



# How Does the Grace of God Save and Teach Us Today?

Marc C. Gibson

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age (Tit. 2:11-12).

The passage quoted above is an inspired affirmation that the grace of God brings salvation to all men and teaches us how to live faithfully before God. A careful study of the New Testament Scriptures will help us understand exactly how the grace of God teaches and saves men today.

## Uncertain Sounds About God’s Grace and Man’s Salvation

Uncertain sounds have been heard lately on this subject. It is has been openly suggested that God can save those in non-Christian religions solely by his grace *without* any belief in Jesus as the Son of God or obedience to his will. If you think this too incredible to believe, read the following statements made by a young man on an internet discussion list, and who is presently in the fellowship of a non-institutional congregation

in central Florida:

I don’t know whether or not the Muslims are going to heaven. That decision belongs to God. From the standpoint of preference, I would rather see a billion Muslims in heaven. I would ask God to extend His mercy and Jesus’ atonement to these people based strictly upon His own goodness and nothing else (David Mathews, Berean Spirit List, April 4, 2002).

I tell you it doesn’t matter in the least what you believe. If you are saved you are saved by God’s grace. The perfect won’t live in bigger mansions,

they won’t have more glorious titles in heaven. In heaven, the perfect will find happy company with the lowest sinner, most ignorant believer and most erroneous false teacher (*Ibid.*, March 11, 2002)

The obvious point of this teaching is that God’s saving grace can, and should, be extended to anyone regardless of what he believes, from the devoted Muslim to the most erroneous false teacher

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# The Biblical Definition of Hell

Mike Willis

There are many passages which discuss the subject of hell. In this section, the biblical data will be presented so that one can see what the Bible teaches about the subject. John Gerstner defined the issue, "The issue is really eternal versus non-eternal suffering. The conditionalist notion of temporary suffering prior to annihilation is virtually nothing compared with eternal suffering. . ." (*Repent or Perish* 67). Here are some biblical evidences that show that hell is eternal punishment



• **Matthew 25:41.** In Jesus' parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats at the final judgment, he says to the goats, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." In this passage the place to which the wicked are sent is the place "prepared for the devil and his angels." The destiny of wicked angels is the destiny of wicked men. In the intervening time between the sin of the wicked angels and their eternal punishment, these angels are reserved in a place of torment described as follows:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell (*tartarus*), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Pet. 2:4).

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day (Jude 6).

Already the angels who sinned have suffered for thousands of years as they await the final judgment. They are not in a state of unconscious existence but in a place of torment. Wicked men who pass away are placed in this place along with sinful angels. Peter described the wicked dead as "spirits in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19). This picture is remarkably similar to the intermediate state of the wicked dead as described in Luke 16:19-31.

The final end of the Devil is described in Revelation 20. After his thwarted attempt to oppose God's will, the Devil is ultimately defeated and cast into torment. The text says,

see "Hell (2)" on p. 121

# Is Just Going To Church Enough?

Bobby Witherington

Recently a concerned Christian gave me a small sheet of paper on which the question, “Is just going to church enough?” was written. The request was made that this question be discussed, either in a bulletin article or a sermon. Through this medium, we herein endeavor to honor that very valid request.

To begin, we stress that it is impossible to over emphasize the importance of “going to church” or assembling regularly with fellow saints in Bible study and scriptural worship. The church of our Lord began on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 precious souls, having heard the gospel of Christ preached by Peter, “gladly received his word” and “were baptized” (Acts 2:41,47). And it is more than merely coincidental that the very next verse informs us that these new converts “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). From the very beginning, “going to church,” or assembling to study the Scriptures and to worship God, became a regular part of life for these “new creatures” in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). They were sincere in their obedience, earnest in their faith, fervent in spirit, and persistent in their attempts to be together and spend time in worship. In fact, the first converts in the Gospel Age were people who continued “*daily* with one accord in the temple,” people who broke bread “from house to house,” and who ate their food “with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46). Being of Jewish nationality, they (and their forefathers) had for many generations regarded the temple as the house of God and the place of prayer. “From house to house” they ate their physical food, and for their spiritual nourishment they “continued daily with one accord in the temple.” Is it any wonder therefore that “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47)?

It is through “going to church,” or regularly meeting with the saints to worship God that one is built up in the inner man. Through worshipping God “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24), God is glorified, “the eyes of your understanding” are “enlightened” (Eph. 1:18), saints are “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2), and encouraged to “hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering” (Heb. 10:23). Gradually, through this process, we behold “the glory of the Lord” and are even “changed . . . from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). In other words, morally and spiritually, we become more like the God we worship! Therefore, we should not be surprised to read the following exhortation made to Hebrew saints who were showing signs of spiritual fatigue:

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“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). Yes, we can cite many reasons as to why Christians should assemble regularly to worship God; yea, why they must in order to go to heaven. However, with all this having been said, we still ask, “Is just going to church enough?”

### “Enough” — For What?

Depending on “what” we are talking about, the answer to that question may be either “yes,” or “no.” Please let me explain.

“Yes,” it is “enough” for one whose religion is limited to “the church building” and to “church building” activities. “Yes,” it is “enough” for one whose main interest is in keeping his name in the local church directory, but is not greatly interested in his name being “found written in the book of life” (Rev. 20:15). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who simply desires a casual acquaintance with other members of the church, but has no real interest in fulfilling “the law of Christ” by helping to bear “one another’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who wants to keep one foot in the church and one foot in the world. “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who has no real sense of priorities and feels no need whatever to “seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). “Yes,” it is “enough” for one who enjoys (?) having just enough religion to make himself miserable!

“No,” it is not “enough” for one who understands that “the law of Christ” is intended to regulate and govern every realm of activity — the home, the work place, social obligations, responsibilities to the civil authorities, and one’s spiritual obligations. “No,” it is not “enough” for those who have enough love for God and for lost souls to “go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should “visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should “labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes that private prayers and private devotions (Matt. 6:1-6) must

complement that which is done in public worship. “No,” it is not “enough” for one who believes he should be “given to hospitality” (Rom. 12:13), and that shining as “lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15) involves contact with people who are “in the world,” and most often found at places other than the worship assemblies of the church. “No,” it is not “enough” for one who understands that being a Christian anywhere requires a person to be a Christian everywhere! Please pardon the ungrammatical double negatives in every sentence in this paragraph — a paragraph which ends with another double-negative statement: “No,” it is not “enough” for a person whose greatest ambition is to go to heaven.

### The Religion of Christ Is Not a “Just” One Thing Religion!

To be sure, it would be easier for all of us if the Lord had predicated salvation on “just” one thing — like “just going to church.” Even though many regard regular attendance in worship as drudgery and an extreme display of religious fanaticism, it is really not all that difficult. In fact, as one grows in his love for God and for the people of God, he begins to look forward to regular periods of Bible study and worship. He discovers that it creates contentment and peace within; he develops warm and meaningful friendships; in fact, all things being equal, it even contributes to more happiness in this life, increased health, and greater longevity! Hence, viewed from the overall perspective, regularity in worship becomes much more of a blessing than a burden. So, viewed in this light, it should be evident that “just going to church” is not nearly “enough!”

Because of his abounding love and his “amazing grace,” God made the supreme sacrifice in order to make our salvation possible. He “gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Moreover, Jesus left the portals of glory, came to this sin-cursed world, and died a most painful and shameful death on the cross so that we, through the shedding of his blood, could have “the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). In brief, Jesus voluntarily suffered the punishment we deserve so that we could be saved. He gave his all for us, and he demands that we give our all to him. To be sure, we can never do enough to earn salvation, and we could never be saved apart from his grace (Eph. 2:8; Tit. 2:11, 12). But, to be saved, we must “take up the cross” (and all that that expression implies), and follow him (Matt. 16:24).

### Conclusion

Friend, if your hope is based upon “just” one thing, it is a false hope. If you think that you can “just get baptized,” and then “just go to church,” sit back and go to heaven “like greased lightning,” you need to go “back to the drawing board” and learn what being a Christian is all about. The Lord requires commitment, and the only kind of commitment he will accept is *total commitment!*

## Galatians

by Randy Blackaby

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# Paul vs. Christ: Did They Teach the Same Thing?

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David Dann

In his first letter to Corinth, the apostle Paul writes, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). Paul clearly set himself forth as one whose aim was to imitate the example of Christ in both word and conduct. In addition to being a follower and imitator of the Lord, Paul’s writings claim to be the inspired word of God (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). The apostle Peter refers to those who twist Paul’s writings, “to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16), thereby placing Paul’s teachings on the same level as the rest of the inspired record.

However, Paul is often viewed today as something other than a true imitator and follower of Christ, especially where his recorded teachings are concerned. It is popular for critics of the Bible and liberal theologians of our day to portray Paul as a headstrong renegade who imposed his own rules and philosophies on others, rather than being a loyal and devoted follower of Jesus. Those who paint such a picture would have us believe that the teachings of Paul recorded in the New Testament are somehow different from, and in some cases contradictory to the teachings of Christ. But is there any evidence to support such claims? The only way to settle the question is to take the specific recorded teachings of Paul on a given subject and place them beside the recorded teachings of Christ on the same subject. Did Paul teach what Jesus taught? Or, do their teachings differ from one another? We will now examine four cases where a comparison can clearly be made.

## The Lord’s Supper

**1. Christ’s teaching on the Lord’s supper.** Luke records that Jesus initially delivered the Lord’s supper to his apostles in the following manner: “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you’” (Luke 22:19-20).

**2. Paul’s teaching on the Lord’s supper.** Paul writes

to the Corinthians that, “the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’” (1 Cor. 11:23-25). There is clearly no difference between what Jesus taught and what Paul taught with reference to the Lord’s supper.

## Divorce and Remarriage

**1. Christ’s teaching on divorce and remarriage.** “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery” (Luke 16:18). In Matthew’s account the Lord inserts a single exception to this general rule, giving an innocent mate the right to divorce a spouse guilty of fornication (Matt. 5:32; 19:9).

