say the „deeds of the law“ are not necessary. The subject under discussion is „justification“ and whether the „deeds of the law“ can „justify“ a person. Being justified in the biblical sense means being made just or right before God, which means having our sins forgiven and completely blotted out. The question being settled is not „Should we keep the law?“ but, rather, „Does present obedience to the law somehow brings a person into a right standing before God and make up for past sins?“
4. The passage in Romans 3:24-25 explains how we are justified. We are justified by God's grace through the redeeming sacrifice of Jesus



Christ. Christ was a propitiation (a sacrifice that reconciles) for us to God. By His sacrifice our past sins are remitted.

5. If a man commits a crime, his obedience to the law in the future does not make him any less guilty of his past offense. This is also true of us spiritually. Paul showed in Romans 3:20 that the „*deeds of the law*“ do not justify anyone, and he went on to explain in Romans 3:24-27 that justification (forgiveness of sins that are past – Romans 3:25) can come only by grace, through Christ's sacrifice.
6. Once we are reconciled to God, we must keep the commandments if we are to remain justified (Romans 2:13).
7. Being justified by faith does not mean we do away with (make void) the Law. On the contrary, we establish the Law (Romans 3:31). Once our sins are forgiven we are able to receive God's Holy Spirit which He gives to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). This Spirit gives us the love of God (Romans 5:5) which is the keeping of His commandments (1 John 5:3).
8. The conclusion is Romans 3:28 that we are justified by faith without the deeds of the Law. „Without“ (in the Authorized Version) could be more clearly translated „apart from“ or „outside of“.

## ROMANS 4:16

„Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all“.

Abraham is called the father of the faithful. Yet, the Scriptures record that he lied on at least two occasions. Some believe that these acts show a lack of faith on Abraham's part.

1. God called Abraham a „*friend*“ (Isaiah 41:8), yet Abraham was only human and on occasion, under duress, stumbled spiritually (1 John 1:8). But throughout his long life while undergoing many severe tests, the one dominant characteristic that motivated Abraham was his absolute faith in God. Hebrews 11 is a perpetual testimony to his resounding faith. Yes, in faith Abraham „*obeyed my (God's) voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws*“ (Genesis 26:5).

What a tremendous example!

2. But there were times when Abraham was unduly influenced by circumstances, by foolish counsel of others, and by his own fear of men.

Abraham's lies are recorded in Genesis 12:18-20 and Genesis 20:2. Under pressures of the moment, Abraham at times yielded to human reason – and sinned (Proverbs 14:12). He was not always at his best spiritually. He, too, had his moments of weakness and lessons to learn. But, though Abraham was not exempted from human error, God forgave him and looked upon his life in its totality and judged him faithful and righteous – worthy of eternal life.

3. For these reasons „*the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; for he was called the Friend of God*“ (James 2:23).

4. Unlike most people, when Abraham heard the voice of God, he listened and obeyed. He indeed is „*the father of all them that believe*“ (Romans 4:11).

## ROMANS 6:14

„For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace“.

Many point to this verse to try to prove we don't have to keep the Law, or that it has been done away. Specifically, the argument here is that we don't have to obey the Law because we are under grace, not under Law. Do the followers of Christ have to obey the Law?

1. Paul was talking to Roman converts who had repented and turned from sin (Romans 6:17). They had been baptized and were living a new way of life, following God's Laws (Romans 6:4).
2. At baptism, the old sinful man was crucified with Jesus Christ (Romans 6:6) and buried with Him (Romans 6:4). A new person, living God's way of life instead of the life of sin, is resurrected from the water (Romans 6:4, 6).
3. We must remember that although people say you don't have to keep the law, they really don't mean this literally. Do they mean you can kill or steal or murder with impunity? No, of course not. What they do mean is that you can break the Sabbath, not tithe and not keep God's Holy Days, etc. We are to remember this when we explain such verses so, if need be, we can point out this inconsistent and hypocritical stance toward the Law.
4. This scripture does not say we don't have to obey the Law. It does say we are not under the Law, but under grace. The term „*under the law*“ refers to being under the penalty of the Law – not under the jurisdiction of the Law.
5. When we sin – break God's Law (1 John 3:4) – the Law has a claim over our lives (Romans 6:23). We are then under the Law – under its penalty. It is the sinner who is under the Law. On the other hand, when we repent and receive God's grace, made possible through the sacrifice of Christ, we are pardoned and the penalty of death is taken away. Then we are no longer „*under the law*“ – in other words, we are no longer under the penalty of death for having broken the Law.

6. Does that give us free license to sin (break the Law) because we are under grace and not under the Law? Paul asks this very question in Romans 6:15 and answers it by saying, „*God forbid*“. It is like a condemned murderer on death row waiting for execution. At the last minute, the governor grants him a pardon. He is now a free man, but that does not mean he is at liberty to murder again. That would be absurd. His pardon covers only the past offense – not future crimes.
7. Repentant, baptized followers of Christ, striving to live God’s Way of life instead of a life of sin, are not under the dominion of the Law. The penalty for their past sins was paid for them by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They are therefore no longer under the penalty of the Law (death), but under grace.
  - a. Our past sins are covered by Christ’s shed blood. They are totally forgotten by God since Christ paid the death penalty for us (Hebrews 9:12, 14).
  - b. We are justified (forgiven of our past sins) by grace (Romans 3:24, Ephesians 2:5, 8).
  - c. Grace is a gift of God, it is undeserved (Ephesians 2:28, John 1:17).
8. Once the penalty for our past sins has been paid by Christ and we are no longer under the penalty of the Law, it does not mean that we no longer have to follow the Law in the future.
  - a. God’s Law defines sin. It shows us what sin is (Romans 3:20, 4:15, 5:13, 7:7-8).
  - b. We should not continue in sin once we have been forgiven for past sins (Romans 6:15, 3:31, 6:1-2).
  - c. The hearers of the Law will not remain justified before God, ONLY the doers of the Law (Romans 2:13). Many other scriptures tell a follower of Christ that the doing of the Law is what is important

(Matthew 7:26, James 1:22-25, 1 John 3:7, James 2:21). If we do not continue to follow God's Law, we will not remain justified.

## ROMANS 7:4

„Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, *even* to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God“.

Many claim this verse does away with the Law of God.

1. Let us notice carefully what Paul said in Romans 7:4: „You... have become dead“ (New King James Version). He did not say, “The law is dead”! The Law of God did not perish, but the people became dead to the Law by the body of Christ.
2. Romans 7:5 helps explain: *„For when we were in the flesh (before we were converted, and while we were living according to the pulls of the flesh), the motions of sins, which were (revealed for what they were) by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death“.*
3. Thus, when we were yet sinners, we were worthy of death in God’s sight, having transgressed His holy Law.
4. *„But now“*, Paul writes further, *„we have been delivered from the (certain death penalty of the) law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter“* (Romans 7:6, New King James Version).
5. Christ paid the death penalty in our stead. The Law of God no longer claims our lives.
6. While sinners, we were worthy of execution. But now, Paul says, we are dead to the law – that is, the penalty of death has been paid by Jesus Christ. So far as the Law is concerned, the penalty is paid – we are dead, in Christ – and there is no further „date with death“ for us if we continue to live in Christ.
7. This verse in no way says that the Law is done away. It merely shows that Christ paid the penalty of the Law for us. He died for us. We are dead with Him (Romans 6:3-4). No longer does condemnation await

us (Romans 8:1), because we are also made spiritually alive with Him through His resurrection (Romans 6:4-5, 11).



## ROMANS 10:4

„For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth“.

Many point to this verse to try to prove that the Law has been done away. Specifically, the argument here is that Christ put an end to law keeping. Do followers of Christ, then, have to obey the Law?

1. The English word „end“ is translated from the Greek „telos“ meaning the result, outcome, or conclusion of an act or state. This is totally different meaning from „termination“ which the English word „end“ can mean.
2. Paul is talking about the Israelites (Romans 10:2), and their self-righteousness (Romans 10:3). Israel did not attain the Law of righteousness because they sought it by their works (self-righteousness) instead of by faith (Romans 9:31-32). The Jews added many restrictive laws of their own to the Laws of God. Because of their self-righteousness, they felt they did not need Christ.
3. If God's Law ended, we wouldn't know what sin was. The Law defines sin (Romans 3:20, Romans 4:15, Romans 5:13, Romans 7:7-8). There would be no sin because sin is the transgression of the Law (1 John 3:4).
4. If there was no sin, because the Law ended, there would be no need for Christ or for His sacrifice.

## ROMANS 13:1

„Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God“.

Some have had misgivings about pledging allegiance to the flag or have believed that saluting the flag is idolatrous.

1. Since the words „one nation under God“ are used, Americans are certainly free to take this pledge. It is then understood that their allegiance is pledged only so far as they are not forced to disobey God's Laws.
2. The Bible commands us to be good citizens of the country in which we live. We know God has set government over all human beings, and every follower of Christ should „*be subject unto the higher powers*“ (Romans 13:1). This is with the understanding that our greater, higher, FIRST allegiance belongs to God.
3. A similar question involves saluting the flag. Some believe that saluting the flag is idolatrous. However, saluting is not in itself an act of worship, but merely a matter of showing respect. Through Paul, God commands us to render respect and honor when they are due (Romans 13:1-7).
4. Americans salute the flag not because it is the symbol of another god, but because it stands for the freedom and blessings which the Most High God has given that nation.

## ROMANS 14:5-6

„One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks“.

Many have questions about this passage as it seems to say that it makes no difference to God which days we keep holy.

1. Actually, these verses do not concern any days which must be kept holy. This is proved by the context of the entire chapter.
2. Paul admonished the saints at Rome to receive the „*weak in the faith*“ and not to sit in judgment of them (Romans 14:1). Some of those recently converted, not yet having grown strong in the faith, refused to eat meat and subsisted mainly on vegetables.
3. Paul explains why in another one of his letters. Most of the available meat had been offered to idols. Some gentiles who had been converted and had come out of idolatry still held some superstitious beliefs. They thought that idols actually had power over their lives. Therefore, „*some with conscience of the idol*“ ate meat „*as a thing offered unto an idol*“ (1 Corinthians 8:7).
4. But why did Paul break into his dissertation about eating meat or refraining from eating it and mention „*day*“? Notice the answer in the New King James translation of this passage:

„One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks“ (Romans 14:5-6).

5. Not only were there weak converts who were afraid of eating meat offered to idols, but there were others who customarily abstained from a particular food – they practiced a semi-fast or abstained from foods on certain days. Others regarded all days alike as far as eating was concerned.
6. The whole matter involved abstention on particular days. The question was, „To eat or not to eat!“ It was merely a question of the days upon which many voluntarily abstained from certain foods. Paul was not referring to God's Holy Days, and there is nothing here referring to the Sabbath.
7. Jesus said that we should fast before God and not be seen or let it be known by others unnecessarily (Matthew 6:16). But Jews and gentiles both practiced semifasts on particular days of each week or month. The Jews customarily fasted „twice in the week“ (Luke 18:12). They also fasted during certain months (Zechariah 7:4-7). The Jews were divided on the matter. The gentiles also were divided over when to abstain from certain foods. These things are mentioned in Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*.
8. In God's sight, it does not matter when one abstains or fasts – but it does matter that we do it with a right heart. Paul wanted the brethren to live at peace with one another and not argue or judge each other over their human opinions.
9. The Bible elsewhere teaches very plainly which days God made holy and commands us to keep holy (Leviticus 23).

## **ROMANS 16:16**

„Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you“.

Some wonder about the practice of greeting one another with a „holy kiss“, as is mentioned several times in the New Testament.

1. In the days of the apostle Paul, it was common in some areas for people to greet one another with a kiss. This custom is still present in much of the world. It was neither a law nor a command from God; it was merely a customary method of salutation.
2. In much of the Western societies, it is more acceptable to greet one another with a hand shake. Shaking hands in greetings might be regarded as the equivalent of the „holy kiss“.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-3

„Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?“

Many have questions about exercising one's legal rights. Although the Bible mentions court action, it does so mostly in a negative light.

1. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for going to court to settle differences between brethren (1 Corinthians 6:1-6).
2. Disputes involving those who are not members of the Church of God, of course, must be settled elsewhere. In the world, that is usually in a court of law. Romans 13 shows that God has allowed the government of this world to maintain law and order and to punish crime. Matters involving the laws of this world, therefore, can be settled in the world's courts. It is not wrong to use the protection of the law.
3. Even so, Jesus gave us some words of wisdom concerning lawsuits. For example, if we have wronged someone or have caused someone to be injured, we are advised to settle the issue fairly before we get dragged into court and a judgment is rendered against us (Matthew 5:25-26). Obviously, if we cannot settle a matter and a suit results, we must defend ourselves legally. If the final judgment is against us, we are counseled not only to pay the penalty, but to do so in a non-begrudging manner (Matthew 5:40). We must not have a hard-bitten, quarrelsome attitude of resistance and griping, as is common in this world. Rather, we are commanded to guide our lives by the Law of love.
4. Most of the time, a person who applies the teachings of the Bible will be able to settle any differences without going to court. God looks on our hearts and is concerned with the attitude we have in these matters – whether of love toward others or of selfishness and concern only for ourselves.

5. God offers wisdom and guidance to those who seek Him and obey His Commandments (Psalms 111:10, Proverbs 1:7, James 1:5-7). Certainly, one ought to pray wholeheartedly for God's help in resolving difficulties peaceably. God is able to make even our enemies to be at peace with us if our ways please Him (Proverbs 16:7).

## **1 CORINTHIANS 6:19**

„What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?“

Many have a question concerning donating one's body for medical research after death.

1. The Bible is silent regarding this topic. There is no scriptural proof one way or the other. Therefore, as with other issues, whether or not to donate one's body organs for scientific research must be a personal decision based on the individual's conscience and understanding.
2. We need to keep in mind that medical science does not have the best reputation for how organs and tissues were obtained for study and how they were used. Through the centuries, the scientific community has had to battle much superstition and false belief. Nevertheless, if a person wishes to contribute to the betterment of mankind in this way, that would be his or her own decision.
3. Even though donating one's body for furthering medical research is a personal decision that violates no biblical laws, many people – rightly so - find this practice to be abhorrent. Not only should one not violate his own conscience, but the feelings and conscience of family members should also be taken into consideration. The practice of love would compel us to avoid offense when we can.



## 1 CORINTHIANS 8:13

„Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend“.

This verse is quoted to prove that Paul did not eat meat and was a vegetarian.

