

# **Special Studies**

## *A Thirteen Lesson Bible Class Study*



*a study certain issues of concern  
to Christians today*

*by  
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## *Introduction*

This series of lesson results from suggested topics by the members of the Wonsley Drive church of Christ in late 1996 and early 1997. It is a series of studies that intrigued many of them as they were asked to submit ideas of topical interest.

What resulted was a series of strangely diverse subjects that answers many questions which do not fit well into larger contexts where an entire series could be devoted to the matter at hand. It is hoped that the diversity of topics in this series will prove interesting and challenging.

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# Lesson 1: *The Occult*

## Introduction

Over the past ten to twenty years we have witnessed a great revival of interest in the occult. In movies, on television, and even in Saturday morning cartoons, there is an abundance of witches and warlocks, ghouls and ghosts. *Ghostbusters* was the biggest money-making movie in 1984, and we were alarmed just a few years ago at the impact of a game called “Dungeons and Dragons.” Have you seen some of the computer-video games popular today? A few years ago, the Shirley MacLaine TV mini-series & book, *Out On A Limb*, was nothing but an extended commercial message for New Age Humanism and the occult.

The occult is no longer a sub-culture. It has captured the interest of people, all the way from Wall Street to rural communities. This should be alarming to us, for two reasons: (1) Because of what the Bible says about sorcery (Rev. 21:8; Gal. 5:20), and (2) It is a troubling fact of history that outbreaks of occultism frequently accompany the collapse of a civilization; one example, the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most prevalent types of occultism is the daily horoscope, printed in almost every newspaper in the country and available for a fee on “900” phone lines. The continued existence of so-called psychics and their new rise to prominence on infomercials and toll lines should also serve to accentuate the growing influence of the occult. Many superstitions and Halloween traditions are tied up in the occult as well.

## How Should Christians React?

The easy answer when any new thing begins to make its way into spirituality is to seek God and his guidance. We must know the truth and be able to persuade others about it. God has always opposed any reliance or affinity for things of the occult. In the days of the prophet Isaiah, popular opinion was leaning to some relationship between God’s people and occultism (Isaiah 8:19-20. Lev. 19:31). God sounds disgusted that his people are searching for answers in black arts and mysterious evil when He has provided them with all they need to find peace.

Has God not given to modern man all knowledge that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)? Yet, still many flock to new age philosophies and doctrines. Many Christians seem infatuated with some of these things as well. The danger should be as obvious as its condemnation.

## Saul at En Dor

King Saul had banned practitioners of the black arts from Israel, but in a faithless fit of desperation, he sought one out himself. The king disguised himself and went to a witch by night to ask that she conduct a seance for him. He hoped to talk to Samuel, who had died some time ago. The witch was hesitant at first, but then agreed, saying, “Who shall I bring up for you?”. Saul asked for Samuel, but *before* the witch started her conjuring and incantations, Samuel appeared. Samuel simply told Saul that the king no longer had a relationship with God, because he had disobeyed the voice of the Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 15). Samuel went on to tell Saul, “Moreover the Lord will also deliver Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The Lord will also deliver the army of Israel into the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 28:19).

Does this passage sanction using mediums and other tools of the occult by Christians? Hardly.

In the first place, God had no welcome for mediums and spiritists in fleshly Israel. Saul, himself, had put them out of the land, in keeping with divine edict (Lev. 19:31).

Second, Saul only turned to the occult after the Spirit of the Lord had departed from him and “a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him” (1 Sam. 16:14). If one uses Saul’s example for approval of what they want to do today, they are using a practice he engaged in after succumbing to evil influences

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<sup>1</sup> Berkeley, Warren E. “Saul’s Visit With The Medium.” “Gospel Anchor,” May, 1987, p. 260.

already.

Third, Saul was only now consulting the black arts because the Lord had refused to hear him because of his impenitence (1 Sam. 28:6). Calling on witchcraft for help indicates a total lack of trust in God, who cannot attend to the prayers of the impenitent (Isa. 1:15; 59:1, 2).

Fourth, before the woman had begun her incantations, there was the appearance of something extraordinary that struck her with astonishment and fear. She was neither the cause nor the medium of this appearance of Samuel; only God could do what Saul saw. The Keil and Delitzsch commentary states that “These words [verses 12 and 13] imply most unquestionably that the woman saw an apparition which she did not anticipate, and therefore that she was not really able to conjure up departed spirits or persons who had died” (page 262, Vol. 2 ).