**2. Paul’s teaching on divorce and remarriage.** In response to the Corinthians’ questions concerning marriage, Paul writes, “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: a wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife” (1 Cor. 7:10-11). Paul recognizes the fact that this command originated with the Lord, and indeed, it is the same as the Lord’s teaching on the subject.

## Submission to Civil Government

**1. Christ’s teaching on submission to civil government.** In Luke we read that the Pharisees asked Jesus, “‘Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ‘Why do you test me? Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription does it have?’ They answered and said, ‘Caesar’s.’ And he said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’” (Luke 20:23-25).

**2. Paul’s teaching on submission to civil government.**

In Romans Paul writes, “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities . . . Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:1, 6-7). One cannot dispute that what Christ said on the subject is the same as what Paul taught about it.

### The Coming of the Lord in Judgment

**1. Christ’s teaching concerning his coming in judgment.** Jesus warned his disciples saying, “But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Luke 12:39-40).

**2. Paul’s teaching concerning the Lord’s coming and judgment.** To the Thessalonians Paul writes, “For you

yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). Paul’s teaching on this subject is exactly the same as what Christ taught.

### Conclusion

To the Galatians Paul writes, “The gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12). Paul’s gospel is identical to that preached by Christ because he received it directly from Christ himself. What about the claim that Paul and Christ differ? As Paul would say, “Let no one deceive you with empty words” (Eph. 5:6). Paul taught what Jesus taught.

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## Jesus Christ — No Greater Friend or Foe

Steven F. Deaton

Jesus Christ can either be our friend or foe. It is wise to seek his friendship and foolish to make him an enemy. Jesus has extended friendship to all men in that he died for all (John 15:13; 2 Cor. 5:14-15). We can accept his invitation and enjoy a relationship that exceeds all others. We will not only be forgiven of our past sins, but also find in him an advocate with the Father when we stumble (Mark 16:16; 1 John 2:1). Our friend will teach us the way to have a life of true joy (John 15:11). We will have confidence in times of trouble and contentment in need (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 Tim. 6:6-8). Jesus is a friend who will never abandon or fail us (John 10:27-28; Heb. 13:5-6).

Though Jesus will not forsake us, we may forsake him (Heb. 3:12). Others never believe and obey to begin with (cf. Acts 13:45-47). In both cases, Jesus still extends friendship, willing that we should repent (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9). However, if we do not repent, but remain stubborn in sin, Jesus is our greatest foe.

The Spirit said, “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jas. 4:4). When one wants to talk, dress, or behave like the world, he has made the Lord his enemy (cf. 1 Pet. 4:3-4). And, when the Lord returns in the day of judgment, no man will be excused or overlooked (Phil. 2:9-11). The Bible tells us that Jesus will return with “His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 1:7-8).

There is no greater friend or foe. With Jesus as our friend, blessings and victory are ensured. With him as our foe, defeat and destruction are unavoidable. Is he your friend or foe?

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# The English Standard Version: New Kid on the Block

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Ron Daly

**The English Standard Version seeks to maintain the beauty and literary elegance of the KJV, the linguistic accuracy and precision of the ASV-1901, the balance of the RSV-1971, and the readability of the NIV.**

To borrow an expression from today's youth: there is a new kid on the block, that is, in the field of Bible translations. It was introduced by its parent company and publisher, Crossway Books, in November 2001. The English Standard Version takes its place among the plethora of English language translations.

The publisher states, "The English Standard Version stands in the classic mainstream of English Bible translations." The translation is described as an "essentially literal" translation "that seeks as far as possible to capture the precise wording of the original text. . . . As such, its emphasis is on 'word for word' correspondence." The ESV is "as literal as possible" while maintaining "clarity of expression and literary excellence."

The textual base is "the masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (2nd ed., 1983) and on the Greek text, the 1993 editions of the Greek New Testament (4th corrected ed.), . . . and *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed.), edited by Nestle and Aland. "The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and other sources were consulted."

The actual translating and revising were performed under the auspices of a translation oversight committee consisting of world class "scholars,"

most of whom held doctorates in English style and literature, or Hebrew/Aramaic, and Greek. Such men as Robert H. Mounce, William D. Mounce, Lelan Ryken, Gordon Wenham, Bruce Winter, etc. Other scholars constituted an advisory council. Some familiar names are Dennis Magary, associate professor of O.T. and Semitic Languages; John Oswalt, Research professor of O.T., Wesley Biblical Seminary; Willem A. Van Gemeren, professor of O.T. and Semitic Languages, Trinity Evangelical; Walter A. Maier III, professor of O.T., Concordia Theological Seminary; Scott Hafeman, professor of Greek and Exegesis, Wheaton College, etc.

The ESV seeks to maintain the beauty and literary elegance of the KJV, the linguistic accuracy and precision of the ASV-1901, the balance of the RSV-1971, and the readability of the NIV. The preface states, "The 1971 RSV text provided the starting point for our work." Archaic language has been removed, most awkward sentences have been rearranged, significant corrections have been made to the text of the RSV, and the translators were not as inclined to emend the text of the Old Testament unless absolutely necessary due to "corruption" in the Hebrew text. There are departures from the Masoretic text, but not nearly as many as were made in the RSV. One can say that the ESV is a conservative revision of the RSV. The text of the English Standard Version is



very similar in cadence and vocabulary to the Revised Standard Version. The ESV does for the RSV what the RSV in some ways did for the ASV; it “tightens up some loose ends.” It benefits from linguistic advances that have been made since the publication of the RSV in the 1950s and the revision in the early 1970s.

The ESV translation team also gave attention to the need of gender accuracy in their work, albeit incomplete. There are many instances in Scripture when the Hebrew words *ach* and *adam*, and the Greek words *tis*, *adelphos*, *adelphoi*, *anthropos*, *anthropoi*, etc. do not mean “man” in the sense of *male(s)*, but mankind, human beings, people, etc. or, “brother” in the sense of a *male member* of a group, but sibling(s) in a family which includes males and females, brothers and sisters. Whether we like it or not, we live in a day when words such as “man,” “men,” “he,” “him,” and “brothers” are often misunderstood to refer only to males. In many biblical contexts they do refer only to men (males), but there are many contexts wherein people of both sexes are addressed by the biblical writers. This is referred to as the generic use of “he,” “him,” “man,” etc. Language is changing and we should strive to be as accurate as possible in the way we communicate. We will have more to say about this issue later. Now let us examine a few texts in the ESV in order to see how it fares when compared to the only legitimate standard for judging accuracy, the original languages of both testaments.

**Genesis 1:2.** The ESV like the ASV, NASB, NKJV, and RSV translates *weruah elohim* as “the Spirit of God.” There is some difference as to how translators interpret the phrase. The NRSV and the Tanakh translate it as “a wind from God.” *Good-speed’s American Translation* reads “a tempestuous wind,” and Knox says “the breath of God.” *Ruah* can mean “wind” or “breath” in certain contexts, and one cannot look at *ruah* alone and

make a rational determination regarding its meaning. In this context at least two factors lead me to believe that the ESV has made the correct choice: (1) *Ruah* is modified by *elohim* which means God in Genesis chapter 1, (2) the presence of the participle (*merahpet*) in the same text figuratively portrays the *ruah* as “hovering” over the face of the waters, that is, ready for action at the command of Yahweh. (Cf. Job 33:4; Ps. 104:1-3, 30 as they contain information about the Spirit’s activity in creation.) Note: it may be possible to opt for the rendering “wind of God” as a picturesque image of the Spirit of God.

**Genesis 2:6.** The ESV retains the rendering “mist” in the text as a translation of the word *ad*. So, the ESV along with the RSV, ASV, KJV, etc. has “a mist going up from the land and was watering the whole face of the ground.” The footnote contains the alternate rendering “spring.” In my judgment, the footnote should be in the text. Though the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (15) gives “mist” as the definition for *ad*, in the Septuagint it is translated by *pege* which means “spring” or “fountain.” *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, edited by William L. Holladay (3) suggests that the reference is to “the subterranean *fresh water stream*, surface water.” *A Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, suggests an Akkadian root meaning, “subterranean stream of fresh water.” Modern scholarship seems to understand *ad* in this way. Most modern translations reflect such lexicography (cf. NIV, NRSV, TANAKH, NASB-95 margin). Holy Bible by Ronald Knox says “spring-water,” and George Lamsa’s *Bible From the Ancient Eastern Manuscripts* reads “spring.” One wonders why the ESV chooses the old reading in this passage.

**Leviticus 10:1-2.** We read here that Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu

“offered unauthorized fire before the Lord.” This is a departure from the old rendering “strange,” though it is placed in the footnote. The Hebrew word *zar* has a range of meanings applicable to various contexts. It can mean “strange, foreign, unholy, forbidden, completely different, and connotatively, unauthorized” (BDB [266]; *Bilingual Dictionary of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament* [265]; Holladay [91-92]). The ESV rendering in this passage is excellent. The context seems to make it clear that Nadab and Abihu’s infraction was in doing something for which there was no divine authority. They offered fire that “he had not commanded them.”

**1 Kings 18:27.** We have very colorful words from the mouth of Elijah, the prophet of God pertaining to Baal. Instead of having Baal “gone aside” NASB-95, RSV or “pursuing” KJV, or “busy” NKJV, NIV, the ESV says “he is relieving himself!” The Holy Spirit, through the writer uses the word *sig* which in this context means to have a “bowel movement” (Holladay, 350). The *Bilingual Dictionary* (919) says it means “excrement, motion” and gives the translation “he has to go to the privy” for 1 Kings 18:27. Some older versions understood this as the meaning of *sig*, e.g. *Taylor’s Living Bible Paraphrased* reads “sitting on the toilet.”