1. As shown in 1 Corinthians 8:4, Paul was talking about those meats offered in sacrifice unto idols.
2. Paul showed that followers of Christ know an idol is nothing and that there is only one God (1 Corinthians 8:4). But some of the brethren who were new and weak ate the meat still thinking the god was in the meat or that it had special significance since it had been offered to the idol. Because of this, their conscience was being defiled.
3. 1 Corinthians 8:10 shows some may have been eating meat in the temple or were close to doing so. They would not worship there, but they could get a cheap meal there, something like a church supper. This led the others who were weak to feel bold to go also into the temple to eat meat. But they still ate the meat with the consciousness that it had been offered to an idol.
4. This was causing the weak brother to perish (verse 11).
5. Paul condemned the whole idea of going into the temple to eat meat as sin against the brethren and Christ (verse 12). Later, in the same letter (1 Corinthians 10:19-23), Paul shows that though the idol is nothing, there is a demon spirit behind it, and that spirit permeates the idol's temple or false church as well. Therefore, Paul said they should never fellowship with demons, which they would be doing by eating meat in the temple. In 1 Corinthians 10:21, Paul told them they cannot be partakers of God's table and the table of demons. Acts 15:29 shows a command from James to all the Church to abstain from meat offered to idols.
6. Paul condemned the idea of eating meat in the temple and their flaunting of their knowledge and liberty before those who were weak

and didn't yet understand, not the eating of meat per se. In 1 Corinthians 8:13, Paul is saying that if eating meat would make my brother to offend as their eating meat in the temple would cause their brothers to sin, then he wouldn't eat the meat.

7. The fact is that Paul did eat meat, and he condemned vegetarianism as a doctrine of demons (1 Timothy 4:1-3). That, of course, doesn't mean that one's choice to live without meat would be wrong since the health benefits of vegetarian life style are well known. However, it is a matter of persona choice, not a biblical commandment.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 10:27

„If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake“.

Some say this verse means that if you are invited to dinner and are served unclean meats such as pork, you should eat it without question to avoid offending your host.

1. Did God here make an exception to His Law? Are there circumstances under which it is all right – even advisable – to eat unclean meats? The context has nothing to do with clean or unclean meats, but with meat offered to idols (1 Corinthians 10:19, 28). If one wants to take this verse out of context, then if your host puts cyanide, razor blades or a bowl of acid in front of you, you should eat it, lest you offend him. This is, of course, ridiculous.
2. The Corinthians, converted from pagan idolatry, came from a society in which sacrificing to various idols was a daily way of life. Those offerings were sacrificed in the pagan temples continually, and the meat was usually eaten by the person who brought it.
3. Often, however, not all the meat was consumed. Each day the priests were left with a surplus. Not willing to miss a chance to turn a quick profit, they sold the extra meat to local butcher shops – called „shambles“ – where it was sold to the public. This is where the problems arose.
4. Paul had taught the converts at Corinth not to become involved in pagan rituals or sacrifices (1 Corinthians 10:14-21). The followers of Christ should have no connection with such idolatrous practices.
5. But some questioned eating the leftover sacrificial meat sold in the butcher shops. How were the followers of Christ to tell the difference between ordinary meat and that which came from pagan altars? And if you were invited to a friend’s home, how could you be sure the host wasn’t serving „defiled“ meat?

6. Paul explained that the idol was just wood and stone (1 Corinthians 10:19). The meat offered to it was just meat. The sin would be in actually participating in a pagan ceremony (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).
7. Therefore, Paul told the Corinthians to stop worrying and to go ahead and buy their meat from the meat markets without asking whether it had been sacrificed to idols (verse 25). It didn't matter where the meat came from as long as it was good meat.
8. The same principle applied to eating at the home of a friend. It did not matter where the meat came from or what had happened to it. Meat was meat – regardless. As long as it was clean meat, it was all right to eat. That is why Paul said, *„If any of those who do not believe invites you to dinner, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you“* (verse 27, New King James Version).
9. When Paul wrote *„whatever“*, he was referring to any clean meat which either had or had not been offered in sacrifice to an idol. Paul's statements have nothing to do with the question of clean versus unclean meat. He was not claiming God's dietary Laws were done away. He was simply showing that it was all right to eat clean meat which had once been part of a sacrifice to an idol.
10. You usually would not have to ask whether or not what you are eating is pork; you can usually discern that. The true meaning is that if the followers of Christ to whom Paul was writing went to an unconverted person's house for a meal, they didn't have to ask him if the meat he served them had been offered to an idol. Idols are nothing to true Christians, and whether or not the meat had been offered to an idol is of no importance.
11. Paul did add one warning, however. He said to ask *„no question for conscience's sake“* (verse 27). In other words, don't ask the host where the meat came from. It is better to ignore that matter, since it makes no difference anyway. If the follower of Christ questioned the host about the meat, and then ate it, the host might be led to think that his Christian guest was compromising his belief. Others present might be left with the impression that idol worship is not so bad in the

eyes of a true Christian. If someone volunteers the information that the meat is „tainted“, then, in consideration of that person’s conscience, the follower of Christ should refrain from eating it.

12. However, if the host or someone else brought up the subject and told the followers of Christ the meat was offered in sacrifice to an idol (and did so in a way that led the hearers to believe the speaker thought the hearers should not eat it), they should refuse – not because it harmed them, but because of the conscience of the other person. This might cause the other person to think that idol worship was all right, or cause him to think they were hypocrites for claiming to be the followers of Christ and appearing to worship the idol by eating meat sacrificed to it (1 Corinthians 10:28).
13. The context of this chapter concerns whether or not it is permissible for a follower of Christ to eat meat that had been offered to idols. The whole topic of discussion is whether or not to eat meats previously offered to idols, not clean and unclean meats. Unclean meats is not the subject under discussion and is not even mentioned. As other parts of God’s Word show, unclean meats should never be eaten (Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14).

## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:5

„But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven“.

This verse is used by some to substantiate the idea that every woman who is a follower of Christ should wear a veil or hat when she prays.

1. This scripture is not talking about hats or veils. The subject in question is hair. *„But if a woman has long hair, it is glory to her: for her HAIR is given for a covering“* (1 Corinthians 11:5). Notice: Paul, under inspiration, speaks of LONG HAIR as the „covering“ or veil – not some hat, or piece of cloth.
2. In 1 Corinthians 11:6, Paul discusses various lengths of hair. Four lengths are mentioned:
  - a. Not covered
  - b. Shorn,
  - c. Shaven, and
  - d. Covered.

Shaven designates a totally bald head. Shorn hair is very short-cropped hair as when a sheep is shorn. Hair that is not a “covering” is short hair. Hair that is a covering is long hair – it should be stylish, attractive, and feminine – not a masculine cut. This, of course, refers to the length, not the style, so that long hair can be worn up on top of the head or in a French roll or bun even though it might appear shorter.

3. In the setting of verse 5 by itself, a veil just doesn’t fit. What does a veil have to do with being shaven? Rather, Paul is saying that if a woman is going to have short-cropped hair she might as well go all the way and shave herself bald.
4. To further show that this chapter is dealing with hair lengths, not veils, let us consider 1 Corinthians 11:4 and 1 Corinthians 11:14. Verse 4 says that if a man has his head covered when he prays, he is

dishonoring his head who is Jesus Christ. Verse 14 shows that it is a shame for a man to have long hair.

5. 1 Corinthians 11:10 shows the purpose of long hair on a woman. This verse should be rendered as it is in the margin: "For this cause ought the woman to have a covering in sign that she is under the power of her husband". Long hair is a sign that a woman is willing to be in subjection to a man, and that she acknowledges the need for protection by angels.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 11:6-16**

Some wonder whether or not a woman should wear a covering on her head in church.

1. The Church of God teaches that a woman does not need to wear a hat, a veil, or any other type of head covering in order to attend its church services.
2. These are differing points of view expressed in commentaries on whether the apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:5-15, was referring to a woman's long hair or to a veil or other head covering associated with contemporary standards of honor. In either case, it is agreed in the Church of God that this scripture does not enjoin the wearing of hats or veils today.
3. The Church of God does recognize, however, that dress styles and matters of honor are not the same in every country or society around the world. Whenever a follower of Christ is a guest of a community in which these standards differ from those of his or her own society, care should be taken not to give any unnecessary offense in the matters of style of dress and deportment.



## 1 CORINTHIANS 11:26

„For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come“.

Many have misinterpreted this verse as if to say that you „may partake of the Lord's Supper as often as you please“.

1. This verse says: „For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup...” (1 Corinthians 11:26).
2. It does not say „take it as often as you please“! It says, „as often“ as we observe the Lord's Supper we „proclaim the Lord's death till He comes“. Jesus commanded, „*This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me*“ (1 Corinthians 11:26).
3. How often should that be? Christ is our Passover, sacrificed for us. He was sacrificed on the exact day of the year that the Passover lambs always had been slain. As the Old Testament Passover commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egypt, a symbol of sin, so the Passover of the New Testament commemorates Jesus Christ's death and our deliverance from sin.
4. Therefore, in remembrance of the Lord's death, the Passover of Lord's Supper is to be taken annually on the anniversary of the great event it commemorates. Jesus instituted this New Testament ordinance on the eve of His death. It was the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the first month (Abib) of the Hebrew calendar.
5. Following Jesus' instruction, the followers of Christ are to observe the Passover of the New Testament on Abib 14. His Church was to continue to observe the 14<sup>th</sup> of Abib (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). The symbols of the Passover of the New Testament, commonly called the Lord's Supper, were unleavened bread, representing Christ's body, which was broken for use, and wine, representing Christ's blood.
6. Jesus' body is represented by the bread. „*I am the bread of life*“ (John 6:48). His blood is symbolized by the wine. „*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*“

(Matthew 26:28). Paul explains, *„The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?“* (1 Corinthians 10:16).

7. How important is it to partake of the New Testament Passover? It is a question of life and death, according to Christ. He proclaimed in no uncertain terms:

*„Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him“* (John 6:53-56).

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:34

„Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law“.

Some wonder about the practice of ordaining women to the ministry.

1. The Church of God follows the example in the New Testament concerning of deaconesses. In Romans 16:1 the word „*servant*“ in the original Greek is „diakonos“. „*Diakonos*“ is translated „*deacon*“ or „*deaconess*“. It means attendant or servant. Both deacons and deaconesses serve the Church by assisting in non-preaching functions (Acts 6:2-3).
2. Based on the practice of the New Testament Church and the teachings of the apostle Paul, the Church of God does not ordain women as ministers (1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:12).
3. The important role of women in the Church is amply demonstrated throughout the Scriptures. The Bible also includes instructive examples from the lives of outstanding women. Consider Deborah's leadership, Hannah's prayer, Miriam's song, the teaching of Lamuel's mother, the accounts of Ruth and Esther in the Old Testament and of Mary, Priscilla, Dorcas and Phoebe in the New Testament. In today's Church, women contribute in such areas as directing choirs, instructing youth programs, various management roles and writing for Church publications.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 15:29

„Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?“

Many wonder about the practice of being baptized for those who have died unbaptized (i.e. „baptism for the dead“).

1. The inspired New Testament Church did not follow this practice, and the apostle Paul did not teach it. This custom was introduced into the professing Christian world about A.D. 150 by Marcion, a man who created his own religion and established his own church in Rome in A.D. 144.
2. The Bible clearly shows that before a person may be baptized, he or she must first repent (Acts 2:38) and believe (Mark 16:16, Acts 16:31, 33). The dead are not able to repent or believe, because *„the dead know not any thing“* (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Baptism is for the living. Baptism is a symbol whereby the living acknowledge their sins, figuratively die with Christ in a watery grave, and rise out of that watery grave to live in a new (righteous) life through Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:4, 8:9; Galatians 2:20).
3. Baptism is also a symbol of the resurrection. To rise up out of the watery grave is to acknowledge belief in the resurrection of the dead (Romans 6). To surrender one’s life to Christ now, to crucify the self now, to be baptized – all this is foolish unless there is a resurrection of the dead. If there were no hope of the resurrection, life could be summed up this way: *„Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die“* (compare with 1 Corinthians 15:32).
4. 1 Corinthians 15:29 now becomes clear. The subject of the entire 15th chapter is the resurrection. Paul cites the example of those who were baptized as one proof of the resurrection. Their action symbolized their hope that they would live again. The resurrection is the hope of the dead.

*„Why were they baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not?“*

This seems to be Paul's question in the King James Version. But, this verse is not correctly translated from the original inspired Greek.

5. Paul is not talking about being baptized „in the place of“ the dead, or „on behalf“ of the dead, or „for“ the dead. The Greek word translated „for“ is „huper“. This word has several meanings and can be translated „above“, „over“, „instead of“, „for the realization of“, or „for the hope of“, depending upon the context in which it is used. Notice the following example.
6. Paul declared, „*For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure*“ (Philippians 2:13). The Greek word translated „of“ in this verse is „huper“, the same word used in 1 Corinthians 15:29. In Philippians 2:13, „huper“ cannot mean „instead of“. It would be senseless to say, „For it is God which works in you both to will and to do instead of His good pleasure“! Correctly translated, this verse says,

„God works in you both to will and to do for the realization of His good pleasure“.

This is translation given in *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*. What is God's good pleasure? „*It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom*“, declared Jesus in Luke 12:32. God works in us „in the hope of“ giving us His Kingdom!

7. Thus, the Greek word „huper“ in 1 Corinthians 15:29, according to the context, should be translated „for the hope of“. Notice the verse again:

„Else what shall they do which are baptized for the hope of the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the hope of the dead?“

8. What is the hope of the dead? It is the resurrection! Paul is writing about baptism; baptism illustrates the hope of the resurrection. Baptism – arising out of a watery grave – is a symbol of the hope of the dead, which is the hope of the resurrection. This verse, then, has

nothing to do with the false doctrine of baptism on behalf of the unbaptized dead.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 16:20**

Some wonder about the practice of greeting one another with a „holy kiss“, as is mentioned several times in the New Testament.

In the days of the apostle Paul, it was common in some areas for people to greet one another with a kiss. This custom is still present in much of the world. It was neither a law nor a command from God; it was merely a customary method of salutation.

In much of the Western societies, it is more acceptable to greet one another with a hand shake. Shaking hands in greetings might be regarded as the equivalent of the „holy kiss“.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 6:2

„(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)“

Millions believe that this time (today) is the only day of salvation.

1. The original Greek text did not contain the word „the“. Neither did the original Hebrew text in Isaiah 49:8 from which Paul quoted. This verse should be translated as is in Isaiah 49:8 in the King James Version:

*„Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee...“ (Isaiah 49:8, King James Version).*

„ (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now (is) accepted time; behold, now (is) the day of salvation.)“ (2 Corinthians 6:2, King James Version).

2. Combining Isaiah 49:8 with 2 Corinthians 6:2, a better rendition of 2 Corinthians 6:2 would be:

„I have heard thee, in A day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is AN accepted time; behold, now is A day of salvation“.

3. If the word „the“ was left in, would it refer only to the time Paul wrote it? Since Paul quoted from Isaiah, would Isaiah’s time be the only day of salvation? Obviously not, or no one before or after those times could obtain salvation.
4. For all of those that have been called by God and received the gift of His Holy Spirit, the time in which they lived was their only day of salvation, their only chance. For those of us today that have repented, been baptized, and received God’s Holy Spirit, this is our day of salvation.