Fifth, her claim of power in verse 21 is nothing more than the boasting of an impostor; the evidence proves something other than her claim is true.

Sixth, just because you find some person doing something in Old Testament history, that doesn't necessarily show approval of that act. You can find David involved in an adulterous affair; Moses disobeying the Lord; Abraham using deception; and so forth. Saul's visit to a witch (after the Spirit of the Lord departed from him) was not revealed as a pattern for God's people to follow. In fact, I Chronicles 10:13 says, “... Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also *because he consulted a medium for guidance.*”

## Conclusion

In whatever form the occult may take, Christians should flee from it. Trusting in the daily horoscope to bring messages from the heavens is a rejection of the message God sent to us in the Bible. Consulting psychics to dip into the secret things of God is tantamount to attempted thievery. Engaging the Ouija board for prophecy denies God's role as prophesier to spiritual Israel.

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul lists some evident works of the flesh and lists sorcery as one that would deny a man entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Condemned in verse 20 and from the Greek word *pharmakeia* (φαρμακεια), sorcery is the practice of magical or curious arts (Robertson, Thayer).

## Questions

1. Name some examples of the occult in our entertainment today.
2. What are some sources for occultism prevalent in America today?
3. Where did God tell Isaiah to send the people when they wanted to hear from the occult (Isaiah 8:19-20)? Is this still sound advice?

4. What does Leviticus 19:31 reveal about the occult?

5. List six reasons why Saul's visit to a witch is not authority to imitate him.

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

6. What Halloween costumes or traditions would fall into the realm of the occult?

7. What are some common superstitions? Would superstitions also suffer as signs of trust in something other than God?

8. What fruit of repentance was exhibited in Ephesus in Acts 19:18-20? What lesson is there for us here?

9. What sorcerer became a Christian in Acts 8? Does the text indicate his magic was real or fake?

## Lesson 2: Angels

### Introduction

It seems that angel worship has become the latest new age fad. *Touched by an Angel* is a popular television program and a movie on Michael the archangel is due out in December 1996. The book stores are filled with the latest tomes on so-called real life encounters with angels. Honestly, most Christians fear the subject, because they feel the world knows more about angels than they do.

This fear is born, not so much of ignorance, but of the paucity of information the Bible provides on the work of angels today. It is easy to see their work in times past, but God tells us little about what they do today. What the Bible does say has been twisted and told so many times that the error seems right only because of its frequency.

In this study, we will endeavor to answer a series of questions about angels and then learn more about them.

(The basis of most of these questions was developed by a man named Jim DuBose, and was plucked from an Internet list in August 1996.)

### Prominent in the Old Testament

Angels are major characters in the Old Testament. We find them at most every turn throughout the patriarchal era and the kingdom age. They deal directly with men like Abraham and Moses and are frequently seem doing God's will and bringing His message to man.

Angels make appearances in the New Testament less often and less prominently. They minister to Jesus and his parents before his birth, but after that, become more the subject of distant scrutiny than concrete appearance until the book of Revelation shows them again in symbolic language.

Why? Perhaps this lesson will show the reason.

### Current Fascination

The current fascination with angels has flown directly against God's will in the Bible. Although many are uncomfortable with the nature of God he reveals about himself in the scriptures, the same threat is not perceived in angels. They are thought to be harmless little mysteries, their natures malleable as each person sees fit to make "his" angel.

God would prefer we become fascinated with him, with Jesus. Salvation is not found in angels, but in Christ.

### Questions

1. God created angels (Psalm 148:1-5; Col.1:16-17). TRUE OR FALSE
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Angels are just as powerful as God (Heb.1:13). TRUE OR FALSE



3. In the original Greek, the word angel means...

- a. worker      b. deity      c. messenger      d. bird

4. Righteous people immediately become angels at death (Matt.22:30). TRUE OR FALSE

5. Angels cannot do anything evil (Jude 6). TRUE OR FALSE

6. There are different kinds of angels (Gen. 3, Isa. 6). TRUE OR FALSE

7. The Bible tells me to pray to “my” angel (Col. 2:18). TRUE OR FALSE

8. Angels are still active today (Heb. 1:14). TRUE OR FALSE

9. All angels have wings (Isa. 6:1-6; Ezek. 1,10). TRUE OR FALSE

10. Angels get married and have children (Matt.22:30). TRUE OR FALSE

11. Jesus and Michael the archangel could have been the same person. TRUE OR FALSE

12. If an angel named Moroni delivered a different gospel to a man in the nineteenth century, the angel should be believed and the new should replace the old (Gal. 1:6-9). TRUE OR FALSE