**Isaiah 7:14.** The ESV says “Behold, the virgin shall conceive. . . .” Bible students are aware that much controversy has swirled around the meaning of the word *almah* in this text through the years. In the literature that the ESV’s publisher sent out a year or so prior to its release, it was stated that this verse would be corrected to read “virgin” rather than “young woman” as found in the RSV. *Almah* is the feminine counterpart of the word *ehlem* which means lad, stripling, young man, boy. It is used to describe David in 1 Samuel 17:56. The ESV translates it “boy” in the Samuel text. (See also 1 Sam. 20:22, ESV “youth”). The ASV and NASB-95 translate *almah* with

the word “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14, and they have a marginal note that gives the alternate rendering “or, maiden.” In our language the closest equivalent for *almah* may be maiden, girl, or young woman with the implied reference to virginity. The Septuagint uses *parthenos* as does Matthew who wrote by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:23). Isaiah is definitely Messianic. Readers should have been made aware that *almah* has a wider range of meaning by a footnote. The ESV doesn’t translate the term as virgin in all of its occurrences (Exod. 2:8). Neither do the KJV, NKJV, ASV, or NASB. Now we turn our attention to a few texts in the New Testament.

**Matthew 1:18.** Both the ASV and the RSV translated the Greek phrase *ek pneumatos hagiou* as “of the Holy Spirit.” This rendering makes it appear that the Holy Spirit was the source of Jesus’ miraculous conception. Matthew isn’t saying that the Spirit was the source of Jesus’ conception but he was the “agent” that the Father used to bring it about. The ESV reads “from the Holy Spirit.” It would be better to read “by (or through) the Holy Spirit” (NIV, NASB-95).

**Matthew 16:18.** For some unexplained and puzzling reason the ESV returns to the KJV’s rendering “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” It does have a footnote that says, “Greek the gates of Hades,” but why is that not in the text? The Greek says *pulai hadou ou katischusousin autes*. It is perfectly clear and it doesn’t say “hell.” The ASV, NASB-95, and NIV say “hades.” The gates of Hades is likely an idiomatic expression meaning “the powers of death” or something equivalent (RSV).

**Matthew 16:19.** The ESV reads “shall be bound in heaven . . . shall be loosed in heaven.” The Greek has *estai dedemenon . . . estai lelumenon*. The future periphrastic perfect participles *dedemenon*, *lelumenon* are probably better translated as “shall have been bound,” and “shall have been loosed” (NASB-95, NIV, and ESV footnotes). It is not an easy issue to decide. I do respect the ESV for making the reader aware that there is at least one more translation option.

**Matthew 28:1.** The ASV says, “Now late on the sabbath day” as a translation of the Greek phrase *opse de sabbaton*. The ASV translators who did the work on Matthew missed the mark in this passage. The RSV corrected the rendering and the ESV follows suit. Even the older lexicons of Thayer (471) and Robinson (538) define *opse* to mean “having just passed, at the close of, after the Sabbath,” but the ASV doesn’t reflect that meaning.

**Mark 6:18** — “For John had been saying to Herod.” Here the ESV’s rendering of the imperfect active indicative Greek word *elegen* is admirable, “had been saying.” This indicates John’s tenacity. He repeatedly told Herod about

his unlawful marriage to Herodias.

**John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 4:9.** The ESV along with the RSV renders the adjective *monogenes* as “only.” *Monogenes* is used in contexts that are designed to indicate the uniqueness of Jesus. He is the only one of his kind, not an only begotten Son as the ASV, KJV, NKJV, and NASB say in their texts. At least the NASB has a marginal note that states, “unique, only one of His kind.” The ESV’s rendering is perfectly legitimate.

**John 1:18** “at the Father’s side” for the Greek phrase *eis ton kolpon tou patros*. This is one of the places where the ESV chooses to be idiomatic in its rendering of the original text. Literally, *kolpon* means “bosom,” but it is obvious that John is not speaking literally in this text. *Kolpon* is used figuratively to describe the closest possible relationship, communion, or closeness, hence we read “at the Father’s side,” that is, Jesus is in a position of honor, privilege, and dearness to the Father. The NRSV is terrific at this place. It says “close to the Father’s heart.”

**Acts 2:38.** Like the RSV, the ESV has the traditional rendering “for the forgiveness of your sins.” The ASV says “unto the remission of your sins,” and the NRSV says “so that your sins may be forgiven.” The NRSV is especially clear as to the meaning of the phrase *eis aphesin ton hamartion humon*. Nevertheless one can learn the teaching of the passage from the ESV.

**Hebrews 6:6.** “If they then fell away” in the ESV seems to express a hypothetical possibility in English. This is the same type rendering as the KJV and the RSV. In the Greek there is no hypothetical, but an actual case of apostasy. The original reads *kai parapesontas*, “an having fallen away.” The ASV, NASB-95, and the NRSV have it right. The writer warns against *actual* apostasy!

**2 Peter 3:10** — “will be exposed” is different to the traditional reading “will be burned up” (KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB-95, RSV). The NRSV says “will be disclosed” and the NIV says “will be laid bare.” The ESV, NIV, and NRSV are all similar. What is the correct reading of the text? What is the meaning of “will be exposed,” etc.? The traditional reading “will be burned up” translates *katakaesetai*. “Will be exposed,” “will be disclosed,” and “will be laid bare” translate *heurethesetai*, the older of the two manuscript readings. If the older manuscript reading is to be preferred, and I believe it is, the meaning may be that when the heavens disappear with a roar (*rhoizedon*) and the heavenly bodies are burned up and dissolved, the evil works of mortals and all else will be laid bare or exposed before the judgment of God Almighty (cf. Heb. 4:13). There will be no place to run and/or hide! All things will be exposed, discovered, or peeled back! The ESV’s choice of rendering seems to be the preferable one in this passage.

The ESV attempts to be consistent in its renderings

where possible. *Episkopos* becomes “overseer” instead of “bishop” as in the ASV and RSV (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; 1 Pet. 2:25). *Porneia* is translated “sexual immorality” instead of the usual fornication (Matt. 5:32; 15:19; 19:9; John 8:41; Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:13, 18; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3, etc.— many other examples could be cited). No translation that strives to be linguistically accurate can be entirely consistent in rendering the same Greek word by the same English in all its occurrences. The contextual usage of a word must be considered. Context may give different “flavors” to Hebrew and Greek words, so the choice of words in the receptor language will vary.

**Gender inclusive or gender accurate language.** Many times language that appears to be masculine in the sacred text isn’t only to or for males, but females are also included. Some modern translations attempt to address this issue that is sometimes laden with difficulty. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek are not identical to English and they do not always function alike. Allowances have to be made. One such allowance is this: a way has to be found to accommodate the transferral of ideas from one language to another while maintaining strict accuracy wherever and whenever possible. How does this apply to trying to be gender accurate in translation?

I remember quoting Mark 16:16 years ago during a gospel meeting, and I was approached by a young person who asked, “Mr. Daly, is Mark 16:16 only talking to men?” The question was prompted by the use of the masculine pronoun “he.” I answered, “No, it is speaking to males and females, people in general.” I began quoting it as “The person who believes and is immersed will be saved.”

The ASV says in Acts 17:30: “The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent.” Does the word “men” mean that God only commands males to repent? Of course not, but how do we know this? First, “men” (*anthropois*) is generally used generically to mean human beings, people. Second, I know that it is so used in this passage because a *woman* is named among those who believed Paul’s preaching (v. 34). The ESV and NRSV read “he commands all people everywhere to repent.” Right on the money.

Another word in the NT which has been discussed quite frequently is *adelphoi*, brothers. The old versions generally translated it with the word “brethren.” Most modern versions use the plural “brothers.” Should we understand the word “brothers” as having a male connotation in the new testament? It depends on the context. It seems to me that when a congregation is being addressed that *adelphoi* also includes the sisters. Therefore, even though the denotative meaning of “*adelphoi*” may be “brothers,” the connotative or applied meaning in most NT contexts, especially when

a congregation is addressed is “brothers and sisters” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-11; Phil. 4:1-2).

Long before the women’s liberation movement blossomed, and before any agenda generated religious movements took shape, the older Greek lexicons indicated that *adelphos* was often a gender inclusive term in the new covenant. Edward Robinson’s Lexicon, 1879 edition (12) says that *adelphos* is used with regard to “a brother, kinsman, relative, a fellow-citizen, fellow-man, friend, companion, . . . spec. a brother of the same faith, a Christian brother.” Joseph Henry Thayer’s revision of *Grimm’s Wilke’s Lexicon* (11) states, “a fellow-believer, united to another by the bond of affection; so most frequently of Christians, constituting as it were but a single family.”

W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich’s translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer’s lexicon says on page 24 of the introduction, that “On *adelphos* (1) there is no longer any doubt in my mind that *adelphoi* can mean ‘brothers and sisters’ in any number. There are passages that scarcely permit any other interpretation.” They cite some references to support the conclusion. The ESV places “brothers” in the text for *adelphoi* and will often indicate in the footnotes “or brothers and sisters.” The plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) refers to siblings in a family. Translating *adelphoi* as “brothers and sisters” in certain contexts does *not* endorse or promote giving women leadership roles such as preachers, elders, deacons, song leaders, or as teachers over men (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-2, 8, 11). We are simply noting that gender accuracy is a necessary part of the translation process.

In conclusion, the ESV is an excellent translation. It like *all others* is not perfect, but it is worthy of study. One can learn God’s plan of redemption from the ESV. In my judgment it is as “accurate” (if not more so) than the NASB, but it is more readable. It doesn’t read quite as smoothly as the NIV, but it avoids many of the pitfalls of the NIV because it is built on a different theory of translation. Rather than attempting to be “dynamic equivalent,” it attempts to be a “verbal” translation where possible, and idiomatic where necessary!

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Good deeds speak for themselves. The tongue only interprets their eloquence.

# East Shelby Church in Collierville, Tennessee

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Doug Seaton

The East Shelby Church of Christ began meeting in its new location on October 7, 2001. The church is blessed with five elders and fifteen deacons. The elders have been active in shepherding the flock. The deacons serve with fervency. Doug Seaton has been preaching for this congregation since June 1989. The congregation is blessed with many able teachers, song leaders, and workers in various ways.