5. There is a time table for when people will receive salvation. Jesus Christ was first (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). After Christ are those that are His at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23, 1 Peter 4:17).
6. What about all the others that have not been called? After Adam and Eve chose the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God allowed a period for man to experiment and try his ways to find peace and happiness. He then cut off access to the tree of life, His Holy Spirit, to all men except the few He has called in this age.
7. Without God's Holy Spirit, ancient Israel was blinded spiritually (Deuteronomy 29:2-4, Isaiah 25:7) and allowed to suffer the penalties of the wrong way so they might know He is God (Ezekiel 20:26). He also gave the Gentiles over to a reprobate mind because they did not like to retain Him in their knowledge (Romans 1:28-29). God has „concluded them all (all mankind) in unbelief that He might have mercy on all“ (Romans 11:32). He has allowed Satan, the god of this world, to deceive mankind (Revelation 12:9, 20:10; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 11:3).
8. Jesus Christ spoke in parables so those who had been called by the Father could understand, but the truth would be hidden from those not called (Matthew 13:10-15, Mark 4:10-12, Luke 8:10, John 12:40, Acts 28:26-27, Isaiah 6:9).
9. Those who live into the millennial rule of Jesus Christ here on this earth will then be given their chance at salvation. „*The people that walked in darkness (blindness) have seen a great light (spiritual blindness removed)*“ and Christ's government and peace will increase on the earth (Isaiah 9:2-7). Christ will pour out His Spirit on ALL flesh (Acts 2:17), and the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Eternal (Isaiah 11:9).
10. The vast majority, the rest of the dead, will not live again until 1000 years are finished (Revelation 20:5, 11-12). This will include even the residents of Sodom (Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24; Luke 10:12). Ezekiel 37:11-14 gives a good picture of how this resurrection will be accomplished for all people. They will live in the physical flesh for a

period of time sufficient to be given an opportunity to receive salvation.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14

„Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?“

Some have used this scripture to prove that followers of Christ should not become more involved in the communities as lights to the world, or to serve others outside the Church.

1. There is no way that 2 Corinthians 6:14 can apply to serving and interacting in a positive way with people who are not of our fellowship. If this were the case, then Jesus Christ Himself would have violated the verse in question.
2. Jesus ate with sinners, spent time with them, reached out to them, healed them and preached His message (of the coming Kingdom of God) to them. In becoming more like Christ and exhibiting Christ-like love, we should follow His example in being lights to the world.
3. Therefore, 2 Corinthians 6:14 is clearly not a prohibition of associating with unbelievers. Rather, it is a command not to be in mental agreement and harmony with people how are not like-minded with us in the faith of Jesus Christ.
4. Let us notice the analogy of „*yoked together*“. This involves far more than serving people in our communities. Oxen yoked together move forward with the same purpose. Paul warns the followers of Christ in Corinth not to be in any mental concordance that leads away from God's ways. Obviously, we can do good works of serving the community without our minds being in harmony with ungodly principles (see Romans 8:4-9).

## **2 CORINTHIANS 13:12**

„Greet one another with an holy kiss“.

Some wonder about the practice of greeting one another with a „holy kiss“, as is mentioned several times in the New Testament.

In the days of the apostle Paul, it was common in some areas for people to greet one another with a kiss. This custom is still present in much of the world. It was neither a law nor a command from God; it was merely a customary method of salutation.

In much of the Western societies, it is more acceptable to greet one another with a hand shake. Shaking hands in greetings might be regarded as the equivalent of the „holy kiss“.

### **GALATIANS 3:13**

„Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree“.

Some have wondered what is meant by being „*hung on a tree*“. Was Jesus hung on a tree? Or was He crucified?

1. The New Testament uses the Greek word for tree, „xylon“, only five times to refer to Christ's crucifixion on a cross. The references are found in Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29, Galatians 3:12 and 1 Peter 2:24.
2. Most of the time, the Greek noun „stauros“ (stake) and verb „stauroo“ (crucify) describe Jesus Christ's death. These two words appear 74 times in the New Testament.
3. One of the five appearances of „xylon“ occurs in Galatians 3:13. In this case Paul was quoting a phrase found in Deuteronomy 21:23.
4. Paul was referring to the Torah's prescribed form of execution by stoning for certain offenses such as blasphemy and idolatry. After being stoned to death, the person's body was hung on a tree to show the individual was under God's curse. To the Jews, hanging on a tree had become a metaphor for an apostate, a blasphemer or a person deemed under God's curse. That is exactly how the Jews viewed Jesus, of course (John 5:18, John 10:33, Matthew 26:63-65).
5. Their attitude would explain why Peter and Paul, on occasion, used the Greek word for „tree“ to describe Jesus' execution, even though He was crucified on a cross. Three times in the book of Acts the word tree is used to refer to Jesus' crucifixion. In these cases, it appears in Jewish context as well.
6. For example, Peter told the Jewish authorities they had killed Christ „*by hanging him on a tree*“ (Acts 5:30). Peter was denouncing them for wrongly having exposed Jesus to a humiliating death. But, said Peter, God had glorified Jesus by raising Him from the death (Acts 5:31).

7. Peter obviously did not mean to say the Jews had actually carried out a crucifixion. When Pilate suggested that the Jewish religious leaders judge Jesus, they said, *„We have no right to execute anyone“* (John 18:31).
8. Peter’s remark to the religious authorities was meant to point out something else. By clamoring to the Roman authorities for Jesus Christ’s crucifixion, it is as though they personally had hung Him on a tree as a blasphemer or criminal.
9. In any case, crucifixion of criminals was not a Jewish practice. Besides, as the *Dictionary of New Testament Theology* states, *„In Judea at the time of Jesus, sentencing to crucifixion and execution was entirely in the hands of the Roman authorities“*.
10. The Romans did not hang criminals from trees, except perhaps in exceptional cases. When they crucified, the Romans used some form of a cross – a platform that had a crossbar attached to the main vertical stake.
11. For the followers of Christ the cross has special symbolism. Jesus said: *„Anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me“* (Matthew 10:38).

He also said: *„If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily“* (Luke 9:23).

12. *„Carrying the cross“* is a meaningful analogy. When the Romans crucified an individual, the condemned man was forced to carry the crossbar, on which his body would be nailed or tied, to the execution site.
13. The suffering of the crucifixion itself made the cross a dramatic symbol of pain, distress and burden-bearing. Jesus used the cross as a symbol to portray the spiritual sacrifice required of His followers.

## **GALATIANS 3:17**

„And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect“.

Some believe that this scripture contradicts Genesis 15:13 and Acts 7:6 which mentions 430 years. Why is there a difference?

Since Galatians 3:17 states that the law was given 430 years after the covenant was made, it is evident that the 430 years began when Abraham was 99 years old and ended the year of the exodus of his descendant out of Egypt in 1443 B.C. and their appearance at Sinai. The law was given on the day of Pentecost 1443 B.C., soon after Israel left Egypt.

The 430-year period begins with the confirming of the covenant (1873 B.C.) and ends with Exodus (1443 B.C.).

Genesis 17:1-2 shows that Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made.

Israel left Egypt 430 years after the covenant was made with Abraham. Exodus 12:40 in the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Septuagint Version (LXX) reads as follows: „The time that the sons of Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan (was) 430 years“.

The dwelling period of Israel in Egypt extended from Jacob's bringing his family into Egypt during the famine to Israel's Exodus: 1682-1443 B.C., or 239 years.

Galatians 3:17 shows that the law was given 430 years after God made the covenant with Abraham. Paul, therefore, accepted the LXX chronology. This chronology is also supported by the genealogy of Exodus 6:14-20 which allows only four generations between Jacob and Moses, and there is reason to think that the genealogical table has been abridged.

The 430 years mentioned in Exodus 12:40 began with the confirming of the covenant God made with Abraham – when Abraham was 99 years old in 1873 B.C. Notice Genesis 17:1-10:

*„And when Abram was 99 years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the almighty God; walk before me, and be you perfect... and Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations... and I will establish my covenant between me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you...”*

Genesis 21:1-5 continues the story. Sarah finally became pregnant at the „set time” (Genesis 21:2). This physical evidence fully confirmed the covenant, and Isaac, the son of the promise, was born in 1872 B.C. when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5).

Genesis 15:3 states that Abraham’s seed (Acts 7:6) – not Abraham – was to be „a stranger in a land (that is) not theirs... and they shall afflict them 400 years”.

This would be the length of time from the death of Abraham (76 years after the covenant was made – compare Genesis 25:7 with Genesis 17:1) through the 40 years’ wandering to the division of the land when the children of Israel received their inheritance under the direction of Joshua. This occurred 6 years after they entered the land of Canaan (see Numbers 10:11 and Joshua 14:7-10).

The 400 years begins with the death of Abraham (1797 B.C.) and ends when Israel divided the Promised land (1397 B.C.)

Abraham lived to be 175 years old (Genesis 25:7). 76 years after the covenant was made.

Abraham was 99 years old when the covenant was made (Genesis 17:1-2).

Abraham's seed was oppressed 400 years (Acts 7:6) in a land not theirs (Genesis 15:13).

The Promised land was divided in 1397 B.C. (Joshua 13:7). This occurred 45 years after Joshua spied out the land (Joshua 14:7-10). The spies were sent out in 1442 B.C., one year after leaving Egypt (Numbers 1:1, 13:1).



## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE 430 YEARS AND THE 400 YEARS:**

Birth of Abraham – 1972 B.C.

Covenant confirmed when Abraham was 99 years old – 1873 B.C.

Death of Abraham – 1797 B.C.

Exodus (Law given at Pentecost) – 1443 B.C.

Period between 1873 B.C., when covenant was confirmed with Abraham to the Law given at Pentecost in 1443 B.C. is 430 years.

Period of wandering of Israel from the Pentecost when the Law was given in 1443 B.C. to the entering into the Promised Land in 1403 B.C. is 40 years.

Period of 6 years during which Israel divided the land brings us to 1397 B.C.

From death of Abraham in 1797 B.C. to the year when division of the Promised land was completed in 1397 B.C. there are 400 years.

## GALATIANS 4:10

„Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years“.

Many use this verse to show that Paul did away with the Holy Days.

1. Paul wrote: *„But... when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God... how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons (times) and years“* (Galatians 4:8-10, New King James version).
2. Did Paul mention God's Holy Days, such as the Days of Unleavened Breads, the Feast of Tabernacles or the Sabbath? No. He said, *„Days and months and seasons (times) and years“* – something altogether different.
3. Paul began the fourth chapter by addressing the Jews. He wrote „we“, because Paul himself was a Jew (Galatians 4:3). But in Galatians 4:6, he began addressing the non-Jewish converts. He did not say „we“, but „you“. He said that there was a time when they did not know God (Galatians 4:8). The Jews knew God, but the gentiles (non-Jews) had not known Him before they heard the Gospel. Jesus said to the gentile Samaritan woman: *„You“* – the gentiles – *„worship what you do not know; we“* – the Jews – *„know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews“* (John 4:22).
4. The converts to whom Paul is now writing were not Jews. They were gentiles by birth. In times past they did not know God and were cut off from Him (Ephesians 2:13). They had been serving demons and idols, not the living God. False teachers were coming among them, perverting the Gospel, beguiling them to turn again to their former ways. They were leaving the Gospel to return to *„days and months and seasons (times) and years“*. They couldn't be returning to God's Holy Days. They did not keep them before Paul preached about them.

5. In Leviticus 19:26 and Deuteronomy 18:10, 14, we find that Moses, according to the command of God, ordered the people not to „observe times“. To „observe times“ originally was a heathen practice often attached to the heavenly bodies, especially in determining the pagan calendar and the heathen religious seasons.
6. The Catholic bishop Chrysostom, who lived in the fourth century, admits that these superstitious times Paul forbids were pagan customs practiced by „Christians“ in his day, as in the days of old. He says, „Many were superstitiously addicted to divination... In the celebration of these times (they) set up lamps in the marketplace, and crown their doors with garlands“ (from Bingham's *Antiquities of the Christian Church*, pages 1123-1124).
7. Besides times, the Greeks observed special days in honor of the dead. „The rites took place on the... unlucky days accompanied by complete idleness and cessation of business“ (Hutton Webster, *Rest Days*, page 79).
8. These gentile Galatians were returning to the customs of doing penance on the old pagan days. Paul denounced this vain and abominable practice. We are not to learn the way of the heathen (Jeremiah 10:1-2 and Deuteronomy 12:29-32).
9. In connection with the old pagan system were many days observed as idolatrous festivals of penance.
  - a. These days were consecrated to deities of the state religious cults and were „unlucky“ because of the supposed influence of the gods. They were set aside as periods of penance because they were „regarded as unsuitable for many purposes, both public and private: for battles, levies, sacred rites, journeys and marriages. We are told that they owed their unlucky quality to the pronouncement of the Senate and pontiffs“ (Ibid., page 17).
  - b. As many as one third of the old Greek and Roman calendars were marked as „unlawful for judicial and political business... on which

the state expected the citizens to abstain from their private business and labour" (Ibid., pages 304-305).

10. No wonder Paul spoke of „*days*". And how many religious and nonreligious people still have similar beliefs about certain days, such as unlucky Friday the 13th?
11. Notice that Paul also condemns the custom of observing „*months, and... years*". Certain months of the year were considered sacred to the Greek gods Apollo (April, October), Artemis (April), Bacchus (January), Zeus (February, June) and many others. Also, entire years were set aside every two and four years. During these special years, national idolatrous feasts were held and the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean and Pythian games were celebrated. Every one of these was connected with idolatrous worship and ceremony.
12. In short, then, Paul was forbidding gentile converts to return to these heathen practices of observing days, months, times and years. At the same time, he was not forbidding them to keep God's Holy Days!

## EPHESIANS 2:8-9

„For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast“.

Various people often use this verse to say that we don't need works, because we are saved by grace through faith and not by works. By „works“ a person might mean the Law in general; or just the Sabbath, tithing and the Holy Days; or good works of charity in general.

1. Preliminary thoughts: we must remember that although people say you don't have to keep the law, they really don't mean this literally. Do they mean you can kill or steal or murder with impunity? No, of course not. What they do mean is that you can break the Sabbath, not tithe and not keep God's Holy Days, etc. We are to remember this when we explain such verses so, if need be, we can point out this inconsistent and hypocritical stance toward the Law.
2. This scripture shows that we are saved by faith – not works – but it does not in any way show that works are not needed. In fact, the very next verse – verse 10 – shows that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus „unto good works“. This is the purpose for which we are alive.
3. Salvation comes as a gift from God. We could never earn salvation in a million lifetimes of perfect obedience. Many scriptures prove that obedience is a condition we must meet before God will give us, as a free gift, salvation. „If you will enter into life“, said Christ, „keep the commandments“ (Matthew 9:17). God gives His holy spirit only to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). If any man says he knows God and does not keep His commandments, he is a liar (1 John 2:4).
4. Faith and works go together. Faith without works is dead, and faith is perfected by our works (James 2:20-22).