13. The word “halo” is used in the Bible to describe the almost metallic band of light that hovers over an angel’s head. TRUE OR FALSE

## Lesson 3: *Demons*

### Introduction

Demon possession is a favorite topic around Halloween and has inspired an innumerable host of bad movies and television programs. *The Exorcist* is the best known among them, but *The Amityville Horror 2* and *The Omen* also tread the same ground. Most often, the exorcism of such a demon is attempted by a Catholic priest, waving a crucifix, splashing holy water and reciting Latin incantations. It is presumed that moral purity rests primarily upon him and that only he can fight the demon into submission.

Demon possession is also a favorite ploy of criminals and the insane, who try to blame the devil for their crimes. Rarely does this defense work, for our justice system does not recognize a legitimate threat of demon possession.

Still, many Americans accept the possibility that a demon might possess someone today and force him to do evil against his will.

It is true that demons possessed people in Jesus's time. But is this phenomenon still taking place today?

### The Demons Believe

In James's discussion of the importance of a working faith, he suggests an odd example of disobedient belief: "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble" (2:19). The word for "tremble" is the Greek *phrissousin*, which indicates the kind of terror that makes one's hair stand on end. These demons, imps of Satan, exist on a somehow inhuman plane and from there can see clearly that God exists.

James's audience understood full well what the writer meant when he spoke of demons, though we, reading much later, struggle to comprehend the nature of these mysterious spirits. Some have suggested that the demons were the disembodied spirits of dead wicked men who escaped hades in the Lord's day to torment mankind, but have now been confined again. Others suggest that they were angels who did not keep their estate and turned evil. All is supposition, though.

### In The Lord's Day

In the first century, the Bible shows that demons could enter individuals to vex them (Luke 8:30-32), interfere with their thinking and reasoning (Luke 7:33, John 7:20) and cause men to do evil (Matt. 8:31, Mark 3:11).

In Mark 1:23-28, Jesus encounters a man in the synagogue with an unclean spirit. He immediately recognizes the deity of Christ and shows his terror of God before the Lord rebukes him and calls the evil spirit out. With a paroxysm and a cry, the spirit leaves the man. The crowd's reaction is notable; they were curious at the authority Jesus exercised over the demons and his fame spread in Galilee.

In the Gergesenes in Matthew 8:28-32, Jesus met two demon-possessed men, described as exceedingly fierce. The demons express fear that Jesus has come to "torment us before the time," indicating that they knew what their eternal fate was to be. They knelt to Jesus's power and begged that he cast them into a herd of swine if he was intent upon exorcising them. Jesus complied, casting them into the swine, which then ran headlong to their death in the sea.

According to Mark 16:9, Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene.

Christ demonstrated His power by casting out these demons, and was even wrongly accused of using Satan's power to cast them out (Matt. 12:24). The power to cast out these demons was also given to His disciples (Matt. 10:1; Luke 10:17). So no one can deny the fact that demon possession did occur at one time.

From this we can conclude certain things:

1. The work of demons was not superstition or a euphemism for disease. Jesus considered them real and powerful.
2. Demons were wicked spirits (Acts 19:13-17).
3. Eternal judgment upon them was already implied and understood.
4. They had individual consciousness and intelligence.
5. They acknowledged Jesus's deity and power over them.

### **Do Demons Still Possess People Today?**

Simply looking at the world today would show us that there is much evil, but it would also persuade us that demon possession is not responsible for it. Few know of anyone who even makes the claim that he is possessed. Truly this is the stuff of fantasy and fiction now. The Bible strongly indicates people ceased to be possessed by demons after the New Testament. Why?

First, the ability to cast out demons was usually connected with the ability to speak in tongues, heal infirmities, and to prophesy (Mark 16:17,18, Matt. 10:1, cf. Matt. 7:22). We know from 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 that prophecy and tongues ceased with the coming of the complete revelation of God. We realize that, in general, the miraculous spiritual gifts that the early disciples possessed were given to them in order to confirm the word that was being revealed at the time (Mark 16:20). When the complete revelation had come, there was no more need for them. These spiritual gifts then ceased from the earth upon the completion of God's revelation, and one would assume that the ability to cast out demons ceased with these other miraculous powers. If the ability to cast out demons has ceased, then it would follow that the possibility to be possessed by demons no longer exists. It would be senseless to think that God would allow us to be possessed by demons with no means of escape.