The congregation began in April 1980 when 40-50 Christians began worshipping in the old Germantown city hall at the corner of Poplar Pike and Germantown Road. Within three years a meeting place was built at South Germantown Road. The congregation then known as the Burlington Church of Christ (due to the old name of the subdivision it was located in) met in the new building on January 23, 1983. For the first eight years of the work, Sparky Owen supported himself and preached for the church. The move from the Burlington subdivision became necessary after the building was enlarged then outgrown. The new facility will seat about 450-500 people, and is equipped to meet future growth needs in this community. We currently have a little over half of that number; so we built with plans to teach the gospel to many more people in this community.

As a group of Christians, our determination is to follow Christ in all things and to truly be what he wants us to be.

The Lord has blessed us with many opportunities to teach people of all races in this community and elsewhere. We have been involved in preaching the gospel in many parts of the United States, Vietnam, Romania, Mexico, Argentina, and India. Currently we are supporting three preachers full time in Romania, and partially supporting another working in Texas and Mexico. Several local members have been involved in teaching the gospel overseas with more hoping to take advantage of those opportunities in the future. Like many local churches in our society, we are constantly fighting the immorality of society with its weakened standards and the tremendous draw of the world. The challenge now and in the future is to remain doctrinally sound, to edify the members and help them be strong in the Lord, and keep the zeal necessary to spread God's word. May God give us the strength to succeed in this effort! We must "... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

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## “Blessed Are the Meek”

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Jim McDonald

The statement, “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,” the third of the “beatitudes” from Matthew 5, is found also in Psalms 37:1, “But the meek shall inherit the land.” Following the Lord’s promised blessings upon the meek, New Testament writers enjoin that character to be present in the lives of all disciples (1 Tim. 6:11; Gal. 5:23).

Some things are difficult to distinguish between such as soul and spirit. Some, realizing the difficulty in distinguishing between “meekness” and “humility” conclude that the two are the same. It is true the two are “close kin,” but they are not the same. Albert Barnes defines meekness as “patience in the reception of injuries. It is the opposite of sudden anger and malice and long harbored vengeance.” W.E. Vine has this definition: “It is the temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good and thus without disputing or resisting.”

Often we may learn what a thing is by eliminating what it is not. Some view meekness as “cowardice” but this is not correct. Paul was a meek man but the way in which he faced the trials of life and even death itself reveal a man of great courage. Jesus was meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29). Was he a coward? Hardly. Some consider meekness as “weakness,” that one acts as he does because he cannot do otherwise. That is not correct either. When Jesus was arrested and taken in the garden and impetuous Peter drew his sword in the Lord’s defense, Jesus told him, “Put up thy sword into its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt. 27:52f). Others define meekness as a failure to speak up for one’s self or to contend for one’s rights, or one who is easily dominated by another. Again, such is a false concept. Jesus spoke up for himself as certainly did Paul. Yet, both are examples of meekness (John 18:23; Acts 16:37; 25:11).

What is meekness, then? How is it that the meek “inherit the earth”? W.E. Vine defines it: “The common assumption is that when a man is meek it is because he cannot help himself. . . . Described negatively, meekness is the oppose of self-assertiveness, and self-interest. It is equanimity of

spirit that is neither elated nor cast down simply because it is not occupied with self at all.” Meekness is willingness to take wrong patiently. “For this is acceptable if for conscience toward God a man endureth griefs, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye sin, and are buffeted for it, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Pet. 2:19ff).

Meekness is gentleness is dealing with others. Strength is often connected to meekness. Paul asked the Corinthians, “What will ye? Shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness (meekness)?” (1 Cor. 4:20). See also Titus 3:1-2; 2 Timothy 2:24ff. The Galatians were exhorted to correct and restore those who were “overtaken in a trespass” in a spirit of gentleness (meekness) (Gal. 6:1). Peter urged that all sanctify in our hearts Christ as Lord, being always ready to give answer to those who ask concerning the hope within us, yet with meekness and fear (1 Pet. 3:15).

Aside from the above cited passages, we are urged to receive the word with meekness (Jas. 1:21). We are to show meekness in the deeds we do (Jas. 3:13). We must show meekness if we would reflect a walk worthy of our calling (Eph. 4:2). How do the meek “inherit the earth”? To some, that promise is of a future earth reign with Christ, but such would make the blessing beyond the pale of our Lord’s intentions. Would it be consistent with other beatitudes to make the blessing of one physical in nature while the others were spiritual? The “poor in spirit” receive the Kingdom of Heaven; “they who mourn” are comforted; those “who hunger and thirst after righteousness” are filled; the “pure in heart” see God; “peacemakers” are called the sons of God. Why make “inherit the earth” a physical blessing when the blessings attached to the others is obviously spiritual? To inherit is to enjoy or share and those who are meek enjoy the earth while in it more so than those who are of a different temperament. They enjoy what God sends; they have God’s care and protection.

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So “put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved,  
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# Catholic Contradictions

Aaron Erhardt

**CATHOLICISM:** Mary remained a virgin after birth of Jesus.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “He came to his native place and taught the people in their synagogue. They were astonished and said, Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds? Is he not the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother named Mary, and his brothers James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas? Are not his sisters all with us? Where did this man get all this?” (Matt. 13:54-56).

**CATHOLICISM:** Call parish priest “Father.”

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven” (Matt. 23:9).

**CATHOLICISM:** Peter was not married.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “Jesus entered the house of Peter, and saw his mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever” (Matt. 8:14).

**CATHOLICISM:** Baptism is a sprinkling, not a burial.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4).

**CATHOLICISM:** Pope is head of the church.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “For the husband is head of his wife just as Christ is head of the church, he himself the savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23).

**CATHOLICISM:** Bishops cannot be married.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Therefore, a bishop must be irreproachable, married only once, temperate, self-controlled, decent, hospitable, able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:1-2).

**CATHOLICISM:** Forbid eating meats during Lent; forbid marriage to clergy.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the last times some shall turn away from the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and demonic instructions through the hypocrisy of liars with branded consciences. They forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

**CATHOLICISM:** Children inherit sin from parents.

**CATHOLIC BIBLE:** “Only the one who sins will die. The son shall not be charged with the guilt of his father, nor shall the father be charged with the guilt of his son. The virtuous man’s virtue shall *be his own*, as the wicked man’s wickedness shall *be his*” (Ezek. 18:20).

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# Jewish Apocalyptic Literature

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Rick Billingsley

**Although the Apocalyptic writings are spurious (not part of the inspired writings of the OT Scripture), is there any value in studying them? Yes! Many of these documents are valuable because they mirror with some accuracy the religious, political, and social conditions in Judea following the close of the Old Testament period.**

The words “apocalyptic” and “apocalypse” have been revived as everyday words in the vocabulary of politicians, military strategists, novelists such as Hal Lindsey, and religious leaders. The use of the Greek title *apokalypsis* (revelation) denotes a special class of literature or theological composition apparently written in the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Included in this group of writings known as the Jewish pseudepigrapha are 1 and 2 Enoch, Jubilees, 2 and 3 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Abraham. Modern scholars would like to include in this group the whole book of Daniel, Isaiah 24-27, 56-66, Ezekiel 38-39, Joel 2:28-3:21, and Zechariah 9-14.

This group of writings concerns itself with the renewal of faith and the reordering of life on the basis of a vision of a prototypical heavenly order (a regard of the heavenly world as the real world and the source of the transformation awaited by the faithful) revealed to a religious community through a prophet. Two points are often made in this literature. (1) Apocalyptic represents a crisis literature, and (2) apocalyptic writings are intended to offer comfort and hope to the afflicted.

## **The Origin of Apocalyptic Literature**

Scholars are divided over the origin of this literature. Some believe that it originated in the Zoroastrianism, the ancient Persian religion; taken over by Judaism in the exilic (the Per-

sian captivity) and post-exilic (after the Persian captivity) periods. H.H. Rowley stated, “. . . the influence of Persian thought must be recognized. For alongside the eschatological passages in the prophets we must set the ideas of Zoroastrian eschatology, which were doubtless widely known in the Persian Empire. Similarly, Persian angelology contributed to Jewish thought” (*The Relevance of Apocalyptic* 38). On the other hand, scholars like Paul D. Hanson believe that the Jewish Apocalyptic began with the Old Testament prophets. “The prophetic tradition lies in the background of most apocalyptic writings is clear, and indeed the important connection between biblical prophecy and Jewish apocalyptic can be demonstrated by tracing the unbroken development leading from prophetic eschatology to apocalyptic eschatology” (*The Old Testament Apocalyptic* 33).

Joining the ranks with Hanson are men like D.S. Russell (*The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic*) and Stanley Brice Frost (*Old Testament Apocalyptic*).

I have to agree with Hanson. The similarities between the Old Testament prophets and the Jewish Apocalyptic are too great to be a coincidence, and since the Old Testament prophets wrote their material long before the Jewish apocalyptic writers, there is no doubt that the Old Testament prophets did influence the thinking and the writings of apocalyptic writers.

It is believed that the Jewish apoca-



lyptic writers tried to keep the prophecy of Israel alive after the teaching of Malachi. It is also an accepted fact that the prophecy of Israel did come to an end after the post-exilic prophets. This list of prophets included Haggai, Zechariah, Obadiah, Joel, and Malachi.

The Jewish historian Josephus (A.D. 40-100) offers explicit information concerning the approximate date when it was believed that God-inspired utterance had come to an end. In a passage upholding the trustworthiness of the Hebrew books over against those of the Greeks, he indicates that in his day there were twenty-two books of an inspired character among the Jews which contained "the record of all time." Of these, five are the books of Moses; thirteen, representing the period from the death of Moses till the reign of Artaxerxes, were written by "the prophets subsequent to Moses." Josephus stated, "From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written, but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier (i.e. the biblical) records, because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets." The prophetic succession, which began with Moses, came to an end in the reign of Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) whom Josephus identifies elsewhere with the Ahasuerus who appears in the Book of Esther. Thus Josephus gives concrete form to the prevailing belief that prophetic inspiration, which had commenced with Moses, ceased in the fifth century B.C. in the time of Artaxerxes, which was also the time of Ezra the scribe.