## PHILIPPIANS 1:23-24

„For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you“.

Paul wanted to depart and be with Christ in heaven?

1. Paul did not expect to go to heaven and receive his reward immediately at death! Rather, in 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Paul explained that he would be with Christ at the day of Christ's appearing – His second coming!
2. On the day Christ returns, the dead in Christ who have been sleeping in the dust of the earth (Daniel 12:2) will be resurrected to life (1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians 15:52). This is the time Paul will receive his reward from Jesus Christ (Isaiah 40:10). He did not expect to go to a "heavenly reward" immediately upon death!
3. Yet, Paul said he was *„willing to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord“*. Why? Paul's answer is found in 2 Corinthians 5:2 where he said that *„we earnestly groan to be clothed upon with our house from heaven“* - the spiritual body he expected to receive at the resurrection. Paul yearned to be *„delivered from this vile body of flesh“*, to end the difficulties and burdens of this life by death (Romans 7:24, Philippians 1:24). *„To die“*, he said, *„is gain“* because the next moment of his consciousness would be the resurrection!
4. Now Paul's statement in Philippians is clear. He was willing to remain alive for the sake of the Philippians who needed him as a teacher and apostle, even though he desired personally to be delivered by death from the troubles of this life. Paul, though dead and buried in the dust of the earth, would be earth, would be AWAITING THE RESURRECTION and ultimately be with Christ at His second coming to this earth!

## PHILIPPIANS 3:20

„For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ“.

Some wonder if a Christian should vote.

1. Those who are converted to God's Way of life are ambassadors for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). As ambassadors and citizens of the Kingdom of God, the followers of Christ are no longer to be involved in man's system of government.
2. Let us notice: *„For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ“* (Philippians 3:20, New King James Version).
3. Christ taught that His Kingdom was not of this world. Consequently, His servants have no part in, but rather, are called out of this world. See John 18:36 and Revelation 18:4.
4. The Bible reveals that it is God who sets up rulers and removes them according to His will (Daniel 4:17). The governments holding power do so only as long as God allows. While they do, the followers of Christ are instructed to be subject to them (Romans 13:1). If, however, there should be a conflict between the Law of God and the laws of man, then, of course, we are to obey God rather than man (see Acts 5:29).
5. Jesus Christ said He will return to set up God's Kingdom, a world government with righteousness and justice. We are admonished to pray for His Kingdom to be established on the earth (Matthew 6:9-10), because then and only then will this world's problems be solved.

## COLOSSIANS 1:18

„And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence“.

Some say this verse teaches that Christ was „born again“.

1. „Firstborn“ is a title to an only child. Christ is the head of the Body, the one with the preeminence. „Firstborn“ shows preeminency.
2. Israel was chosen, the nation had a special owner apart from all the nations. Exodus 4:22, *„Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD: Israel is My son, My firstborn“*.
3. „Firstborn“ or „Firstbegotten“ shows exalted position, pre-eminence. It is a title of honor not of order or rank. Hebrews 1:6, *„But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him“*.



## COLOSSIANS 2:14

„Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross“.

Christ blotted out the Law and nailed it to His cross?

1. No, Christ did not blot out the Law. He blotted out the „HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES“ (same verse).
2. This could not refer to the Law of God. God's Law is not „against us“ and „contrary to us“ (same verse). *„The law is holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good“ (Romans 7:12)*. David said, *„O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day“ (Psalm 119:97)*. God's Laws don't hurt us - they help us. *„Moreover by them is thy servant warned: „and IN KEEPING OF THEM IS GREAT REWARD““ (Psalm 19:11)*.
3. The context explains what „ordinances“ Paul is referring to: *„Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ“ (Colossians 2:8)*.

*„Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the RUDIMENTS OF THE WORLD, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men?“ (Colossians 2:20-22)*.

What kind of ordinances? „Touch not, taste not, handle not“. In other words: asceticism, Stoicism, Catholicism, meatless Fridays, vegetarianism. It certainly doesn't mean the Ten Commandments. It can't mean the Feasts where people ate, drank and danced vigorously. It can't mean the sacrificial law - the priest had a great portion of meat and had to handle and slaughter animals. This was a lusty way of life.

4. The Greek words for HANDWRITING OF ORDINANCES are „cheirographon tois dogmasin“. This means the note of guilt from keeping man's laws. CHEIROGRAPHON, according to the Greek Lexicon by Parkhurst means: *„Anything written with the hand...a bond, note of hand...it signifies a sort of note under a man's hand, whereby he obliges himself to the payment of any debt.“* In other words, a note of debt or a note of guilt.

In the same Lexicon by Parkhurst one of the meanings given for TOIS is „from“. DOGMASIN simply refers to law (see Strong's Concordance). In this case it refers to the laws of men as proved in point 3 above.

5. The note of guilt is OUR SINS. We have sinned by obeying the laws and customs of men rather than God. What Christ blotted out is OUR SINS.
6. The Law was not nailed to the cross - Christ was (John 19:18, 20:25). He was made sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our sins were nailed to the cross in His body (1 Peter 2:24).
7. Colossians 2:15 shows what Christ defeated. It was not the Law: *„And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it“*. The principalities and powers referred to here are the same as the *„spiritual wickedness (wicked spirits) in high places“* mentioned in Ephesians 6:12 - demons.

By making possible the forgiveness of sin, Christ defeated the purpose of Satan and his demons. He made it possible for sons to be born into the God Family.

Only two things were nailed to the stake at Golgotha:

- a. The physical body of Jesus and
- b. the „note of guilt“ - the record of our sins which Christ paid for Himself in this sacrifice of His own life.

Therefore, NO LAWS of ANY kind were nailed to the stake - legal, ceremonial, sacrificial or any other!

## COLOSSIANS 2:16-17

„Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ“.

This passage is frequently cited in an effort to show what has been abolished by Christ.

1. According to that interpretation, Paul's list (*„in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days“*) is a reminder of what is no longer in force.
2. This interpretation is clearly wrong. Christ's death did not put an end to eating and drinking or to keeping Holy Days. The New Testament contains adequate references to the followers of Christ, after Christ's death and resurrection, eating and drinking. And to see how positively the New Testament speaks about God's Holy Days, one has only to read the account of what took place on the first feast of Pentecost after Christ's death. See Acts 2.
3. To fully understand this section of Scripture, we must look at it in light of its background and context. One of the reasons the apostle Paul wrote the letter to the followers of Christ at Colossae was a disturbing report he had received. The faith of some was being undermined by a heresy. Certain Jewish Christians had fallen prey to early Gnostic teachings. As a result, they contended that Jesus Christ was not the center of God's plan of salvation. They dishonored Christ by seeking to approach God another way.
4. According to them, the followers of Christ trying to reach God through Christ were presumptuous. Such followers of Christ needed to lower their view, these misguided teachers claimed, and seek the mediation of more easily accessible angelic beings to reach beyond Christ to the Supreme God (Colossians 2:18).
5. Part of this process was a measure of self-abasement – asceticism (Colossians 2:23). This included strict regulations in matters of eating and drinking, as well as burdensome do's and don'ts regarding the observance of the Holy Days, new moons and Sabbath days (Colossians 2:16, 20-21).

6. The apostle Paul had declared that such „*philosophy*“ (Colossians 2:8) was in error. It consisted of „*commandments and doctrines of men*“ (Colossians 2:22). Paul's answer to the ascetic content of the Colossian heresy is that such matters are to „*perish with the using*“. The sense of this year is similar to that conveyed by Matthew 15:17 and 1 Corinthians 6:13. There is no moral value in prohibitions enjoined for purposes of asceticism.
  
7. One can imagine how inane the Colossians heresy was in attempting to hold onto anything mentioned in Colossians 2:16. As Paul points out with logical force, what is the point of subjecting oneself to decrees of any sort after the fullness of Christ has been set aside?
  
8. In this context, the decrees or ordinances were of human origin and gave only an appearance of wisdom and knowledge. In reality, they had nothing to do with a knowledge of God's Law or God's plan of salvation, which are fully accounted for in Christ. Paul is not saying that there was no value in obeying God's Law. He is saying that any act one could care to mention – circumcision, keeping new moons, Sabbaths, etc. (Colossians 2:11-17) – cannot replace or transcend Christ. Only Christ, with His sacrifice, is able to nail every person's spiritual debts to the cross (Colossians 2:14), thus triumphing over all principalities and powers.
  
9. Whatever had power over man's spiritual life – whether an order of angels, or an ascetic principle – was already superseded by Christ. He was now the „*head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints ligaments, grows with the increase which is from God*“ (Colossians 2:19).
  
10. The judging that was going on at Colossae was misguided (Colossians 2:16). In any case, the force of this verb (to judge) is not negative; it does not mean „condemn“. Indeed, how could any member at Colossae prevent others from condemning him? The force of the above verb is that the Colossians could do something about this problem. It means, „Don't allow any to take you to task“. The matters listed, despite the claims of the Colossian heretics, could not transcend Christ who is now the body, the substance, the very center of God's plan of salvation. All else is a mere shadow that holds no value as a replacement for Christ. After all, the Colossians were members of the very Body of Christ!

11. The heretics, then, were ignorantly trying to push the church at Colossae out of the light and into shadows! Even God's Law had a „*shadow of the good things to come*“. Even so, it could not „*make those who approach (it) perfect*“ (Hebrews 10:1).
12. The Colossian heresy, then, can be seen, in context, to have been caused by Jewish Christians who had fallen prey to early Gnostic teachings. Paul, in turn, addressed this local problem directly, by centering the minds of the Colossians on the completeness and fullness in which they shared as members of the Body of Christ.
13. Jesus Christ is the total and complete way to God (Colossians 2:9-10). In Him the spiritual IOU (a document acknowledging a debt) of our sins (awkwardly translated „handwriting of requirements“ – Colossians 2:14) is blotted out. Jesus Christ transcends all (Colossians 2:15). Therefore, the followers of Christ at Colossae were not to let themselves be taken by heretical teachers concerning matters such as eating, drinking, Holy Days, new moons, and Sabbaths.
14. After all, how could such matters possibly transcend Christ? He is the body, the substance, the very center of God's plan of salvation. All else is a mere shadow that holds no value as a replacement for Him (Colossians 2:17).
15. The word „*is*“ is in italics in verse 17 and is not in the original. Therefore, this should read, „Let no man therefore judge you, - but the body of Christ“. The body of Christ is the Church of God (Colossians 1:18) and it is the Church that is our pillar and grounding in the truth (1 Timothy 3:15) and our standard, not the ideas of men.
16. The word „judge“ in verse 16 is better rendered „call you in question“. The Gentile Colossians previously knew nothing of God or of His Holy Days.
17. Paul taught the followers of Christ at Colossae to observe the Sabbath and the Holy Days, and outsiders called them in question for doing so. The ascetics in Colossae saw those in the Church eating and drinking, feasting on the Holy Days and despised them for it.
18. These Holy Days are shadows of things to come - they picture the major events in God's master plan to bring all mankind to salvation. Therefore, Paul is telling the Colossian converts to let no man call them in question for their observance of God's Holy Days.

## 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17

„Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord“.

This is one of many texts used to „prove“ heaven is the reward of the saved. Specifically, it is twisted to say that Christians will go to heaven and be there with Christ forever.

1. Since those who misunderstand this verse believe it to confirm that the reward of the saved is heaven, we should review the general subject of what God's Kingdom really is and what the reward of the saved is.
2. Paul was speaking of the resurrection of Christ's followers at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16). We will rise to meet Christ in the air – the atmosphere over this earth (verse 17). Thus we will be with the Lord.

Then what? Where do we go from there? Since we will be with Christ, the question to ask is, „Where will Christ be?“

3. Christ is coming to this earth. Zechariah 14:4 shows that on the very day mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, Christ will be standing on the Mount of Olives, which is on this earth.
4. Christ is coming with all glory and with His angels to judge all nations (Matthew 25:31-32). His saints will be given power to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 2:26-27). They will be kings and priests with Him and will reign on the earth (Revelation 5:10).

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:9-10

„In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works“.

Some use this verse to show that Christ-like women should not wear jewelry.

1. The Bible does not condemn the proper use of material things. It teaches that the material things are not sin, but it is the improper use of them that is wrong. It is the act of abuse or misuse that is a sin or violation of God's Law.
2. Paul, here, is condemning the wrong use of clothes and jewelry.
  - a. Paul says that women should adorn themselves in modest apparel. This is not speaking of the cost or quality of the material, but of the design.
  - b. Paul mentions braided hair. This refers to the custom among Greeks of intertwining god strands through the hair. Today this could apply to any outlandish hairstyle.
  - c. Paul mentions gold, pearls and costly array. This is speaking of the addition of costly or distracting and unnaturally bulky adornments which take away the natural beauty of a woman.
3. What Paul is getting across in 1 Timothy 2:10 is that a woman should not have the emphasis on physical attire but on her character.
4. 1 Peter 3:2-4 is also used to try to show the prohibition of the use of jewelry. But in 1 Peter 3:2, the word „conversation“ refers to conduct or behavior as shown in *Strong's Concordance*, or in more modern translations. As with Paul in 1 Timothy 2, Peter is here showing that a Christ-like woman's conduct should be adorned with the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit, and not with the outward

appearance of elaborate plaiting and braiding of hair. Nothing here forbids the right use of jewelry.

5. Many other scriptures show that God does not condemn the use of jewelry per se:
  - a. Exodus 3:22 shows that God instructed the Israelites to take jewels from the Egyptians and to put these jewels of silver and gold on their sons and daughters.
  - b. Genesis 24:22 shows that Abraham's servant gave earrings and bracelets to Rebekah when he came seeking a wife for Isaac.
  - c. In Ezekiel 16:11-13, God says that He figuratively bedecked Israel with earrings, bracelets, a crown, and other jewelry.
  - d. In the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11-32, God the Father is pictured as receiving back a repentant son. And in Luke 15:22, we see that he has his servants place a ring on the son's hand.
6. From these accounts we see that a modest use of jewelry is not condemned in the Bible. Only such use of jewelry as detracts from a woman's modest character is rejected. God wants us to keep our minds on the spiritual aspects of life and not physical possessions.



## 1 TIMOTHY 4:3-5

„Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer“.

Many have said that eating meat is a sin.

1. Should every creature of God made to be eaten as long as we are thankful for it? (1 Timothy 4:4).
2. Paul is writing to combat vegetarianism (or avoidance of all meat) not to combat people who might be falsely propounding a return to the law of Moses. Meat is not a sin to eat (unless it is out of the Law of God).
3. The word of God must „*sanctify*“ it and the word of God only sanctifies the clean meats of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14.
4. 1 Timothy 4:3 says we can thankfully receive meat only if we „*believe and know the truth*“. John 17:17 says that God’s word is truth hence, the Bible is our only acceptable standard for the truth. Thus, it is all right to eat meat as long as it is meat from a clean animal.