Several Old Testament prophecies support this common sense approach to the question on modern demon possession. Several Messianic prophecies tell us about what would take place during the time that the Lord's kingdom is established. "One such prophecy is found in Zechariah 13:1-4. Here Zechariah talks of a day when "a fountain shall be opened" to his people "for sin and uncleanness." This is clearly a reference to the time when the blood of Christ would be made available to take away sins. The prophecy goes on to say that three other things would happen *in that day*. He says that the name of idols would be cut off from the land, a reference to the fact that those in God's kingdom do not worship idols but the true God. Secondly, the prophet and the unclean spirit would be caused to depart from the land. As we have already seen, eventually prophecy ceased in the kingdom; it was done away with. Now if one claims to be a prophet we know that he is a liar, as Zechariah says, 'if anyone still prophesies,' he will be told, "You have spoken lies." It is impossible for one to speak prophecies when prophecies have ceased; and if one does, you know he is a false prophet. But notice that at the same time the prophets were to depart from the land, the unclean spirit was to depart from the land. So just as surely as prophecies have ceased, people have ceased to be possessed by unclean spirits or demons. 'In the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles'" (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary On The Minor Prophets*, p. 392).<sup>2</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While demons do not possess men today, we need to realize that it is possible for us to allow Satan himself to control our lives. It is him that we need to be concerned with today and not some demons that might possess us. While the demons of Christ's day came in and took control of someone against his will, Satan can only control our lives if we allow him to do so. So we need to be diligent in our efforts to keep him from controlling our lives (1 Peter 5:8-9). We need to turn to Jesus and let him control our lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Bragwell, Edward O, Jr. *Do Demons Possess People Today?*, "The Reflector."

## Questions

1. What medium has done much to create the modern conception of demon possession?
  
2. What does James say about demons? What does this teach about the limits of their power and existence.
  
3. What are two ideas about the origin of demons?
  - a.
  - b.
  
4. What were three first century abilities of demons?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
5. How did the demon in Mark 1 react to Jesus? What was a result of Jesus's exorcism of it?
  
6. Did the demons in Matthew 8 seem to understand their fate?
  
7. What confession did demons make that the Jewish leaders and even some believers would not?
  
8. What are some other miraculous abilities exercised in the New Testament? According to 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 (cf. James 1:25), do miraculous spiritual gifts still exist today?
  
9. If demon possession still exists, is there any means to exorcise a demon, then?
  
10. When did Zechariah teach his prophecy would be fulfilled?
  
11. What three things were to be cut off in that day?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.

# Lesson 4: *New Testament Canon*

## Introduction

When Christianity began, the earliest disciples had what to them was their Bible, the collection of Old Testament scriptures. By Christ's time, this particular Old Testament canon was universally accepted as a collection of divinely inspired books. The word "canon" is a peculiarly Christian word from the Greek *kanon*, which means literally, a reed or measuring rod or a norm, rule or standard. It came to mean a rule of faith and then eventually a catalog or list of such rules. Currently, canon means a collection of divinely inspired and authoritative writings. The story of the Old Testament canon is a much different one than that of the new, but suffice it to say, that the first Christians recognized the same books as scripture as we still do today.

## Authoring The New Testament

As Christianity commenced, there appeared to be little need for a set of authoritative books, for certain men spoke by divine authority. These were the apostles and prophets, the foundation of the church building along the cornerstone of its king and founder (Eph. 2:20). The twelve apostles had been given the keys of the kingdom to bind and loose on earth what had been bound and loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19-20). In their writings and recorded sermons, we see and hear them doing just that, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

As time wore on, however, the importance of these new inspired writings became apparent. The apostle Peter says in 2 Peter 1:12-15:

*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this present tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*

In this same letter, the apostle includes such new inspired writings under the umbrella of inspiration when he speaks of Paul's letters as meeting the same fate as "the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:16).

The process of bringing together the New Testament is generally described in three stages: (1) from the apostles to 170 A.D., (2) from 170-220 A.D. and (3) the third and fourth centuries.