The teachings of Josephus are substantiated by the rabbinic tradition. In *Pirke 'Abot I.I*, we read, "Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua, to the

Elders, and the Elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue." The Great Synagogue was a body of 120 elders, including many prophets who came up from the exile with Ezra.

Thus the Jewish apocalyptic writers tried to keep the prophetic inspiration alive through their writings. That is why they were written in Pseudonym-



ity style, a style that employed the name of an Old Testament character as a means of validating their fictitious revelations.

#### Differences Between Prophets and the Apocalyptic Writers

Post-exilic prophecy undoubtedly supplied some of the codes and raw materials utilized by the later apocalypses. However, after a thorough examination of the two, one can clearly see a vast difference between these two pieces of literature.

The Old Testament prophets have been regarded as a unique feature of Israel's religion. The prophets claimed to be the mouthpiece of God, and their utterance was commonly introduced by the words "thus saith Jehovah." These prophets were guided by the Holy Spirit. "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet. 1:20-21). The prophets claimed to receive their revelation from God. The central content of their revelation

was the will of God. It is true that the prophets did at times receive revelations by dreams and visions (Isa. 6; Ezek. 1; Jer. 24, Heb. 1:1-2), however, these dreams and visions were not the central theme of their message. Unlike the apocalyptic writers, the center of interest of their revelations was solutions to the problems of evil and the coming of God's kingdom through dreams and visions or heavenly journeys.

As I mentioned above, most modern scholars want to place parts of Isaiah, parts of Zechariah, parts of Ezekiel, and the whole book of Daniel into the time frame of the apocalyptic writers. They claim that these revelations could have been written during the time of 300 B.C.

through 130 B.C.. Their reasoning is that these revelations contain and mention in detail future events of history that relate to the time of apocalyptic writers. This is most unfortunate, for this takes away from the divine inspiration of these prophecies. A way to determine a true prophet was the fulfillment of his prophecy.

The Jewish Apocalyptic books deal with the end of the present world order and with the next world. The biblical prophets were primarily preachers, concerned with current problems of their own generation and nation.

The Jewish Apocalyptic writers wrote in names of Old Testament characters to give validity to their pious fraud. The revelation of Old Testament prophets was written by a living author who was well known to those to whom he wrote.

These apocalyptic writers not only borrowed an OT character as the alleged author of his book, he often rewrote the history of Israel from the time of the alleged author to his

own time, but cast it in the form of prophecy. The biblical prophets were men known to their audiences, who took their stand in their own historical situations and proclaimed their messages to their own generations against the background of the coming kingdom of God. Each prophetic writing reflects the events of the author's own time, and also the prediction of both historical and eschatological (eschatology is a study of the last things, OT eschatology is the teaching of the coming Messiah and his kingdom, Luke 24:44 Acts 3: 21-26) that yet lay in the future.

The prophets saw a dynamic connection between the immediate historical future and the more distant eschatological future. For instance, Amos describes the day of the Lord as a day of darkness, when a historical judgment would overtake Israel (5:18-20). The apocalypists lost this connection between history and eschatology. The present and the future were seen as quite unrelated. The apocalypists could not understand the prophetic interpretation of present historical experience as God's judgment upon his people for their apostasy, for Israel was no longer faithful. There are many other contrasts between the Old Testament prophets and the apocalyptic writers.

**Guidelines to Understanding Apocalyptic Literature**

Although the apocalyptic writings are spurious (not part of the inspired writings of the OT Scripture), is there any value in studying them? Yes! Many of these documents are valuable because they mirror with some accuracy the religious, political, and social conditions in Judea following the close of the Old Testament period. In the understanding of these writings one must ask such questions as, who is being addressed? By whom? In what setting? And for what reason?

Here are a few other guidelines one might want to consider:

**1. Read with the ear of an ancient listener.** Apocalyptic literature can be very confusing. Pay close attention to people and events.

**2. Be sensitive to the setting of crisis.** Apocalyptic literature may have received its roots from biblical prophets but the immediate circumstances are what sprung these messages of hope.

**3. Expect symbolic language.** The events described in apocalyptic literature are often presented with literary techniques found more commonly in poetry: metaphor, hyperbole, personification, irony, numerical patterns and so forth.

**4. Recognize the function of apocalypse.** It was a message of hope for the oppressed, a warning to the oppressors, and a call to commitment for those unsure of their loyalties.

**Conclusion**

It would be wrong to classify the Old Testament prophecies as apocalyptic literature, for apocalyptic literature had its beginning with such books as 1 and 2 Enoch. However, to say that apocalyptic imagery is not found among the prophets is not accurate as well. If we are correct that apocalyptic literature is a spin off of the Old Testament prophets, then one would find apocalyptic imagery among the prophets.

The Old Testament prophets used such imagery as cosmic imagery, extending to the whole universe. The elemental forces of nature — sun, moon, stars, sea, and mountains are part of their prophetic teachings. Symbolism of colors and numbers were often used. White is the color of purity; red, of either evil or warfare; black, of death. The numbers three, seven, ten, and twelve (and their multiples) signified perfection, completeness, fulfillment, and victory. Six is a sinister number— approaching seven but falling fatally short. Imagery of suffering and terror is prominently used by the prophets. Earthquakes, famines, wars, and people fleeing to the mountains were all employed by the prophets.

The same guidelines used to study the apocalyptic writings ought to be used in studying the prophetic teachings of the Bible. More perhaps than any parts of the Bible, the visions of the prophets must be studied in the light of three things: (1) a neutral category of images that simply portray future events as neither good nor bad, (2) a category of decidedly negative images including cosmic collapse and moral degeneration, and (3) a category of blissful images, the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom.



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# God Said of Citizens in His New Kingdom: “All Shall Know Me”

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Ron Halbrook

Jesus Christ is the mediator of a new and better covenant, fulfilling the promises and prophecies of an old covenant. The Old Covenant is the Law of Moses. The New Covenant is the gospel of Christ. As Hebrews 8:6-13 shows, the two covenants differ in how men become citizens of the old and new kingdoms. In the old kingdom of Israel, its citizens had to be taught to know the Lord. God promised that this would not be necessary among the citizens of his new kingdom, because, “All shall know me.”

## Hebrews 8:6-13

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 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: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes Jeremiah 31:31-34 to show this prophecy of a New Covenant to replace the Law of Moses is fulfilled in the gospel of Christ. Under the Law of Moses, a male child was circumcised on the eighth day to signify his acceptance by God among his people (see Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12; Luke 2:21-24). That child then had to be taught to “know the Lord” as he grew older. He was a part of the nation of Israel long before he knew it, and

not by his own choice.

Under the New Covenant of Christ, it is not necessary to teach the citizens of the kingdom of Christ to “know the Lord” because only people of a responsible age can enter, and they enter only by their own choice. If a person is willing to hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believe it (Mark 16:16), repent of sins (Acts 2:38), confess Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:9-10), and be immersed in water (Mark 16:16), then that person’s sins are thus forgiven and he enters the kingdom of God (John 3:5; Col. 1:13-14). God says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Therefore, everyone in the new kingdom of Christ knows the Lord. Infants do not enter this kingdom because they are already in fellowship with God and have not sinned. Also, they could not chose to enter the kingdom. Only sinners who seek God’s forgiveness in the way he appointed can enter this kingdom.

In short, we must teach men to know the Lord before they can enter his kingdom, not after. Therefore, it is very urgent that we preach the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16-17). “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Only those who hear and obey the gospel enter the kingdom. Through gospel preaching, God puts his laws into the minds of people who wish to be citizens in his new kingdom. God said that the citizens of this kingdom will not teach their fellow citizens, “‘Know the Lord:’ for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.”

We commit the Golden Rule  
to memory and forget to  
commit it to life.

# Classic Idolatry Alive and Well

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Larry Ray Hafley

Classic idolatry, the iniquity of antiquity, the idolatry censured at Sinai and profaned by the prophets, is alive and well in twenty-first century America (Exod. 20:3-5; Ps. 135:15-18; Isa. 40-44; Jer. 10).

As proof thereof, we extract the following from *The Providence (Rhode Island) Journal*, and published in the *Yakima (Washington) Herald-Republic*, 12/9/00, 2F). Read it and marvel and mourn:

Isis is the Egyptian goddess known for her veiled beauty and . . . power. She molded a serpent from soil. She raised her husband from the dead. Now if she can only fix Laura Schmidt's 1986 Chevrolet. . . .

It is a rainy . . . night and Schmidt, a 22 year-old art gallery director . . . sits in a circle on the floor . . . with four friends. . . . Then she drops bits of cedar and spicy scented patchouli in a cannister and lights candles. Then she announces the evening's mission: to cast off illness, mean people, and one more thing. "We'd like to banish poverty . . . and, if possible, for my car to find a better place and a new one to come."

Sarah Slater, 31, agrees: "Yes, we need to do some automobile healing. Mine is running pretty rough."

The women are part of the Cauldron of Annwyn Pagan Society . . . started by Schmidt in 1998. . . . They are part of a number of spirituality seekers — many of them young women disillusioned with the female role models in traditional religions — who are engaged in goddess-worship . . . the female deities that grace ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Celtic lore. . . . It's spawned "Goddess 2000," a national art project with the slogan, "A Goddess on Every Block."

Schmidt . . . one of six . . . contacts for Goddess 2000 . . . arranged an event . . . at which people painted stones with images of goddesses. . . .

"It's so much easier to think of a girl looking over you," Slater says.

Schmidt . . . (is) the daughter of a Roman Catholic mother and Reform Jewish father. Mary, the Virgin mother, seemed distant to her. She turned to paganism in her teens. Her family had a fondness for superstition; they turned their St. Joseph statue upside down when they heard it might

help sell their house.