## 1 TIMOTHY 5:23

„Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities“.

Many don't understand why Paul advised Timothy to drink wine.

1. The King James version says, „Drink no longer water“, which some might take to mean do not drink any more water, but drink wine. Newer translations say, „Drink no longer only water“, which may mean Timothy did not drink any wine. He may have been timid (1 Corinthians 16:10) or overly cautious about the instructions for elders to refrain from drinking while in church, visiting people, etc. (Leviticus 10:9) and instructions to rulers not to drink while passing judgment (Proverbs 31:4). The remainder of the verse says, *„but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your often infirmities“*.

Paul advised Timothy to drink no longer only water, but to drink a little, not much, wine.

2. Timothy was an elder in the Church. Paul's instructions to Timothy for ordaining new elders and deacons said they should not be given to much wine (1 Timothy 3:3, 8). Therefore, Timothy knew he was not to drink much wine. Drinking too much is condemned in many places in the New Testament (Luke 21:34, Romans 13:13, 1 Corinthians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 6:10, Galatians 5:21, Ephesians 5:18, 1 Peter 4:3).
3. Why was Timothy advised to drink a little wine? For his stomach's sake and his frequent illnesses. Apparently, Timothy had a digestive problem which could have led to other health problems.

## HEBREWS 6:2

„Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment“.

Some don't understand the practice of „*laying on of hands*“, mentioned a number of times throughout the Bible.

1. The laying on of hands is a required act which sets individuals apart and signifies the imparting of spiritual blessings, authority and power. In the Old Testament, blessing was often conferred in this way. An example is Jacob's laying his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh to pass on blessings they were to receive from God (Genesis 48:13-20).
2. In the New Testament, a newly baptized person had hands laid on him or her for the receiving of the Holy Spirit. We see in Acts 8:17-18 that after a number in Samaria had been baptized, Peter and John „*laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And... through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given*“. Acts 19:5-6 and 2 Timothy 1:6 also refer to this practice.
3. The laying on of hands also accompanies an elder's prayer for the afflicted. We read in Acts 9:17: „*And Ananias... laying his hands on him (Paul) he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus... has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit'*“ (New King James Version).
4. Another purpose for the laying on of hands is that of ordination. An example is found in Acts 6. Here seven men became deacons when the apostles prayed and „*laid their hands on them*“ (Acts 6:6).
5. The laying on of hands, then, serves to show that God works through His ministry. This ceremony is mentioned as a doctrine in Hebrews 6:2.

## HEBREWS 7:14

„For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood“.

Many wonder whether Jesus was a Jew.

1. The word Jew is a shortened form of the old English word Judean, referring to the descendants of the patriarch Judah. In the New Testament genealogies, both Mary and Joseph are listed as descendants of Judah, through the line of David (Matthew 1 and Luke 3). Jesus was not only a descendant of Judah – He was not only a Jew – but He was of the Davidic – the kingly – line of Judah. Numerous verses refer to Jesus as the son of David.
2. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: *„It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah“* (Hebrews 7:14). In Revelation 5:5, Jesus is called the *„Lion of the tribe of Judah“*. Long before His birth, it was prophesied that Shiloh – the Messiah, the Prince of Peace – would come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10).
3. In His conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus said, *„Ye (Samaritans) worship ye know not what: we (Jews) know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews“* (John 4:22).

Jesus used the pronoun we and clearly considered Himself to be a Jew. But the Jews rejected Him – He came *„unto his own, and his own received him not“* (John 1:11).

4. Paul wrote about God's sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3). Christ took on the flesh and blood of His physical parent, Mary (Hebrews 2:14). Jesus was born as a human being by a divine begettal into the nation, area, and family of Judah. Jesus was a Jew!

## HEBREWS 8:8

„For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah“.

Many wonder about the old and new covenants mentioned in the Bible.

1. The old covenant was a „marriage agreement“ in which Israel (the wife) promised to obey the Eternal (the husband). God, in turn promised to provide for the nation. To obey the husband meant to keep God's prior-existing Law. The old covenant, in essence, meant simply that the children of Israel would be God's people and He would be their God.
2. The conditions of that covenant are found in Exodus 20. It is important to understand that this was a reaffirmation of the covenant made originally with Abraham: *„On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying: „To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates“ (Genesis 15:18, New King James Version).*
3. This same covenant was made with Abraham's son, Isaac and Isaac's son, Israel (Jacob). Israel had 12 sons from which came the 12 tribes of Israel. It was this covenant which God fulfilled when He rescued the children of Israel: *„And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob“ (Exodus 2:24).*
4. There was just one problem with the old covenant. The children of Israel did not have God's Holy Spirit and were unable to fulfill the requirements of that covenant – to trust and obey God. Therefore, God is in the process of making a new covenant: *„For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah“ (Hebrews 8:7-8).*

A few who are called by God today have already entered that new covenant. The rest of mankind will enter it after the return of Jesus Christ.

5. Please read the entire chapter of Hebrews 8, which shows that God will write His Commandments in men's hearts through His Holy Spirit. So the new covenant has the „*better promise*“ of God's Holy Spirit. It also has a better reward. Under the old covenant, the Eternal promised to make Israel a nation above all people. The promises were purely national and material – for this world. The new covenant contains the promise of an „*eternal inheritance*“ (Hebrews 9:15).
6. Under the new covenant, all humans become Spirit-led Israelites and Jews – including those who were natural-born Israelites. In that sense, those called out now are given the promises of the new covenant. They are all spiritual Jews (Romans 2:28-29). They are also Israelites (Galatians 6:16).
7. At this time, God is calling only scattered individuals, in what can be called „the Church age“. Therefore, the new covenant applies to those members of the Body of Christ who are led by God's Spirit. However, the great fulfillment of the new covenant will occur when God delivers His people from captivity just prior to the beginning of the Millennium (1000 years rule of Christ and His saints in the Kingdom of God).

## HEBREWS 9:4

„Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant“.

Many wonder concerning the contents of the ark of the covenant. This scripture seems to contradict 1 Kings 8:9.

1. 1 Kings 8:9 and Hebrews 9:4 do seem to contradict each other. One verse says that only the two tables of stone (inscribed with the Ten Commandments) were in the ark. See also 2 Chronicles 5:10. The other verse lists several additional objects which apparently were also in the ark. But, God's Word does not contradict itself!
2. The original Greek word translated „wherein“ in Hebrews 9:4 is „hou“. From Strong's Concordance and other sources, we find that „hou“ means „at which place“. „Hou“ is a general word which does not necessarily mean „wherein“, „within“, or „in“. It simply means „in the same location as“.
3. With this in mind, let us read Deuteronomy 31:24-26:

*„And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book (not the Ten Commandments which God had written on two tables of stone, but the civil law which Moses had written in a book – the law of Moses), until they were finished, That Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee“.*

4. Notice that the book of the law was not placed inside the ark, but „in the side of“ („by the side of“, Revised Standard Version; „beside“, New King James Version) the ark. That is why the book of the law is not mentioned in 1 Kings 8:9 as being in the ark. The book of the law, along with the pot of manna (Exodus 16:33-34) and Aaron's rod, was kept by the side of the ark, not in it. All of these items could properly be described as being „hou“ – in the same place as – the ark.

## HEBREWS 12:29

„For our God is a consuming fire“.

Some misunderstand the verses which make reference to God as a „jealous God“.

1. The verses which make reference to God as a „jealous God“ are often misunderstood. The reason is that we are accustomed to “jealousy” referring to envy or bitter resentment. However, this is not the intended meaning of the word jealous when used in reference to God. A better translation, then, is zealous.
2. *Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* has this as one of the definitions of jealous: „vigilant in guarding a possession“. This is the proper sense in which we should understand this word as applied to God. Please compare Exodus 20:5 with Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29.



## JAMES 1:13-14

„Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed“.

Many believe that God „tempts“ men with evil.

1. Although it is usually used in the sense of „proving by testing“ or „testing under trial“ (James 1:2, 12, 13-14), „tempt“ can be translated „entice to sin“ or „solicit to sin“. Examples of enticement or solicitation to sin are found in Genesis 3:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 11:3-4. These examples are associated with SATAN, not with God.
2. James 1:13-14 could better be translated as: *„Let no man say when he is enticed to sin, 'I am enticed of God'; for God cannot be enticed to sin with evil, neither does He entice any man. But every man is enticed (tempted) to sin, when he is drawn away by his own desires (lust)“.*
3. When we lust after something, we are doing it ourselves. After we have conceived lusts in our own minds, those lusts lead us to commit sin (James 1:15). God made us His begotten children with His Word of truth and wants us to be the firstfruits of His Family (James 1:18). He therefore would not entice us to sin and turn away from Him and thereby not qualify to be a part of His Family.
4. This is consistent with Isaiah 45:7. In this world we have the choice of whether to follow and worship God as He commands and receive the blessings that result or we can choose to follow the ways of this world, the enticements of Satan, and our own lusts to receive the adversity or affliction (evil) that results from breaking God's Laws. It is our choice.

## JAMES 4:4

„Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God“.

Some use these verses to prove that the followers of Christ should totally avoid those still „of the world“.

1. The Bible tells the followers of Christ that *„anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God“* (James 4:4). This scripture does not mean that the followers of Christ should totally avoid those still of the world.
2. Jesus was a friend to people of the world without being friendly with the world's ungodly ways (Matthew 9:10-11). He loved the people without desiring to do what was contrary to God's Way. This is what James was referring to by the word friend.
3. Paul also was quick to clarify that the followers of Christ should not isolate themselves from the „people of this world“. At least in their daily lives and business, the followers of Christ encounter *„people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters“* (1 Corinthians 5:10). To avoid completely such people and problems, wrote Paul, the followers of Christ *„would have to leave this world“*.
4. The true followers of Christ are to be good neighbors and exemplify the principle of love (Mark 12:31). They show they are not of the world by loving their enemies as well.
5. *„If you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than the others?“* Jesus asked His disciples, *„Do not even pagans do that?“* (Matthew 5:47).
6. A disdainful or hateful approach to people identifies one as being of the world. But Jesus calls His followers out of the world to a higher standard. *„Be perfect, therefore,“* He says, *„as your heavenly Father is perfect“* (Matthew 5:48).

7. Today, it is not the riches, but the cares of this world – the struggling to stay afloat – that threatens to overcome the followers of Christ. We should care about something called “worldliness” given the times we live in.

## **JAMES 5:12**

„But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation“.

Some have questions about whether or not it is permissible for a follower of Christ to swear by an oath?

1. The answer is that he should not! Jesus Himself said, *„I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’, ‘No’. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one“* (Matthew 5:34-37, New King James Version).
2. The Bible is very clear on this point: *„But above all things, my brethren, swear not... but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation“* (James 5:12).
3. This scriptural instruction is not meant to imply that oaths by themselves are sin. To emphasize that we mortal human beings are often powerless to fulfill even our strongest intentions, God commands us not to swear by His name in any oath. Failing to fulfill an oath would be taking God’s name in vain.
4. Therefore, a follower of Christ should simply say „Yes“ or „No“, according to what one honestly believes to be true, even in legal matters. The law of the United States permits affirmation; that is, saying „Yes“ or „No“ – without raising the hand to swear.

## JAMES 5:15

„And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him“.

Many tend to believe, like Job's friends, that all sickness is the direct result of sin. There is also „time and chance“. James states *„and if his sickness was caused by some sin, the Lord will forgive him“* (James 5:15). Notice the word „if“.

1. There are several reasons why people get sick:
  - a. Psychological reasons. At least 50% of hospital beds are occupied by people with a psychosomatic illness that is self-induced.
  - b. To demonstrate God's power. In John 9:3 we have the example of the man born blind. When Jesus was asked who sinned, He replied, *„Neither one of them. This man is blind in order that the glory and the power of God might be demonstrated“*.
  - c. Violation of physical law. A car accident, falling out of a ladder or falling out of a tree create injuries. If our bodies knowingly or unknowingly violate a physical law, then disease, pain, accidents, and decay are the natural results.
  - d. Satan's attacks. Demonstrated in the Book of Job. For no reason whatsoever Satan inflicted boils on Job's body. In the end, God healed Job.
  - e. Committing sin. Paul tells us that because of taking the Passover in an unworthy manner, or very lightly. *„For this cause many are weak and sickly“* (1 Corinthians 11:30).
2. The most practical application of James' admonition is to sort out in one's mind where God is working, where God's Church is, and where God's elders are so that we may call upon the elders of the Church.

## 1 PETER 3:2-4

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Paul mentions gold, pearls and costly array. This is speaking of the addition of costly or distracting and unnaturally bulky adornments which take away the natural beauty of a woman.

What Paul is getting across here is that a woman should not have the emphasis on physical attire but on her character.

1 Peter 3:2-4 is also used to try to show the prohibition of the use of jewelry. But in 1 Peter 3:2, the word „conversation“ refers to conduct or behavior as shown in *Strong's Concordance*, or in more modern translations. As with Paul in 1 Timothy 2, Peter is here showing that a Christ-like woman's conduct should be adorned with the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit, and not with the outward appearance of elaborate plaiting and braiding of hair. Nothing here forbids the right use of jewelry.

Many other scriptures show that God does not condemn the use of jewelry per se:

Exodus 3:22 shows that God instructed the Israelites to take jewels from the Egyptians and to put these jewels of silver and gold on their sons and daughters.

Genesis 24:22 shows that Abraham's servant gave earrings and bracelets to Rebekah when he came seeking a wife for Isaac.

In Ezekiel 16:11-13, God says that He figuratively bedecked Israel with earrings, bracelets, a crown, and other jewelry.

In the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15:11-32, God the Father is pictured as receiving back a repentant son. And in Luke 15:22, we see that he has his servants place a ring on the son's hand.

From these accounts we see that a modest use of jewelry is not condemned in the Bible. Only such use of jewelry as detracts from a woman's modest character is rejected. God wants us to keep our minds on the spiritual aspects of life and not physical possessions.

## 1 PETER 3:19-20

„By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water“.

Many use this verse as proof that Jesus was alive and preaching to the spirits in prison when He was dead.