## From The Apostles to 170 A.D.

By the end of the first century, all the books of our New Testament were in existence, having been addressed and sent to various churches or people, summarily copied or shared and widely broadcast throughout the known world (1 Thess. 5:27, Col. 4:16). As the church expanded geographically and the inspired men began to die, the need for an authoritative record of Jesus's life and teachings became clear. A letter from Polycarp to the Philippians dated around 100 A.D. depicts the exchange of letters that encompassed the saints of Eurasia. While it is unclear when the books began to be assembled into collections, it is apparent that a collection of Paul's letters existed around 115 A.D. There is also reason to believe that the gospels had been brought together by this time.

This period is known as the sub-apostolic age. Along with Polycarp, Clement of Rome and Ignatius are noted saints. In 95 A.D., Clement wrote a letter in the name of the Roman Christians to those in Corinth. He uses material from at least 11 of our canonical books.

The Epistles of Ignatius date to 115 A.D. and correspond to our gospels in many places, incorporating also the language of Paul's letters. Their focus on the persecutions of the empire and growing heresy in the church reflect the concerns of Peter, Paul and John.

This first period shows only that the current New Testament books existed and were widely

circulated and accepted. Still, there is yet no full collection of the 27 books assembled.

### **From 170 to 220 A.D.**

This half-century is filled with literature in which the great issues of canon and creed were discussed. Names like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian are prominent. In this era, the question of having a canon is settled.

Irenaeus expresses this attitude well. Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp who had sat at the apostle John's feet. He dwells on the fact that there are four gospel accounts and quotes authoritatively from Acts, the epistles and Revelation. To him, they were scripture in every sense.

By the end of the second century, the canonicity of the four gospels and the Pauline epistles was settled. This collection was often called "The Gospel and the Apostles" in response to the Old Testament's designation as "The Law and the Prophets." The phrase "New Testament" was apparently first used of this new collection circa 193 A.D. by an unknown writer. Origen and others use it frequently.

The sheer distance separating Clement (Egypt) and Irenaeus (Asia Minor) geographically serves to solidify the testimony of the canon's authenticity in both parts of the world.

Additional evidence is found in the Muratorian Fragment, dating to the second century but discovered in 1740. It gives a list of the New Testament books recognized in this early era and is concerned with the matter of canon itself. The document is apparently Roman in origin. It lists the gospels, Acts, the Pauline epistles, Revelation, 1 and 2 John and Jude. The book of 3 John is perhaps implied to be with 2 John. Missing are Hebrews, the Petrine epistles and James. For various reasons, these books had not gained a secure place yet among recognized canon. The third period will finally bring them together.

### **The Third and Fourth Centuries**

Origen, an elder in Alexandria, is the premier name of the third century. He accepted the gospels, Pauline epistles, and Acts confidently. He also accepts Hebrews, though wonders who wrote it. Origen believes Revelation and Jude are inspired, but questions James, 2 Peter and 2 and 3 John.

A second noteworthy of the third century is Dionysius of Alexandria, a pupil of Origen. He admits the inspiration of Revelation but attributes it to an unknown John. He accepts James and 2 and 3 John, but disputes 2 Peter and Jude.

While these two labored in the eastern churches, Cyprian of Carthage was most influential in the west. While accepting Revelation, he was silent on Hebrews.

As the third century closed, the question of the exact extent of the canon remained open.

In the early fourth century, Eusebius, an elder in Caesarea, wrote his *Church History*. Eusebius lived in an age when persecutors burned Christian places of worship and their texts. So it was vital to know for which books the saints must stand. He acknowledged the gospels, Acts and the Pauline epistles, including Hebrews. However, he noted that James, Jude, 2 Peter and 2 John and Revelation were still disputed.

In the second half of the fourth century, effort was made repeatedly to end the uncertainty about certain books. Athanasius wrote a pastoral letter listing all 27 of our current books with his church calendar. He called these 27 "wells of salvation" to which no man should add or subtract. Gregory and Cyril also published lists with the 27 minus Revelation. Finally, the twenty-seventh book began to gain full acceptance among the eastern churches, too.

The Council of Carthage in 397 validates the place of the current 27 books. Unanimity of opinion on them eventually was won as the faith spread. The Christian emperor Constantine established the canon's number when he ordered Eusebius to prepare fifty copies of the "Divine Scriptures." When the Vulgate (Latin Bible) was published, the canon was decided also in the west.