. . . She relies on her own prop: a goddess card deck . . . this deck contains 48 goddesses from ancient tales. Each woman picks a card and reads the message on it. . . .

It's very empowering . . . for women to worship a deity that resembles them, and to feel — as they delve into the tarot card reading and witchcraft — that they have a handle on the unknown. Say a woman has trouble in relationships. She could turn to Aphrodite, the goddess of love. . . . Does it work . . . these requests for female divine intervention?

Eclipse Neilson, an author, teaches a women's spirituality class in Providence. "What we all agree on is that the goddess is alive and well in the year 2000," she says.

The cauldron devotees say they don't use their gods and goddesses and their witchcraft spells on the mundane. A spell is a last resort, Schmidt says.

But it is done. When one woman received nasty e-mails from a bitter ex-boyfriend, the group went to Lincoln Woods to perform a "healing ritual."

"By Wednesday, the person causing her trouble — his e-mail server went down and he could not send her messages anymore," Schmidt says.

When her husband's boss was being cruel, they bound up a voodoo doll with string. The boss apologized, she says.

**Comments:** It is alright to believe that one may turn a statue upside down to sell a house, but it is crazy to believe Jesus calmed the sea; it is reverent to believe that one may paint an image on a rock and "heal" an automobile, but it is insane to believe that Jesus, the Son of God, rose from the dead! It is "spiritual" to believe that one has performed a "healing ritual" when she miraculously shuts down an enemy's e-mail server, but I am stupid when I shut down my own server by hitting the wrong key! It is somehow a "divine intervention" when one binds a "voodoo doll with string" to elicit an apology, but that a woman was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' garment is absurd. "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry" (1 Cor. 10:14; 1 John 5:21).

# Allah Is God

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William V. Beasley

The patriarch Abraham, the “friend of God” (Jas. 2:23), had two sons. Actually, Abraham had eight sons, but the six sons by Keturah (Gen. 25:1-2) do not figure prominently in the history of the world’s great religions, the subject of this study. The first born son of Abraham was Ishmael, the son of Hagar, Sarah’s handmaid. In her old age, after the normal age of childbearing (Gen. 18:11-13), Sarah conceived and bore Isaac, the son of promise (Gen. 17:15-19).

Three of the great (i.e., large) world religions look to God as Creator and seek to serve/worship the same God, “the God of Abraham” (Gen. 26:24; 28:13; Exod. 3:6; 1 Kings 18:36; 11 Chron. 30:6; Matt. 22:32; Acts 7:32). These three great world religions, in the order of their coming into existence, are Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The three in order of size are Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

Christianity of the New Testament, before man’s corrupting influence introduced countless changes, was/is the logical, spiritual offspring of Judaism: “So that the law is become our tutor (to bring us) unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now faith that is come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:24-25, ASV). Jesus Christ, his work and his kingdom, the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 16:16) are the fulfillment of numerous Old Testament prophecies. Even the acceptance and salvation of the Gentile peoples of the world, so despised by the Jews, were plainly foretold in the Old Testament (Isa. 2:2; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 62:2; Pss. 18:49; 22:27, 28; 46:10; 47:8; 67:2, 4; 110:6; Mal. 1:11, 14). Therefore, most Christians today accept the fact that both Jews (those living today as well as those who lived in the first century) and Christians

worship, or at least attempt to worship, the same God. To say that the Jews attempt to worship or even worship the same God as Christians is to say nothing about that worship being acceptable before the Almighty. Using the language of the New Testament, “They profess that they know God” (Tit. 1:16a). Jews living today “profess that they worship God.”

Jews, out of a deep reverence for God (mixed, perhaps, with a degree of superstition) refused to speak the name of God. Thus, in the Old Testament (especially in the King James Version) we find “LORD” (all capital letters, although the last three letters are in smaller type) in the place of the name of God. In reality, it should be, if transliterated “Yahweh” (or “Jehovah”); or, if truly translated, “the existing One” (Brown-Driver-Briggs). This name for God is found some five thousand times in the Old Testament, and is most often rendered “Jehovah” in the American Standard Version. To the Jews, Yahweh (Jehovah) was spoken of as LORD; to the Christian, Yahweh (Jehovah) is, as Paul and Peter wrote, “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3).

To the Jews, LORD (Yahweh, Jehovah) was “the God of Abraham (of Isaac and of Jacob).” “The God of Abraham” is found twelve times in the Old Testament and five times in the New Testament. Most of the references in the Old Testament also mention Isaac and/or Jacob (Gen. 31:42, 53; Exod. 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5; 1 Kings 18:36; 1 Chron. 29:18; 2 Chron. 30:6) and all of the New Testament passages (Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; Acts 3:13; 7:32) speak, in the immediate context, of God as the God of Abraham,

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Brethren, the article above shows us a number of things. First, it testifies to the abysmal ignorance that pervades our allegedly “enlightened” modern age. Second, it reveals that men will worship something, that there is a hunger for spiritual knowledge and a desire for divine aid. Third, it demands that Christians exert every effort to “preach the gospel to every creature” in order “to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of

Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Mark 16:15; Acts 26:18).

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Isaac, and Jacob. Islam looks back to Abraham as both the first *monotheist* (believer in one God) and the first Muslim. Muslims are striving, as are Jews, to worship/serve the God of Abraham. Islam does not speak as readily of the God of Isaac and of Jacob because they claim to be the spiritual descendants of Abraham's first son, Ishmael. The God known to the Jews as LORD or the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and to the Christian as Yahweh (Jehovah) or "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3) is commonly referred to by Muslims as Allah. Allah is God. Actually, *Allah* is an Arabic word which means *The God*. *Allah* is not presented by Muslims, as many non-Muslims in the west mistakenly believe, as *the* or even *a* name of God.

### Size

In order of size, as the world views these three religions, it would be: Christianity, Islam, Judaism. In reality Christianity is quite small (Matt. 7:13-14). There is a world of difference between Christianity as set forth in the New Testament and the conglomeration (Greek Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant denominationalism, sectarianism, etc.) that the religious world calls Christianity today. In but a few years, unless Yahweh intervenes (and such is my prayer), the order of size (as the world views it) will be: Islam, Christianity, Judaism. Islam is the professed religion of nearly 1.2 billion people, or approximately one-fourth of the world's population, and Islam is the world's fastest growing religion. There are fewer Episcopalians in the United States today than there are Muslims.

### Vocabulary

Since Islam is the world's fastest growing religion and is making in-roads into the religious life of the United States, we would do well to know something about the teachings of Islam. This is needed that we might seek to convert our Muslim neighbors (and if you live in a large American city, you do have Muslim neighbors), and also to warn others of this growing spiritual menace. In order to communicate intelligently with a member of the Islamic faith, it is necessary, I believe, to understand several key words. One might spend a good deal of time arguing or seeking to prove to other non-Muslims that *Allah* is not *the* or *a* name of the God of the Bible, when, as we have already indicated, Islam does not believe or teach such.

*Islam* is the accepted name of the religion preached (most non-Muslims, myself included, would say originated) by Muhammad from approximately A.D. 610 until his death. *Islam* is an Arabic word that means *surrender* or *submission*. A Muslim is one who follows the teachings of Islam. The word *Arab* is not a synonym for Muslim, but is one whose native language is Arabic. Numerous Arabs are not Muslims, and more than 85% of the world's Muslims are non-Arabs. All Muslims, regardless of race or nationality, are expected to learn/know a few Arabic

words and phrases. The Koran is purportedly the revelations received by Muhammad from God, via the angel Gabriel. *Koran* is from the Arabic word *Qur'an* and means *recitation*. The Koran is one of the two sources of authority in Islam. The other source of authority is the *Sunna*, the body of tradition of the conduct and words of Muhammad. The *Sunna*, Muhammad's sayings and acts, is preserved in written collections called the *Hadith* (Arabic word for *report*). These two primary sources of authority in Islam are used by Muslims to understand or explain the principle of *Shari'a* (also spelled, *Shari'ah*). This is an Arabic word which means *the way that leads to God*. In addition to the Koran (Qur'an) and the Sunna, Muslims recognize two other sources for interpreting the Shari'a and making daily application to one's life. These are (1) extending the reasoning of previous laws to new situations, and (2) the views of Muslim scholars and jurists.

Because Islam recognizes the views of Muslim scholars and jurists as secondary authority (i.e., in interpreting the Shari'a and making application to one's daily life) divisions would seem inevitable. The *Sunni* Muslims are the largest division of Islam. They are called *Sunni* because they claim to follow the Sunna of Muhammad. Next in size is the *Shiah* division. The Muslims who compose this division called themselves *Shiites*. The name *Shiah* comes from *shiat* Ali, an Arabic phrase meaning *supporters of Ali*. They believe that the descendants of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad should be the leaders of the Muslim community. The smallest of the major divisions of Islam are the *KharUites*. This name comes from the Arabic word that means *secessionists*. These were formerly follows of Ali who broke away in 657. They teach that the best Muslim should lead his fellow believers. A Muslim incarcerated in the Brushy Mountain Prison in east Tennessee told me that the inmate who could quote the most verses from the Koran was recognized as the leader of the Muslims in the prison. These are the three major divisions of Islam; there are, as might be expected, divisions within these groups.

### Becoming A Muslim

On one of the web sites designed to spread the Islamic faith, the following exchange was found. The subject of the e-mail received was: "How do I become a Muslim?" The response: "GO TO THE LOCAL MOSQUE. THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD TO SAY 'THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH AND MUHAMMED IS HIS MESSENGER' IN ARABIC." Another questioner received a similar response: "To become a Muslim, one must say the testification of faith which has two parts (it can be said in any language but is best said in Arabic); the first part is to say 'I profess (or bear witness, or believe) that no one is God except Allah (or you may say God)'. The second part is to say: I profess (or bear witness, or believe) that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.' Now you are a Muslim!"