1. This scripture does not say Christ preached to the spirits in prison during the time He was in the grave.
2. Notice what 1 Peter 3:19-20 really says. Wicked angels who followed Satan are in chains of darkness, imprisoned for their own folly (Jude 6). These wicked angels followed Satan in his rebellion against God (Isaiah 14:12-14), and were put in prison (chains of darkness) for their folly (2 Peter 2:4).
3. But when did Jesus preach to imprisoned spirits? Read it: „When once the long suffering... in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing“ (1 Peter 3:20). Jesus preached to the wicked angels in the days of Noah, not during the time He was in the tomb.
4. Jesus died (1 Corinthians 15:3, Revelation 1:18). When He was dead, He was dead! The dead know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Their thoughts perish (Psalms 146:4). Jesus could not possibly have preached to those wicked spirits while in His grave. Rather, He did this during the days of Noah.
5. The Jews had a very shadowy conception of life beyond the grave. They did not think in terms of heaven and of hell but of a shadowy world, where the spirits of men moved like grey ghosts in an everlasting twilight and where there was neither strength nor joy. Such was Hades, into which the spirits of all men went after death. Isaiah wrote of „Sheol“ or „Hades“ (Isaiah 38:18). The Psalmist wrote: „*In death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who can give praise?*“ (Psalms 6:5). „*Will the dust praise thee?*“ (Psalms 30:9).



*„Do you work wonders for the dead?“ (Psalms 88:10-12). „The dead do not praise the Lord“ (Psalms 115:17).*

6. The Jewish conception of the world after death was of this grey world in which men were separated from life and light and God. *„For there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going“ (Ecclesiastes 9:10).* Christ could not, therefore, have preached to dead men in their graves.

## 1 PETER 4:6

„For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit“.

Many wonder about the „Gospel preached also to them that are dead“.

1. The key to understanding this verse is in knowing the identity of the „*dead*“ spoken of by Peter. At the time Peter wrote this epistle (about A.D. 67 to 69), multiple thousands of the followers of Christ had already been living according to the way of life that was preached by the apostles. In the span of time after the apostles' preaching began, some had lived a Christ-like life and had died. Many had suffered martyrdom at the hands of unscrupulous religionists or pagan civil leaders.
2. When did these dead have the Gospel preached to them? Obviously, they had the Gospel preached to them while they were yet alive.
3. The Bible shows that „*the dead know not any thing*“ and that „*there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave*“ (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). Clearly, the dead cannot receive any communication whatsoever. Preaching is for the living, not the dead.
4. There is one other sense in which the Gospel is preached to those who are „dead“. In this case, the term „dead“ is used in reference to people who have not repented and thus have not been forgiven by God. They are still „dead“ in their trespasses – they have not yet received God's Spirit, which is the down payment of eternal life. Jesus mentions such people in Luke 9:60. Paul explains further in Ephesians 2:1 by saying that such people are „*dead in trespasses and sins*“. Some who exist physically are dead spiritually because they have not yet heeded the Gospel of the Kingdom.
5. The Church of God has been commissioned to preach the Gospel as a witness to the world (Matthew 24:14). Yet, most people have not yet been called by God and do not heed that message. They remain both

in ignorance and in sin. They continue to live and be judged by the standards men devise, rather than „*according to God in the spirit*“.

6. Each of these individuals will ultimately be given an opportunity to receive salvation.

## 2 PETER 2:4

„For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;”

This verse is used to prove that there are two „categories” of demons.

1. In 2 Peter 2:4, there are „*angels who sinned*” cast down to „hell” (Greek „tartaroo”) or imprisoned. Their hell is to be under restraint. Can these imprisoned demons in „tartaroo” influence mankind? In Ephesians 6:12, there are wicked spirits „roaming free” but with limited power.
2. Actually, these two verses do not describe two „categories” of demons. 2 Peter 2:4 reveals that the wicked spirits or demons – including Satan the devil – have been placed in a condition of restraint („tartaroo”) and into „*chains of darkness*”. Both of these scriptures tell us that the wicked spirits lurk in the darkness or spiritual depravity of this world.
3. Ephesians 6:12 emphasizes the fact that even though the demons have definite limitations set upon them – otherwise they would have taken over the world long ago. They do possess much greater power than physical humans.
  - a. The Greek word translated „principalities” is „*arche*”, which means „the chief ruler or ruler” (*The Companion Bible*, Appendix 172). Strong's number 746.
  - b. The Greek word rendered „powers” is „*exousia*”, which means „delegated power or as unrestrained arbitrary powers”. Strong's number 1849. The term approximates at time „*dunamis*”, but with the distinction the „*dunamis* denotes external power but „*exousia*” has a more internal reference (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, page 238).
4. Even though the wicked spirits are under certain constrains, they are potent enemies of God's people, the children of light (Matthew 5:14, Ephesians 5:8). This is why we are advised to put on „*the whole*

*armor of God*", that we may be able to withstand the „wiles" or scheming of the devil and his demons (Ephesians 6:11).

## 2 PETER 3:10

„But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up“.

Many wonder if Peter was talking about the total destruction of the earth.

1. Let us notice what the context tells us: *„But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition (destruction) of ungodly men“* (2 Peter 3:7).

This fire is the judgement of incorrigible sinners. This is the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 20:14), the unquenchable fire that will burn up the unrepentant (Matthew 3:12).

2. Peter goes on to describe the effects of this unquenchable fire: *„In the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up“* (2 Peter 3:10).
3. An unquenchable fire is one that cannot be put out. It burns until it has consumed all combustible material. Then it dies out for lack of anything else to consume. Everything will be burned up except for spirit beings, who are not affected by physical fire.
4. Peter used the example of Noah's Flood as a type of the future cleansing of the earth by fire: *„Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished“* (2 Peter 3:6).

Just as the earth continued to exist after the Flood, so it will continue to exist after the coming worldwide „Gehenna“ fire.

5. Continuing with the context of 2 Peter 3:13 we find that *„we... look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness“*.

In the book of Revelation the new heavens and new earth are mentioned immediately after the account of the lake of fire. *„And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away (by fire); and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven... the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them (on the earth)“* (Revelation 21:1-3).

6. The earth will still exist (Ecclesiastes 1:4).
7. The simple explanation of 2 Peter 3:10, then, is that the surface of the earth and everything physical on it, including the incorrigibly wicked, will be destroyed by fire. God will then renew the earth's surface and make it a glorious habitation for Himself and the rest of the God Kingdom (Revelation 21 and 22).
8. What will happen after God's plan of salvation has been corrupted and the earth purged by fire? Revelation 21:1-3.
9. At that time, the earth will become the headquarters of God's Government, which will never cease to grow (Luke 1:33, Isaiah 9:9).
10. God's plan is concerned with eternity. The sons admitted into His Kingdom will be active, dynamic, productive! They will not just sit around idly. Instead, they will continue fulfilling God's master plan. Hebrews 2:6-8 states that God will ultimately put the universe under man's authority. (The words „all things“ would be better translated „the universe“).
11. What is happening now is only the beginning. We cannot begin to fathom the immensity and glory of what we will be doing for eternity. A great deal more is included than meets the eye in the hint given in Revelation 21:5: *„Behold, I make all things new“*.
12. Whatever the future will be, we know that it will be glorious and wonderful beyond our most imaginative dreams. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Romans 8:18).

## 1 JOHN 1:9

„If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness“.

Some use this verse to claim that man must „confess“ their sins one to another.

1. The Church of God believes that the followers of Christ are to confess their sins to God – not men. We notice David's example in Psalms 51. No man can forgive sins. Neither has any man been given the office of mediator between mankind and God. This office is held by Jesus Christ alone. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: „*Wherefore he (Christ) is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them*“ (Hebrews 7:25).
2. The apostle Paul also wrote in 1 Timothy 2:5: „*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*“. Thus, as stated, confession of one's sins ought to be made to God – not to a fellow human being.
3. John wrote that when we sin, we have an advocate with God the Father – Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1-2). He is faithful to forgive our sins when we confess to Him (1 John 1:7-10). Therefore, we can come boldly to His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16).
4. The Scriptures do tell us that we may confess our faults to one another – so we can pray for each other (James 5:16). But there is a difference between seeking a brother's help in overcoming a fault – human weakness – and confessing sins of the past. The latter should usually not be done because only God can forgive sin. And they do not forget either, as God does when our sins are removed (Hebrews 8:12).
5. Some try to use John 20:23 to prove that persons in ecclesiastical offices have the power to forgive sins. This verse reads: „If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained“ (New King James Version).



However, it does not mean that mere men can actually forgive sins in a spiritual sense. God alone can forgive sins (Mark 2:7-10, Luke 5:21-24). Christ spoke these words to His future apostles in the context of the Church authority. He was giving them (see John 20:21) – the power to disfellowship those who were dissenters or heretics (see 1 Corinthians 5:2 and 1 Timothy 1:20) and bring them back into the congregation upon repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-10).

## 1 JOHN 2:15

„Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him“.

Many don't understand the meaning of the concept „the world or anything in the world“. A follower of Christ is not to love or have anything to do with „the world“.

1. True Christians are true Christians because they are different internally – in their minds. They show the world by their spiritual actions „in“ the world that they are not „of“ the world.
2. The apostle Peter plea stressed this point when he wrote: *„Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God“* (1 Peter 2:12).
3. The apostle Paul echoed the same thought. He said that the followers of Christ should be *„children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation“* (Philippians 2:15).
4. Now, we must know exactly what „worldliness“ is. The apostle John helps us understand worldliness by clearly defining what part of the world – or kosmos in the Greek – we are to hate. First of all John tells us, *„Do not love the world or anything in the world“* (1 John 2:15).
5. John then explains what is it about this world we should hate. He says it is *„everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does“* (1 John 2:16).
6. John describes the world as feeding on two dominant traits – one of which is desire. But of what kind? John defines wrong desires as human craving, coveting what seems attractive to the physical senses and mind but the hunger goes far beyond cigarettes, whiskey and wild women – or wild men, as the case may be.
7. Worldliness can be summarized as putting a personal desire – any desire – ahead of God. It is making something other than God the supreme object of our desire.

8. But we must be careful to understand what John meant by the Greek word „kosmos“. The followers of Christ did not hate the world as such. It was God's creation; and God made all things well. God said that the creation was „*very good*“ (Genesis 1:31). Jesus had loved the beauty of the world, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of the scarlet anemones which bloomed for a day and died (Matthew 6:29, Luke 12:27). Jesus again and again took his illustrations from the world. In that sense the true follower of Christ did not hate the world. The earth was not the devil's; the earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Psalms 24:1, 50:12).
9. But „kosmos“ acquired a moral sense. It began to mean the „world apart from God“ (C.H. Dodd in *The Johannine Epistles*, defines the meaning of kosmos: „Our author (John) means human society in so far as it is organized on wrong principles, and characterized by base desires, false values, and egoism“.

In other words, to John „*the world*“ was nothing other than pagan society with its false values and its false gods.

10. The „world“ in this passage does not mean the world in general, for God loved the world which he had made; it means the world which, in fact, had forsaken the God who made it. The follower of Christ cannot escape the obligation to be different from the world. In this passage John sees things as he always sees them – in terms of black and white. This is a matter in which there is neutrality; a man either loves the world or he loves God. Jesus Himself said, „*No one can serve two masters*“ (Matthew 6:24). The ultimate choice remains the same. Are we to accept the world's standards or the standards of God?
11. Attitudes about worldliness come out of our culture and our philosophy, not out of God's Word. If we hold a wrong view of what constitutes the „world“, we may find ourselves „of the world“ without realizing it. The aspect of the world we need to be most on guard against has to do with what seems good, not bad. It has to do with

whatever has drawing power on the self – our thinking, our desires and our nature.

12. Why should the world be so alluring? It is because the world or society was created – and it is sustained – by humans like us. In a real sense, then, we are of the world. That, perhaps, is the most basic point to grasp if we are to understand what it means to be „of the world“. We have found the world and, lo and behold, it turns out to be us.
13. Being of the world is thinking and doing as humans do. The basic problem we face is quite sobering. We have a nature that resonates with the world God condemns. The world has a downward pull on our desires and thoughts. The point is, we are worldly by nature. Thus, we are trapped in worldliness, having been born „of the world“ - and raised in it.
14. How can we come out of the world if we are the world? Quite simply, our nature must be changed by God’s Spirit. It is impossible to come out of the world without being born from above. That new birth by God’s Spirit exerts its own dynamic power. It enables us to pull against the magnetic power the world has on our fleshly nature. That is why God gives the follower of Christ a new nature through the Holy Spirit at baptism. That new nature is able to resonate with God and His Way. At the same time, the Holy Spirit enables the follower of Christ to resist worldly influences.

## 1 JOHN 2:18

„Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time“.

Many wonder about the „Antichrist“.

1. The term „antichrist“ is found only in 1 and 2 John. We notice 1 John 2:18: *„Little children, it is the last time: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time“.*
2. There were many antichrists in the days of the apostle John. They pretended to be part of God’s true Church. John wrote, *„They went out from us, but they were not of us“* (1 John 2:19).
3. What is an antichrist? The key is found in 2 John 7: *„For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist“.*
4. An antichrist is a deceiver. But how does an antichrist deceive us, and what does it mean *„who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh“*? The phrase *„is come“* in the King James Version is somewhat obscure. The Williams translation renders it more clearly as *„continues to come“*. Christ not only came once in the flesh, but by the Spirit of God dwelling in us, which is also in Him, He continues to come into us even at the present. In other words, Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh right now by living His life in His people. In 1 John 3:24 we read, *„And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him (Christ), and he (dwells) in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us“.*

Christ abides or lives in us through His Spirit. That is exactly what the apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20: *„I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me“.* It is Christ in us, *„the hope of glory“* (Colossians 1:27). God actually works IN US *„both to will and to do of his good pleasure“* (Philippians 2:13).

5. On the night before His crucifixion Jesus said, *„If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM“* (John 14:23). This would be impossible without God’s Spirit working within us. God’s Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). And just what is the love of God? *„For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous“* (1 John 5:3).
  
6. The spirit of antichrist is lawlessness. An antichrist is one who denies that Jesus Christ actually comes into our flesh through His Spirit, and lives the very same life He did when He was on earth – a life of obedience to the Law of God. Therefore, an antichrist is one who is against Christ – against His Law and Way of life. Such a spirit of antichrist (lawlessness) was widespread in John’s and Paul’s day: *„For the mystery of iniquity (the original Greek means LAWLESSNESS) does already work“* (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

## 1 JOHN 3:9

„Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God“.

Some use this verse to prove we are not „born from above“ as this verse apparently says that when you are born again you will be physically and spiritually unable to sin.

1. „*Cannot sin*“ refers to habitual sin, it does not mean one is incapable of sinning anymore. Present tense of the verse. A person „does not continue to live in habitual sin“. It is not a habit anymore.
2. New King James translation of 1 John 3:9: „Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin because he has been born of God“.
3. Williams translation: „No one who is born of God makes a practice of sinning, because the God-given principle continues to live in him, and so he cannot practice sinning, because he is born of God“.
4. Barclay translation: „Anyone who has been born of God does not commit sin, because his seed abides in him; and he cannot be a consistent and deliberate sinner because he has been born of God“.
5. A follower of Christ will not contradict his calling by doing sin. A follower of Christ is preserved from sin by the indwelling power of the Word of God. The Word of God is definitely identified with the imperishable seed of God.
6. This is shown by James 1:18 and by 1 Peter 1:23.

James 1:18: „Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creature“.