## Questions

1. Was the New Testament originally given in its assembled form?
2. What does the word “canon” currently mean?
3. Why did it appear that such a collection was unneeded in the first century? What apostle recognized the need for a written record?
4. Which New Testament books were written after the end of the first century A.D.?
5. What happened to them after reaching their primary audience?
6. Describe the input of Polycarp, Clement of Rome and Ignatius.
7. Who was Irenaeus and what did he accept?
8. What is the significance of the Muratorian Fragment?
9. Who are the two noted men of the third century in the eastern church? Who is the one noted from the west?
10. Why was the matter important to Eusebius?
11. Whose pastoral letter validates the 27 books? What council does likewise?



# Lesson 5: *Prayer*

## Introduction

Prayer has been called the last refuge of a scoundrel and that seems fitting in many cases. So many people, even nominally religious ones, reserve prayer as a last resort. Some explanations are that they are guilty over faithlessness, they don't believe that God is real, or they don't believe that prayer can change things.

Prayer is important and should be frequent (1 Thess. 5:17). The Bible says that Daniel prayed three times each day, even though the civil government forbade it. Surely, we can aspire to such frequency when our government does nothing to stop us.

Some new Christians have trouble learning to pray, both privately and publicly. I suppose the key is to remember that you are speaking to God in either case.

We will use the model prayer of Matthew 6 to learn more about prayer and how it should be made.

In Matthew 6:5-8, the Lord includes an admonition against hypocrisy in prayer in his sermon on the mount. What he condemns is any prayer that is meant to impress men rather than communicate with God. Jesus condemns the prayers of those who jockey for public forums in which to show off their abilities. The Lord says that when men applaud their efforts and do them homage, the hypocrite has received his only reward. God is completely unimpressed with his volume of words and dramatic tones if man has been their object.

Christ directs us to our inner rooms to make our private prayers. Such solemn communication between man and Maker deserves such solitude. There is a reward for this too, but it comes from God.

Jesus also censures those who utilize "vain repetitions" in their prayers. Some religious systems have actually codified acceptable prayers for all occasions and simply repeat the same petitions over and over again with little personal feeling ever inserted. We must be careful never to fall into a routine in which we do not consider our words, but merely recite them. Men may be impressed by our many words, but God sees through their pretense.

One thing more, God knows what we need before we ask him. Some have suggested that this negates the need for prayer. Such an attitude misses the point of prayer. God deserves and demands the glory that is paid through prayer, but much of a prayer is for man's benefit. Our prayer reminds us of what is important and makes us consider the daily condition of our souls. It gives us an opportunity to do a good turn to our friends and enemies alike and open our hearts to someone who cares. God may know what we need before we pray, but very often, we only figure it out while we are praying.

So that we will not be misled, Jesus next gives us a model for prayer. It is not a prayer to be repeated over and over again, but it is to give us an idea of what to pray about and how. Jesus says we should pray "in this manner." This is the way to pray, not the only acceptable words.

## "Our Father in heaven..."

In any communication, we begin by addressing our audience. Our prayers should commence with some form of address that reminds us we are speaking to the creator of the universe and the master of our destiny. In no way whatever is God an earthly being or someone approaching our low plane of existence. He is God, the same being who identified himself to Israel simply as "I AM."

We are blessed to be called the children of God (1 John 3:2) and to call Jehovah, Father. That is a reverential term that figuratively bows the knee to our Master. The Master of the universe should never be referred to as "Big Daddy" or "the Man Upstairs" or any other frivolous term. There is a movement afoot to bring God down to our level by personalizing Him. God is a person; he does not require personalizing. But, he is not a man and does not deserve to be demeaned in our image.

Using the King's English—thee, thou, thy, etc.—is not necessary, though there is nothing wrong with it.

You may begin your prayer exactly as Jesus did here or you may simply say "Heavenly Father..." or something to that effect. But, do yourself a favor, pause every time you address God and be certain you

do in humility of heart.

**“... Hallowed be Your name.”**

To hallow something is to make it holy. God’s very name should be considered holy and set apart to his children. We should never use God’s name or the word “God” without considering it. That is taking his name in vain as surely as using it in a curse word.