### Five Pillars of Islam

This testification (dual profession of faith) is the first of the Five Pillars of Islam. This profession of faith is called the *shahada* (an Arabic word which means *the act of bearing witness*). The other four pillars of Islam are: Prayer (in Arabic it is *salat*); the prayers are to be said at five prescribed times each day. The prayers are very ritualistic, involving symbolic movements, including bowing toward Mecca. The third pillar is almsgiving (the Arabic word is *zakat* and means *purification*). The *zakat* is paid once each year, and may be given to the Mosque, Islamic centers, or welfare organizations. Fasting during the ninth month (Ramadan) of the Islamic calendar is the next pillar. During the entire month of Ramadan the faithful (healthy) Muslim foregoes eating, drinking, smoking, and sexual activities *during daylight hours*. The final pillar is Pilgrimage, or in Arabic *hajj*. That is, at some point in his life the faithful Muslim, who is physically and financially able, is to go to Mecca during the first several days of the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar.

### Central Miracle of Islam

From the web site, Islam Empire of Faith, in an article entitled, *Koran And Tradition*, we took the following: “The central miracle of Islam is God’s revelation to Muhammad, whose human fallibilities as a mere mortal are repeatedly mentioned in the Koran.” What is here said of Muhammad (regarding a mere mortal with human foibles and frailties receiving a revelation or revelations from God) could be repeated of all of the Old Testament prophets, and each of the New Testament writers. Such cannot be said of the One about whom many of the Old Testament prophets foretold and of whom the New Testament writers wrote. Jesus of Nazareth was shown to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:12-17; 1 Pet. 1:3). Each and every writer of both the Old Testament and the New Testament had a similar/equal miracle to the central miracle of Islam. Muhammad’s revelation from God, even if it were true, is sadly lacking when compared with the resurrection, never to die again, of Jesus Christ from the dead.

### Oneness of God

Great emphasis is given in Islam to *tawhid* (Arabic word for the *oneness of God*). Unfortunately, Muslims have followed (intentionally or unintentionally) the Jewish mistake of thinking that *oneness* in reference to God is an absolute one. In reality, it is a unified one. In a good marriage husband and wife are one (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6; 1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31). This does not mean that there is only one person (absolute one), but there is to be a oneness of purpose, goals, desires, etc. (unified one). Husband and wife are to be one in much the same way that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One.

In seeking to show a common bond (i.e., worshipers

of the same God) with both Judaism and Christianity, one Muslim writer (i.e., pro-Islamic web site), wrote, “Muslims, Christians and Jews worship the same god. All three are *monotheistic* (emphasis theirs, wvb) religions, with many common doctrines, texts and beliefs.” Two short paragraphs later, he wrote: “. . . Muslims do not believe Jesus is the son of God; this acceptance would contradict the Islamic belief in the uniqueness of God’s divinity.” Thus, Christianity is presented as *monotheistic*, while denying the uniqueness of God’s divinity and worshiping (as Islam would view it) more than one God. Two explanations for this seeming contradiction are stated but not developed. The writer (and Islam in general) believes that the New Testament was “flawed in the process of human transmission,” and that the acceptance of Jesus Christ as the Son of God is simply a “difference in interpretation” of the New Testament.

In their misguided zeal to uphold the *tawhid* (oneness of God), the central concept of Islam, Muslims make a fatal mistake. They *deny* the very God they claim to serve. Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matt. 4:3, 5; 8:29; 14:33; 26:63-64; 27:43; Luke 1:35; John 1:34,49; 3:18; 9:35-37; 11:27; 19:7; 20:31; Rom. 1:4; Rev. 2:8). Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, said: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am (he), ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Jesus also said, “And I say unto you, Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God” (Luke 12:8-9). In making a practical application of the words of Jesus, the beloved, aged Apostle John wrote: “Who is the liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, (even) he that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever (Jew, Muslim, non-believer) denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also” (1 John 2:22-23). *When Muslims or Jews fail to confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they deny the God of Abraham.* “They profess that they know God; but by their works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Tit. 1:16).

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Renew

## “Grace of God” continued from front page

This is a serious departure from the truth on how the grace of God teaches and saves men today.

### How the Grace of God Teaches and Saves Us

The Scriptures teach how we are able to stand in the grace of God today: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also *we have access by faith* into this grace in which we stand” (Rom. 5:1-2). The access into God’s grace is by faith through Jesus Christ. To suggest that God may, or will, extend his grace to someone who does not possess this faith in Christ is to contradict God’s own word and to go beyond the truth. Man may wish many things in his own fallible wisdom, but it is God who has already revealed his judgment for those who do not believe or obey the gospel of Christ. “When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance *on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9). To reject this truth of God is to reject the wisdom and judgment of God.

In order to access the grace of God by faith, we must be taught the truth and believe it. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The word of God is the means by which the grace of God teaches us. It is by the word of God that we learn that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Tit. 2:11-12).

It is by the word of God that the grace of God teaches us the way unto salvation. The grace of God saves an individual when he obeys the commandments of God. The grace of God brought the walls of Jericho down *when* (and only when) the Israelites obeyed God’s commands (Josh. 6). The grace of God healed Namaan of leprosy *when* he obeyed the command to wash seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings 5:1-14). The grace of God healed the blind man *when* he obeyed Jesus’ command to wash in the pool of Siloam (John 9:1-11). The grace of God saves a man from his sins *when* (and only when) he obeys the commands of God to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized (Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10). There is no other way to be saved or any other Savior than Jesus (Acts 4:12). But wait, there is more unsound teaching to be heard about those who do not obey God’s revealed plan of salvation.

I believe that God can save people who follow a different plan of salvation, not because they are correct nor because the truth has no value. I believe that God can save such people because God can save them, that salvation in this case is strictly an act of God’s grace and nothing else (*Ibid.*, June 26, 2002).

I believe that all in Christ only is mankind saved, specifically in the death and resurrection of Christ. I believe that Christ blood saves all men. That is not to say that I believe that all those religious people of the world who do not know Christ, and those who are so immersed in their religious upbringing and culture so as to not appreciate Christ’s sacrifice, are doomed to destruction. God can save these people by the blood of Christ and His own grace. At least, that is what I hope God will do on the day of judgment (*Ibid.*, April 3, 2002).

While such statements may sound soothing to unlearned ears, the serious problem inherent in such thinking is a misunderstanding of the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus died for the whole world (1 John 2:2), but only the believer will be saved (John 3:16). Only he who does the will of the Father will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 7:21). The person who does not believe or obey Jesus will perish in his sins (John 8:24; Matt. 7:21-23). God will not save this person.

The redeeming blood of Christ *cannot* be applied by a just God to one who will not believe. The Scriptures teach that the blood of Jesus is justly applied *only* to the one who has faith in Jesus: “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, *that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (Rom. 3:24-26). To teach that God should apply the blood of Christ to people who do not believe or obey Christ is to make God unjust. God’s grace is available only to those who have faith in Christ, and there is nothing we can do to change the decree of God.

### Conclusion

It is important to understand the grace of God so that we do not make unlearned and false statements derived from our own wisdom. Our teaching about God’s grace should be “as the oracles of God.” May faithful brethren continue to believe, practice, and boldly speak the truth of God that ~~saves sinners, and courageously~~ refute those who would teach the false doctrines of men.

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## The Holy Spirit: His Personality and Work

by Michael Hardin

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## “Hell (2)” continued from page 2

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 (Rev. 20:10).

The devil “shall be tormented.” The word “tormented” is from *basanizō* which is defined as “to torture (2 Macc. 7:13); hence 4. univ. *to vex with grievous pains* (of body and mind), *to torment*” (Thayer 96). The passage Thayer cited in 2 Maccabees 7:13 refers to the torment administered to a man before his final execution: “they *tormented* and mangled the fourth in like manner.” It does not describe annihilation, but an endless torment. The passage does not say that they will be destroyed with an irreversible destruction; rather they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

What does the Bible teach is the ultimate destiny of the devil and his angels? They will be “cast into the lake of fire and brimstone” and “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). “Day and night” means without intermission (Thayer 278; cf. its use in Luke 2:37; Acts 26:7). Its use in Revelation is particularly important: The phrase is used of the angels ceaselessly praising God around his throne (Rev. 4:8); of the righteous who serve God day and night in heaven (Rev. 7:15); of the uninterrupted accusations that the Devil makes against the saints (Rev. 12:10); and here of the uninterrupted torment given to the devil (20:10).

The uninterrupted (“day and night”) torment shall continue “for ever and ever.” The phrase is *aiōnas tēn aiōnas*. The word *aiōnas* is a critical word in reference to several verses which will be used in this study, so this is as good a place as any to study its meaning.

### The Meaning of *Aiōn*

Like most other words, the word *aiōn* has several nuances of meaning. It is used in the following ways:

**1. Of eternity.** The word means “forever.” In this use, it means “an indefinite period of time; time without limitation; ever, forever, time without end, eternity” (Moses Stuart, *Future Punishment* 17). In this sense, the word is used of the everlasting God (Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; 2 Cor. 11:31; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 1:25; 4:11; 5:11; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:6, 18; 4:9, 10; 7:12; 10:6; 15:7).

The word is used in the sense of an endless future. It is used in this sense in reference to the future happiness of the saints (John 6:51, 58; 8:51, 52; 10:28; 11:26; 2 Cor. 9:9; 1 John 2:17; Rev. 22:5). The word is also used in this sense to “designate a period unlimited and without bounds, i.e. *ever*, and (with a negative) *never* (Matt. 21:19; Mark 11:14;

3:29; Luke 1:33, 55; John 4:14; 8:35; 12:34; 13:8; etc.). All of these uses are with reference to the future.

The word can also be used of eternity in the past. Thus *aiōn* is sometimes used of “an indefinite or long period in time past, ancient days, times of old, long ago, always in time past, generations or ages long since” (Stuart 24). See such passages as Luke 1:70; Acts 15:18; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:9, 11; Colossians 1:26 which illustrate this use.