1 Peter 1:23: „... having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever...“

## 1 JOHN 5:7

Many cite this verse to prove the doctrine of the trinity, because there is no other scripture in all the Bible to lend credence to the pagan doctrine of a tri-une God.

1. The proof used is not a part of the original Bible. Actually, all of verse 7 and half of verse 8 did not begin to appear in manuscripts until 800 A.D. and after. Since it does not belong in the Bible and there is no other verse in the Bible that says anything similar, the Bible does not teach this concept. The doctrine of „God in three Persons“ is not Biblical. It originated in ancient paganism.
2. 1 John 5:7 is properly deleted in modern translations, such as Moffatt, Goodspeed, the Revised Standard Version and the New International Version. Where then did 1 John 5:7 come from? Why is it found today in the King James Bible? And who put it there?
3. The editors of the *Critical and Experimental Commentary* were forced to admit that this verse is not found in any of the old manuscripts of the Bible and was not found in the manuscripts of the Latin Vulgate until as late as the 8th century. Notice:

„The only Greek manuscripts, in any form, which support the words, „in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and there three are one: and there are three that bear witness in earth“, are the Montfortianus of Dublin, copied from the modern Latin Vulgate; the Revianus, copied from the Complutensian Polyglot; a manuscript at Naples, with the words added IN THE MARGIN BY A RECENT HAND; Ottobonianus, 298, of the fifteenth century, the Greek of which is a translation of the accompanying Latin. ALL of the old versions omit the words. The oldest manuscripts of the Vulgate omit them, the earliest Vulgate manuscript which has them being Wizanburgensis, 99, of the EIGHTH century“.

4. Adam Clarke explains in his *Commentary*: „But it is likely this verse is not genuine. It is wanting in every manuscript of this epistle written before the invention of printing, one excepted, the Codex Montfortii, in Trinity College, Dublin...“



„It is wanting in both the Syriac, all the Arabic, Ethiopic, the Coptic, Sahidic, Armenian, Slavonian, etc., in a word, in ALL the ancient versions but the Vulgate; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct manuscripts have it not. It is wanting also in ALL the ancient Greek fathers; and in most even of the Latin“.

5. *The Emphatic Diaglott* also explains: 1 John 5:7 „is not contained in any Greek manuscript which was written earlier than the fifth century. It is not cited by ANY of the Greek ecclesiastical writers; nor by any of the early Latin fathers, even when the subjects upon which they treated would naturally have led them to appeal to its authority. It is therefore evidently SPURIOUS; and was first cited (though not as it now reads) by Virgilius Tapsensis, a Latin writer of no credit, in the latter end of the fifth century; but by whom forged, is of no great moment, as its design must be obvious to all“.
6. God is not a Trinity. The New Testament does not explicitly teach the „personhood“ of the Holy Spirit as later defined in trinitarian thought. The Bible does reveal three entities within the one God-head – the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that the Bible portrays the Holy Spirit as the presence of God in action, distinct from the Father and the Son, yet one with them.
7. The Bible tells us that, upon conversion, the follower of Christ is „*born from above*“ into the Kingdom of God as one of the „*children of God*“ (John 3:3, 1 John 3:2). Thus we learn that God has a family (Ephesians 3:15), composed of the Father, and Jesus Christ, the first-born among many brethren (Romans 8:29) and many „*children*“. The Bible does not teach a „closed“ God-head. Rather, true Christians can become spirit-composed Sons of God – very members of the God family – if they are changed, at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51, New International Version) by His Spirit at the resurrection.
8. At the resurrection, the followers of Christ will become co-inheritors with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:17). We will be glorified just like Jesus Christ – we will be like Him, „*for we shall see Him as He is*“ (1 John 3:2) as very God. God's family is getting ready for an enormous expansion.

9. Satan has deluded the world (Revelation 12:9) with his diabolical trinitarian concept in order to hide the marvelous truth about man's destiny.
  
10. The Church of God believes in one God (Deuteronomy 6:4). In this context, it teaches the full divinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit – the biblical foundation for all Trinitarian discussions. It accepts every facet of God's self-disclosure as found in the Holy Scriptures.

## 1 JOHN 5:16-17

„If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death“.

Some say this verse proves there are some sins one can commit and not incur the penalty of eternal death.

1. Let us review first this difficult scripture to see what it says and what it does not say. 1 John 5:16-17, in both verses „*sin not unto death*“ is underlined. Is there such a sin that does not lead to eternal death? The wages of sin are death (Romans 6:23) – there are no exceptions. If you sin you will die.
2. God does not categorize sin, but Hebrews 10:26-27 shows that if we sin willfully and deliberately there is no more sacrifice of Christ for that sin. „*Fiery indignation*“ (eternal death) is poetic for „Lake of Fire“.
3. Of course, God is big enough to forgive us any of our sins if we repent. 1 John 1:8-9. „*If we confess our sins to God*“. Accidental sin is not willful sin. We sin out of laziness, stupidity, weakness or ignorance.
4. 1 John 5:16-17 refers to when we see a brother who is striving to obey God „*sin a sin which is not unto death*“ – sin of weakness or ignorance – we ought to ask God to help our brother recognize his error and repent of it. When we do so God „*will give him life*“ – God will hear our prayers for him. This is the kind of concern we ought to have for one another. This is one way that we can bear burdens one of another (Galatians 6:2).
5. On the other hand, a brother „*sins unto death*“ if he has willfully turned from God's Way – in wrong attitude. This, for example, would not include all disfellowshipped people – only those who have willfully rejected God's Way so that they could not be brought again to repentance (Hebrews 6:4-6). A „*sin not unto death*“ then, is one that does not involve a willful violation of God's will. Obviously, we cannot determine someone else's attitude at the time of sinning.

John says, „*I do not say that we should pray*“ instead of „He shall not pray for it“. This allows for our natural desire to hope the person has not gone too far – to hope he will repent. Prayer is not prohibited. We would rather err on the side of praying than not praying.

6. The sin you repent of becomes a „*sin not unto death*“. The willful, stubborn rebellion from God's Way is definitely a „*sin unto death*“. The follower of Christ today in his striving to overcome should not sin. There is no such thing as „victim-less“ crime. ALL sin is bad in the eyes of God.

## 2 JOHN 1

„The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;“

Many wonder who the „*elect lady*“ was, mentioned by the apostle John in his second epistle.

1. The Bible does not identify the „*elect lady*“ directly. John sent his letter to a particular person. However, he may also have been referring to the Church symbolically.
2. Although Church history does not know to whom John wrote, his letter was probably addressed to Mary the mother of Jesus. Mary's unique role and the special association between herself and John would make it unlikely that he would have referred to any other person in that manner. As Jesus hung dying on the cross, He charged John with His mother's welfare ([John 19:26-27](#)). We also know that Mary had several children in addition to Jesus (some are mentioned in [Matthew 13:55-56](#)) and a sister ([John 19:25](#)). This is in accord with [2 John 1](#) and [2 John 13](#). Symbolically, the „*sister*“ congregations were those of the Greeks and Israelites.
3. It would not have been out of place for John – while writing the letter specifically to Mary – to have addressed the Church as a very special lady. As shown by the contexts of [Ephesians 5:32](#) and [Revelation 12](#), the Church is sometimes referred to as a woman. At the time John wrote, false Christianity was on the increase, and God's „*children*“ needed a mother's – the Church's – spiritual guidance and protection more than ever. Compare with [Galatians 4:26](#).
4. While there is a natural curiosity to know the meaning of the „*elect lady*“, we should remember that it is really of no great significance as far as day-to-day living is concerned. The important thing to keep in mind is that this letter is a part of the inspired Scriptures and contains a vital message for the followers of Christ today.

## 2 JOHN 10

„If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed“.

Should the followers of Christ receive in their homes just about anyone who is going from house to house trying to get them to accept his or her form of doctrine?

1. Some religious groups send their members from house to house engaging people in religious discussions. But is this really what God wants? The reaction of many householders indicates that they do not appreciate such surprise visits. Most people prefer to decide for themselves when and how to become involved in religious studies.
2. The Bible teaches that it is God who „calls“ a person to repentance and the Christ-like Way of life. When God opens a person’s mind, the individual becomes interested in receiving guidance from a teacher he knows and respects. God has His own way of calling each person (John 6:44).
3. Acts 20:20 can be correctly understood by reading it in context, beginning with Acts 20:17. The apostle Paul „sent to Ephesus, and called the ELDERS of the church“ and said to them, „I... have taught YOU publicly, and from house to house“ (Acts 20:17-20).

Acts 20:17 shows that Paul was specifically speaking to the elders of the Church at Ephesus and not to the general public. Paul’s practice was to teach the leaders of the church in their own homes. He was not going from house to house attempting to teach whoever opened the door. In other words, Paul made himself available, teaching the Gospel to those who wanted to listen. He did not try to force himself onto an unwilling audience.

4. Should we, then, invite into our homes just anyone who is going from house to house trying to accept his or her form of doctrine? Here is God’s instruction:

*„If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the truth of God’s Word), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed“.*

5. We are not to go preaching from house to house. Neither are we to accept into our homes any peddlers of religion who might show up at the door. This is the example of Jesus Christ and the early Church of God.
6. God’s servants did not go door to door proselytizing to the unconverted. God loves all people and will offer salvation to every person (Matthew 18:14, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9), but He chooses the time to open each person’s mind to receive the truth (John 6:44, 56).
7. The followers of Christ should not invite people in or contribute to their efforts. Dissidents should be avoided (2 John 10). The followers of Christ should not want to receive those who would change doctrine.

## REVELATION 1:1-3

„The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time *is* at hand“.

Some misunderstand what will take place after the 1000-year reign of Christ on this earth.

1. What will happen after God's plan of salvation has been completed and the earth purged by fire (2 Peter 3:10-12) is found in Revelation 21:1-3:

*„And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, „Behold, the tabernacle (dwelling) of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God“ (New King James).*

At that time, the earth will become the headquarters of God's Government, which will never cease to grow (Luke 1:33, Isaiah 9:7).

2. God's plan is concerned with eternity. The sons admitted into His Kingdom will be active, dynamic, productive! They will not just sit around idly. Instead, they will continue fulfilling God's master plan. Hebrews 2:6-8 states that God will ultimately put the universe under man's authority. (The words „all things“ would be better translated „the universe“.)

3. What is happening now is only the beginning. We cannot begin to fathom the immensity and glory of what we will be doing for eternity. A great deal more is included than meets the eye in the thing given in Revelation 21:5: *„Behold, I make all things new“*. Whatever the future will be, we know that it will be glorious and wonderful beyond our most imaginative dreams. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9 and Romans 8:18).



## REVELATION 2:9

„I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan“.

Some wonder what is meant by the „synagogue of Satan.“

1. The same term is used in Revelation 3:9. The word „synagogue“ comes from a Greek word meaning „assembly“ or „church“. The *„synagogue of Satan“*, then, is an assembly of individuals who *„say they are Jews and are not“*. The term „Jew“ is used here in the spiritual sense.
2. Romans 2:9 tell us, *„He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God“*. It is not one’s physical race that counts, but his spiritual condition (Galatians 3:27-29). True followers of Christ are spiritual Jews.
3. Those in the „synagogue of Satan“ say they are Jews – pretend to be real Christians – but are not. This false church was already developing in the days of the apostle John. It masqueraded as God’s true Church and had congregations in the cities of Smyrna and Philadelphia even at that early time. It and its daughter churches are further described in Revelation 17.

## REVELATION 3:14

„And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;”

Some use this verse to prove Jesus was a created being.

1. The correct meaning of the phrase „*the beginning of the creation of God*” is the Beginner of all creation. It refers to its originating instrument (see Colossians 1:15-17). Jesus is the Head and Governor of all creatures; He is the King of creation. For further evidence of this meaning, please see the commentary by Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown.

2. Proverbs 8:22-25 is sometimes cited as evidence that Jesus was created. However, this passage is clearly referring to wisdom personified (see verse 1), not to God! Notice that God possessed wisdom in the beginning and used it in creating the worlds.

3. The Bible tells us plainly that Jesus (who was known as Melchizedek anciently) had no beginning of days nor end of life (Hebrews 7:1-3). He was not created, but was the creator of all things that were made (Colossians 1:16). He was with the Father in the beginning, and all things were made by Him (John 1:1-3). He has always existed.

## REVELATION 4:10

„The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne...”

Some wonder who the 24 elders are while others falsely teach that the 24 elders are taken from among saved mortals.

1. This assumption is primarily based on a mistranslation of Revelation 5:8-10. According to the original inspired Greek, the last half of Revelation 5:9 and all of Revelation 5:10 should read:

*„four thou was slain, and has redeemed them (the saints, not us, the 24 elders) to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them (not us) unto our God kings and priests: and they (not we) shall reign on the earth”.*

2. These „elders” are powerful SPIRIT BEINGS – not men – who assist God at His throne in heaven. On the other hand, the resurrected saints will reign on earth! See Revelation 20:4.

3. We know that the 24 elders are not redeemed human beings because no man except Jesus Christ (John 3:13) has ascended to the heaven of God’s throne. All saved human beings – those who are Christ’s true servants – will be given immortality at Christ’s coming – when He returns to the earth to rule and reign (1 Corinthians 15:22-23).

4. The 24 elders, then, are a part of the created heavenly host. They are created spirit beings and have been given positions of responsibility in the government of God, through which He rules the universe.

## REVELATION 5:6

„And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth“.

Some have a question concerning this verse, which mentions *„the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth“*.

1. In this same verse these spirits are described as being the *„seven eyes“* of the *„Lamb“*. They are seven angelic beings who serve as the seven observers for Jesus Christ. In Revelation 1:4 we read that these seven angels have access to the very throne of God in heaven.
2. The function of these seven angels is described in 2 Chronicles 16:9: *„For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth“*. This description is repeated in Zechariah 4:10, along with a reference to the *„eyes of the Lord“* being seven in number.
3. These seven angels have a specific and very important responsibility. They continually go throughout the entire earth to observe conditions and report them to Jesus Christ in heaven.

## REVELATION 6:9-10

„And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?“

Many have claimed that these verses prove the immortality of the soul and that people go to heaven when they die. The Bible itself, however, shows that souls are mortal by nature and that this entire description is symbolic, not literal.

1. What did John see? In vision he beheld a book or scroll sealed with seven seals. As Jesus opened each seal (Revelation 5:5), John saw a preview of an event which would take place „*hereafter*“ (Revelation 4:1). John was „*in the spirit*“ while the seven seals were being opened (Revelation 4:2). So, the events he saw were not actually happening then. They were heavenly enactments of what was to take place later on earth.

2. When the fifth seal was opened, John „*saw under* (at the base of) *the altar the souls of them that were slain*“ (Revelation 6:9). Because Jesus revealed the meaning of the seven seals when He was on earth, we know that the fifth seal is symbolic of the coming Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:9-28). It is a picture of an event to take place on the earth.