The phrase *eis ton aiōna tou aiōnos* is a special use “to emphasize the concept of eternity” (TDNT I:199). The phrase appears 21 times in the Pauline epistles and Revelation as a “distinctive formula” to refer to eternity. Significantly, this is the phrase used in Revelation 20:10 which we are examining!

**2. Age, period of time.** In this use, the word *aiōn* approaches the meaning of “age” in the sense of dispensation (1 Cor. 10:11; Eph. 2:7; Heb. 6:5; etc.). The phrase is used with this meaning in passages which speak of the present age and the age to come (Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; etc.).

**3. The world with its cares.** The word *aiōn* is sometimes used to denote the world with “all its cares, or business, or temptations, or allurements to sin” (Stuart 28). See Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; Luke 16:8; 20:34; Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 1:20; 2:6, 8; 2 Cor. 4:4; Gal. 1:4; 2 Tim. 4:10; Tit. 2:12). From this use, the word can be used of the world itself (Matt. 13:40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Luke 20:35; 1 Cor. 3:18; etc.).

From this brief survey one can get a grasp of the use of this word. (For a more extended treatment of this word, see Moses Stuart, *Future Punishment* 5-47; TDNT I:197-209; Thayer 18-21; Arndt and Gingrich 26-28.)

With this background, one has to ask himself which use of the word best fits the context under consideration. The context is 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*.” What does “for ever and ever” mean in this context? Does it mean “the world with its cares”? Obviously not. Does it mean “an age, period of time,” such as the meaning when it is used of “this present world” (Matt. 12:32)? Assuming this were so, what is the duration of the “age to come”? Significantly, the duration of the age to come for the righteous is the same duration for the wicked for both are described by the same word (Matt. 25:46, see notes below). Defining the word with the meaning “age” does not shorten the torment of eternity unless it also shortens the duration of “eternal life.” The only meaning of *aiōn* which fits the context of Revelation 20:10 is the definition of “eternal” in the sense of an end-

less future. The devil and his angels “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”

### Eternal Torment Redefined

Brother Fudge redefines “eternal” with reference to eternal torment alone. That is, he wants eternal life to go on forever, but he wants eternal punishment to have an end. So he affirms that “eternal” does not mean “never ending” or “unlimited future,” with reference to torment, although it has that meaning when used of “life.” Rather, he affirms that “eternal” (αἰώνιος) describes a “quality.” Just what “quality” does “eternal” describe? Is it not the duration quality that is so defined? Fudge cites several examples to support his contention that “eternal” means “eternal in its effect,” not an ongoing process. He uses the following examples to sustain his point:

- “Eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:9)
- “Eternal redemption” (Heb. 9:12)
- “Eternal sin” (Mark 3:29)
- “Eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:2)

He argues that the act of saving did not last forever, only its consequences; the act of redeeming did not last forever, only its consequences; the act of sinning did not last forever, only its consequences; the act of judging does not last forever, only its consequences. If the argument has validity with reference to eternal punishment, it has equal validity with reference to “eternal life.” In that case, “eternal” does not describe an eternal living but a resurrection to a life that has eternal consequences but not an eternal duration. Robert A. Morey notes how in each case, Fudge changes the nouns (salvation, redemption, judgment, sin) into verbs (saving, redeeming, judging, sinning) which creates the problem (132). He wrote:

We fail to see how the annihilationists are correct in their attempt to make “judgment” into a verb, i.e., a work of action. It is a noun, not a verb. Yet, this is exactly how annihilationists argue. They begin their argument by defining “judgment” as “a word of action.” They ridicule the idea of an eternal act or process of judging. They then state that the results of judging are eternal but not the process.

What these annihilationists fail to recognize is that the word “judgment” is in its noun form which means that an endlessly binding verdict is being described. Also, the endlessness of this verdict is part of the superiority of the new covenant (132).

Those who wish for a limited torment recognize the significance of the word αἰών. They cannot deny its meaning in this context of the endless future. Consequently, they explain that the torment is “eternal in its effect” (that is, the wicked are annihilated which annihilation lasts forever — that is, it is eternal in its effect). In this they are mistaken.

Returning now to Matthew 25:41, we see the significance of this verse for our study. Jesus said to the wicked, those on his left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” The wicked go “into everlasting fire” (to πῦρ τοῦ αἰῶνος). The appositional phrase modifying this eternal fire is the fire “prepared for the devil and his angels.” The fire prepared for the devil and his angels is referred to in 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*.” The torment of the devil and his angels is uninterrupted (day and night) and endless (for ever and ever). Their punishment is not annihilation but “torment.” Remember that, if the torment of wicked men ceases, so also does the torment of the Devil.

• **Matthew 25:46.** In the same context as Matthew 25:41, Jesus said, “And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*.” The significance of this verse is that the same word, αἰώνιον, is used to describe the duration of punishment and of life. This has not escaped scholars’ attention as the following quotations show:

**Augustine:** Then what fond fancy it is to suppose that eternal punishment means long-continued punishment, while eternal life means life without end, since Christ in the very same passage spoke of both in similar terms in one and the same sentence, “These shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into life eternal!” If both destinies are “eternal,” then we must either understand both as long-continued but at last terminating, or both as endless. For they are correlative, — on the one hand, punishment eternal, on the other hand, life eternal. And to say in one and the same sense, life eternal shall be endless, punishment eternal shall come to an end, is the height of absurdity. Wherefore, as the eternal life of the saints shall be endless, so too the eternal punishment of those who are doomed to it shall have no end (*The City of God* 21.23).

**Moses Stuart:** I take it to be a rule of construing all *anti-thetic* forms of expression, that where you can perceive the force of one side of the antithesis, you do of course come to a knowledge of the force on the other side. If *life eternal* is promised on one side, and *death eternal* is threatened on the other and opposite one, is it not to be supposed that the word *eternal* which qualifies *death*, is a word of equal force and import with the word *eternal* which qualifies *life*? In no other case could a doubt be raised, with regard to such a principle. I venture to say that the exception here, (if such an one must be made), is without any parallel in the just principles of interpretation.

If then the words αἰών and αἰώνιος are applied 60 times (which is the fact) in the New Testament, to designate the *continuance* of the future happiness of the righteous; and some twelve times to designate the *continuance* of the future misery of the wicked; by what principles of

interpreting languages does it become possible for us, to avoid the conclusion that *aiçn* and *aiçnios* have the same sense in both cases?

... It does most plainly and indubitably follow, that *if the Scriptures have not asserted the ENDLESS punishment of the wicked, neither have they asserted the ENDLESS happiness of the righteous, nor the ENDLESS glory and existence of the Godhead.* The one is equally certain with the other. Both are laid in the same balance. They must be tried by the same tests. And if we give up the one, we must, in order to be consistent, give up the other also (*Future Punishment* 56, 57).

**Anthony Hoekema:** If, however, the word *aiçnios*, means “without end” when applied to the future blessedness of believers, it must follow, unless clear evidence is given to

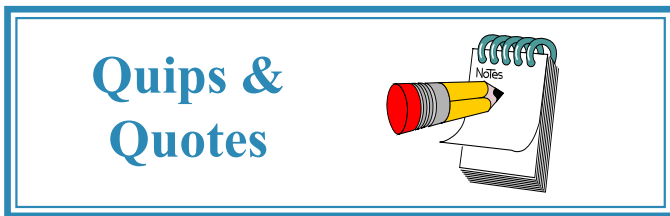
the contrary, that this word also means “without end” when it is used to describe the future punishment of the lost (*The Four Major Cults* 369).

**Charles Hodge:** The same word is used in both clauses; the wicked are to go *eis kolasin aiçnion*; and the righteous *eis zçÛn aiçnion*; it must have the same sense in both (Matt. xxv. 41, 46) (*Systematic Theology* III:875-6).

Citing such quotations could be extended should one choose to do so. Sound exegesis demands that one understand that “eternal” punishment lasts just as long as “eternal” life.

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#### New Tract

There is a new tract available: *The Silence of the Scriptures* by John Isaac Edwards. You may order this from Truth Bookstore, 1-800-428-0121.

#### Scalia Criticizes Rulings on God

“Fredericksburg, VA — Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia complained Sunday that courts have gone overboard in keeping God out of government.

“Scalia, speaking at a religious ceremony, said the constitutional wall between church and state has been misinterpreted both by the Supreme Court and lower courts.

“As an example, he pointed to an appeals court decision in California that barred students from saying the Pledge of Allegiance with the phrase ‘one nation under God.’

“That ruling is on hold pending further consideration by the same court, but the Supreme Court could eventually be asked to review the case” (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 13, 2003], A4).

#### Stone Tablet May Confirm Biblical Narrative, Experts Say

“Jerusalem — Israeli geologists said Monday they have examined a stone tablet detailing repair plans for the Jewish Temple of King Solomon that, if authenticated, would be a rare piece of physical evidence confirming biblical narrative.

“The find — whose origin is murky — is about the size of a

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legal pad, with a 15-line inscription in ancient Hebrew that resembles descriptions in the Bible’s Book of Kings. It could also strengthen Jewish claims to a disputed holy site in Jerusalem’s Old City that is now home to two major mosques.

“... The Israeli daily Haaretz on Monday quoted an unidentified source as saying it was uncovered in recent years, during renovations carried out by the Muslim administrators of the mosque compound known to Muslims as the Haram as-Sharif, or Noble Sanctuary, and to Jews as the Temple Mount.

“From there, it reached a major antiquities collector in Jerusalem, Haaretz said. The Holy Land has a thriving trade in antiquities, often operating on the edge of the law.

“The sandstone tablet’s inscription resembles descriptions in Kings II, 12:1-6, 11-17, said Israel’s Geological Survey, which examined the artifact. The words refer to King Joash, who ruled the area 2,800 years ago.

“In it, the king tells priests to take ‘holy money ... to buy quarry stones and timber and copper and labor to carry out the duty with faith.’ If the work is completed well, ‘the Lord will protect his people with blessing,’ reads the inscription’s last sentence” (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 14, 2003], A11).