3. In vision, John was projected forward to our time now, a time when one martyrdom has already happened (during the Middle Ages) and a greater one (the Tribulation) is yet to come. The „souls“ (followers of Christ) who „*were slain* (martyred)“ were told to „*rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled*“ (Revelation 6:11). Those who have died are to continue to „rest“ – remain in their graves (compare Acts 2:26-27) – until others, like them, are also martyred. Remember, there are no graves in heaven.

4. The „souls“, the dead saints, crying „*avenge our blood*“ (Revelation 6:10) is similar to Abel’s blood (his life, see Leviticus 17:14) crying to God from the ground (Genesis 4:10). Since neither blood nor the dead talk (Psalm 115:17; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10), we know that the meaning is not literal. The „*souls under the altar*“, then, is a symbolic picture of the martyrdom of saints.

## REVELATION 7:5-8

Some wonder why the tribe of Dan is not mentioned in the 144,000 described in these verses.

1. It is interesting to note that Dan is also left out of the genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1-9. This historical point of interest helps explain why Dan was not mentioned in Revelation 7:5-8.

2. The tribe of Dan as a whole was guilty of idolatry – even to the point of stealing the idols they used to practice their religion (Judges 18:14-31). Theirs was the first organized idolatry in ancient Israel, and the longest in duration. It continued „*until the day of the captivity of the land*“, nearly 500 years later (Judges 18:30). Jewish tradition says that Dan was the first tribe to follow Jeroboam into his sin of idolatry. In their literature, the term „Dan“ is often used to represent idolatry.

3. From this summarized history of the tribe of Dan, it becomes obvious why Dan would not be among the 144,000 „*servants of God*“ described in Revelation 7:1-4. Dan thoroughly rejected God’s true religion for thousands of years, substituting a continuous tradition of idolatry. The descendants of Dan say, „*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord*“ (Genesis 49:1, 18). The vast majority of Danites must wait for salvation until after the sealing of the 144,000.

4. It is reassuring to know that Dan and all the other tribes of ancient Israel will be saved. In fact, Dan is mentioned first in the apportionments of land in the soon-coming Millennium (Ezekiel 48:1). The Bible records, „*All Israel shall be saved*“ (Romans 11:26). The 144,000 are only a very small portion of the people of all nations who will eventually be saved.

5. A related question involves the tribe of Ephraim. Some have thought that this tribe is not mentioned among the 144,000 either. But, in fact, Ephraim is included. You will notice that the tribes of Mannaseh and Joseph are both listed. Ephraim and Manasseh were the two sons of Joseph (Genesis 48:1). Since Manasseh is one of the tribes descended from Joseph – and mentioned by name – the „*tribe of Joseph*“ here must refer to Ephraim (Revelation 7:8). Ephraim, being the leading tribe of the house of Joseph, sometimes bore the name „Joseph“.

## REVELATION 10:4

Some wonder about the message of the seven thunders.

1. God's Word does not reveal the message of the seven thunders. In fact, we find in this same verse that John was instructed to *„Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not“*.
2. It is clear, however, that their message concerns an event which is to take place at the time the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, the event which will herald the return of Jesus Christ to the earth (see Revelation 10:7 and Revelation 11:15).

## REVELATION 11:3

„And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth“.

Some wonder about the two witnesses, what they will do, what their mission might be and about the time of their appearance.

1. No one now knows who the two witnesses are. But when they do appear, we will know that the return of Christ is not far away.

2. The two witnesses are two human beings who will be given extraordinary power for three and a half years just prior to Christ's return (Revelation 11:3). If anyone attempts to harm them before they complete their ministry, *„fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies“* (Revelation 11:5, NKJ). Note the similarity between this and the power given to Elijah (2 Kings 1:9-15). They will also have power to produce drought and famine, as did Elijah (Luke 4:25, 1 Kings 17:1-7), and to smite the earth with plagues (Revelation 11:6).

3. The mission of the two witnesses will be to give one final warning to the governments of this world. They will be martyred because of their message, and the whole world will rejoice as they view their dead bodies, lying unburied in the streets of Jerusalem (Revelation 11:9-10). But, those same people will be struck with great fear when they see the two witnesses come to life again and ascend into the sky in a cloud (Revelation 11:11-12).



## REVELATION 13:16

„And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads“.

Some want to know what the mark of the Beast is.

1. In context, two beasts are described in Revelation 13. The beast rising up out of the sea (Revelation 13:1-10) is the last resurrection of the government of the „Holy Roman Empire“. The beast rising up out of the earth (Revelation 13:11-18) is the great whore, the false church, that will ride and control the government. Therefore, the mark of the beast rising from the earth in Revelation 13:16 is a religious mark, not a government mark such as a Social Security number, or a National Identity number.
2. Those who receive the mark of the beast will suffer the corrective plagues of God's judgement (Revelation 14:9-10; Revelation 15:1, 6; Revelation 16:1-2). Those receiving the mark of the beast are contrasted with the saints, those who keep God's commandments (Revelation 14:12). Therefore, the mark has to do with commandment breaking.
3. A mark is an identifying sign or brand. One group is forced to bear the sign, brand, or mark of the beast to work or buy and sell.
4. Keeping the fourth commandment, the Sabbath, is a sign, mark, or brand that identifies God's people (Exodus 31:12-17). God's commandments, especially the fourth, are a sign on the hands and foreheads of those who keep them (Deuteronomy 6:6-8, 11:18).
5. The coming European dictator, the „first beast“ of Revelation 13, will „*think to change times and seasons*“ (Daniel 7:20-25), God's Sabbaths and Holy Days (Leviticus 23:4, Genesis 1:14). The mark of the beast is the idolatry of false „Christianity“! As integral part of that idolatry there will be enforced observance of the pagan days dedicated to sun (Sunday and Satan's holidays)

instead of God's Sabbath and Holy Days. These pagan days are already specially protected by the German Constitution.

## REVELATION 13:18

„Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six“.

Some want to know what the number of the Beast is.

Revelation 13:18 tells us „*to count (compute) the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is 666*“. Languages other than English, such as Hebrew, Greek, Roman, and Latin, assign numerical values to letters in their alphabets. Revelation 13:17 tells us that „*no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark (of the beast), or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*“. These verses tell us six things:

- a. The beast has a number, and may be identified, if we have wisdom, by this number.
- b. The number is 666.
- c. We are told to count (add up or compute) the number.
- d. This number, 666, is the number of the beast. The only Bible interpretation of this symbol, „*beast*“, is a kingdom or the king who rules it, and therefore, really is the kingdom (Daniel 7:17-18); Therefore 666 must be the number of the kingdom, or government, or empire, as well as that of the king who founds or rules it.
- e. The expression „*the name of the beast, or the number of his name*“ makes plain that the number 666 is the number of the name of the kingdom or empire.
- f. The expression „*it is the number of a man*“ shows we must also count this number in the name of the king, or ruler, over the kingdom identified as the „*beast*“.

The beast is the Roman empire. It was named after Romulus, the founder and first king of Rome. His name, the name of a man, also is the name of

the kingdom. Every citizen in the kingdom bears the same name – a Roman. The apostle John wrote the book of Revelation in Greek. Therefore, we should count in Greek, not in Latin.

This name, in Greek, is „Lateinos“. It means „Latin man“ or „the name of Latium“, from which region the Romans derived their origin and their language. In Greek, L=30, A=1, T=300, E=5, I=10, N=50, O=70 and S=200. They add up to 666.

In Hebrew, „Romulus“ adds up to 666 as does „Nero Caesar“, the emperor of Rome at its height. Mussolini called himself „Il Duce“. Italians displayed many signs saying VV IL DUCE, meaning long live the chief. In Latin, the number of this sign is 666.

For 1260 years, the popes reigned and ruled over the beast. They were, in effect, the religious heads of the empire, ruling over emperors, as well as over the church. Although it is not among the acknowledged titles of the pope, he does claim to be the Vicar of Christ, VICARIUS FILII DEI in Latin. In Roman numerals, this also adds up to 666.

This number is branded on the pagan Roman empire, on the founder and first king of the Latins, on every Roman and even on Mussolini.

## REVELATION 14:11

„And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name“.

Some wonder about how to understand the scripture that speaks of „And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever...” Do the wicked burn forever in hell?

1. Notice that Revelation 14:8 gives the time setting of Revelation 14:11. Revelation 14:11 does not say the wicked burn forever in hell, it concerns the impending fall of „Babylon“.

2. Revelation 14:9-10 state, *„If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark... he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone... in the presence of the Lamb“* (that is, at Christ’s Second Coming).

3. Those who have a part in this system of „Babylon“, and who receive this frightful punishment from Almighty God, have *„no rest day nor night“* as long as they remain in that land falling under God’s wrath. They will either have to flee that area and seek God’s mercy or be tormented by sulfurous fumes till they perish.

4. This passage does NOT say these individuals are being tormented forever in an ever-burning hell. Revelation 14:11 says, *„The SMOKE of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever“*.

5. This is the time when God pours out His punishment upon those who worship the Beast (the United States of Europe – the resurrected Roman Empire) and his image (the papacy) (Revelation 14:9-10). This event occurs in the presence of the Lamb – that is, at the second coming of Christ.

6. At that time the Beast and False Prophet will be cast into a lake of fire (Revelation 19:19-20). It does not say they burn for all eternity. Revelation 14:11 says the smoke of their torment ascends forever. Of course, as long as the fire is burning, the smoke will ascend.

7. The term forever does not necessarily mean for eternity as we understand it. In Exodus 21:5-6 God says a servant in ancient Israel who loved his master was to serve that master forever. Obviously, this did not mean for all eternity. Eventually both would die. It meant as long as they both lived – as long as the conditions of the contract remained constant.

8. The same is true for the fire used by God to punish the wicked. As long as the fire burns smoke will ascend. When the fire stops burning the smoke will stop ascending. The smoke that is already in the air will rise until it becomes diffused into the atmosphere.

9. The Bible plainly teaches that flesh and blood is subject to combustion and death. Malachi 4:3 says that in the end the ashes of the wicked will be under the feet of the righteous. The wicked will be DESTROYED and will die that death – the second death – from which there is never to be a resurrection (Revelation 20:6, Revelation 20:14).

## REVELATION 19:1

„And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God“.

Many misunderstand what is meant by „much people in heaven“.

1. This is unfortunate translation of the Greek word „ochlos“. This word can mean people, but it also has a variety of other English synonyms. Since the Bible elsewhere plainly tells us that the reward of the saved is this earth – not heaven – it is evident that another synonym of the Greek word „ochlos“ should have been chosen.
2. The Goodspeed translation and the Revised Standard Version render „ochlos“ as „multitude“. The Moffatt translation renders it as „host“, while the Amplified New Testament and the Numeric English New Testament render it as a „crowd“. The Faithful Version renders it as „voice of a great multitude“.
3. These translations best convey the meaning of the original Greek. Thus, the „people“ of Revelation 19:1 are actually the „host, crowd, or multitude“ of heaven. This verse is speaking of angels who are in heaven. They are the great multitude that sings forth praises to God (Revelation 5:11-12).

## REVELATION 20:5

„But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection“.

Some wonder whether the earth could contain all of the people who will be resurrected in the first and second resurrection.

1. This world in its present state could only hold few more people. Many areas are terribly overcrowded. Tillable land is becoming more scarce in many countries, and much of the world is covered with gigantic mountain ranges which are too high to be of use. Deserts or polar regions monopolize each continent at this time, and pollution, wars, and many other problems have lessened the earth's capacity to support additional people.

2. It is unlikely, then, that the world could now contain all those who will ever have lived. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that they will not live in this world, this age, this society. They will be resurrected after a thousand years of renovation by God's Government (Revelation 20:4-5). Here are some of the physical changes that will be made.

a. Mountains will be miraculously lowered to a tillable height, and valleys below sea level will be elevated (Isaiah 40:4). The deserts will blossom abundantly (Isaiah 35:1-2). God will restore a right climate to the earth and will provide rain when needed (Isaiah 30:23, 35:7; Zechariah 10:1).

b. These changes will take time, but Christ and the saints will have a thousand years to prepare the entire earth for the multitudes that will be resurrected.

3. Suppose that at the time of the events of Revelation 20:11-12 occur, forty billion people will have lived. Could the earth possibly support this number?

a. Simple mathematics - fifty million square miles of land surface shared by forty billion people - tell us that there would be about five acres of land available for each four- to six-member household. This would be large enough to feed the household and leave plenty of space for other purposes. This fits perfectly with Micah 4:4: „*They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid*“.

b. The Bible clearly shows the logic of God's plan for mankind.



## REVELATION 20:7

„And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison“.

Some wonder about Satan being loosed at the end of the 1000 years of Christ's rule on earth.

1. God is working out a great purpose here on this planet. And He is doing so according to His master plan!

2. God has been allowing man to work things out for himself. He is permitting human beings to try every conceivable way to solve world problems in their desperate attempt to find peace and happiness. Men have chosen to follow the way of Satan, the god of this world.

3. When men finally come to their wits' end and are facing utter annihilation, God will intervene to save them from themselves. Then Satan will be restrained from deceiving the world, and there will be 1000 years of utopia on earth. All people will be taught to follow God's law – the only way to true happiness.

4. But familiarity breeds contempt. After 1000 years of real happiness, some will forget or will ignore the lessons of history and the record of how miserable it was when Satan ruled. Some few just won't agree with God – they will insist on having their own way.

5. Satan will be released from his prison for a very short time to demonstrate to these minds the fact that God rules supreme – that His way alone brings true happiness.

6. Satan will be allowed to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth. The nations Gog and Magog are a type of all rebellious peoples who have not yielded themselves to the Government of God (Revelation 20:8).

7. Those who choose to follow Satan and knowingly refuse eternal life can't be allowed to be around.

## REVELATION 20:10

„And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever“.

Some use this verse to prove that hell is a place of eternal punishing.

1. Some misunderstanding of this verse has resulted from a translation error in the King James Version of the Bible. You will notice that the word „are“ is in italics. This means that the word was supplied by the translators and is not in the original Greek.

2. According to the chronology of Revelation itself, both the Beast and the false prophet will be cast alive into the lake of fire at the beginning of God's thousand-year reign on the earth (Revelation 19:20). By merely using God's explanation of what happens to human bodies when they are cast into fire, we find that they will be burned up (Psalms 37:20). Therefore, the phrase in Revelation 20:10 should be translated „where the beast and the false prophet were.“

3. In Matthew 25:41 Jesus said, „*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*“. Jesus here plainly shows that the everlasting fire was prepared for Satan and his angels. Yet he goes on to say that human beings who are ultimately judged unfit for eternal life are also to be cast into this very lake of fire. „*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment*“ (verse 46).

4. When these people are cast into the lake of fire, it is by God's definition „*the second DEATH*“, from which there is no resurrection.

„*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*“ (Revelation 21:8).