It is quite a privilege to come before the Almighty as we are allowed. When we do so, we approach his throne of grace as supplicants or petitioners. We come with no bargaining power and should never pray like this: “If you do such and such for me, I will start being a faithful Christian or start doing good things that I neglect.” First, be faithful and do good wherever you find it and do not test the Lord, your God.

We can express this humility and awe in a number of ways. We can glorify God for his creation, for the scheme of redemption, for his patience and mercy.

**“Your kingdom come.”**

When Jesus taught this prayer, the kingdom was still yet future. According to the parables and especially Colossians 1:13, the kingdom now exists, known as the church and we are citizens of it. No more can we pray for the kingdom to come than we can pray for today’s bread after we have already received it.

Still, the kingdom of Christ is something to always consider in prayer. Gaining citizenship in it is a great blessing. We are thankful for our King who gained the throne only through great anguish and sacrifice. We are thankful for our fellow subjects who edify us (Heb. 10:24-25). We are thankful for the law of the kingdom (James 1:25, 4:12) by which we can learn what is pleasing to our ruler. We can pray that others seek and find her gates. Ours is a kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

In this vain, we should pray for the elders and deacons and evangelists who serve the church. We should remember to pray for those who have shown an interest in the kingdom and her king. We should pray that our king might soon return to lead us home to heaven with him (2 Peter 3:12).

We can no longer pray “Thy kingdom come” for it has come, but we can still pray about events in the kingdom.

**“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”**

In all things, our ambition should be that God’s will is carried out. We should make supplication for those in positions of civil authority like our governor and our president and congressmen (1 Tim. 2:1-3). We should pray that orphans and the unborn are protected, that the poor are not taken advantage but instead helped to find honest work and a decent home. We should pray that the moral code of the New Testament is exalted, that groundless divorce, fornication and pornography are discouraged. We should pray that the gospel be given free course to be broad cast in this world.

When we pray for the sick, we should remember that God’s will regarding their recovery is necessarily best. Whatever the outcome, God’s will should be our desire, even when it does not seem to suit us best at the time. Our prayers for the traveling also fit here.

God’s desire is that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:1-4) and that we pray that each might come to a knowledge of the truth. Our prayers, if fervent, are effective in pleading for a neighbor (James 5:16).

**“Give us this day our daily bread.”**

This part of the prayer involves our needs. We may pray that our physical needs be satisfied and also be confident that they will. Remember that God sends rain on the just and the unjust and cares for his people (Matt. 7:25-27). Every good thing comes down from God who sends only good upon his creatures (James 1:17).

It is important also to remember to be thankful for what God has give us. Often we pray fervently for something and when it arrives, we forget to express gratitude to its ultimate giver (Eph. 5:20).

God has promised to supply our needs and some of our wants will be met, but we should never expect all our wants to be provided. One should remember how many have much less than we do and be grateful for the true bounty that is ours.

Gratitude for such physical blessings may include food, homes, clothing, employment, the earth, family, and countless others. We sing “Count your many blessings...” and really should do just that.

**“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.”**

We should also take account of our daily sins and confess them before God, that he might forgive them (1 John 1:9). Our offense against God is quite great when measured by the sheer volume of our sins (Rom. 3:23). It is indeed a little thing for us to bow before him and beg his mercy and aid.

This is a good time to consider that we should not effect an air of superiority toward other men, brethren, or even to God when we pray. Remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). It is the man who admits his sins and pleads for mercy that will be forgiven, not he who wrongly claims he is righteous and trusts in himself for salvation.

Jesus says we should forgive others as God has forgiven us. In Matthew 18:1-4, we learn that we should be converted and be as little children. One great aspect of childhood is that kids can be fighting one minute and back to best friends the next. Most do not hold grudges and are willing to forgive and forget quickly. We should be so wise.

In Matthew 18:6-12, we learn the value of a man’s soul and what we should do in its service. We should seek to bring an erring soul back to the flock and never drive it away by pettiness or insistence on holding a grudge even beyond confession.

In Matthew 18:15-20, we learn how to win back a brother who has wronged me. It should be our desire to clear up this blemish on his soul and this impediment in our brotherly relationship. We keep the matter private as long as possible, hoping to win him to right.

In Matthew 18:21-35, we learn that we ought always be willing to forgive a brother, for God has forgiven us often and much. We should never resist a brother who seeks our forgiveness with sincerity. Our souls will be held accountable and due torture if we do.

When we pray, we should ask for mercy and express gratitude that it has been granted through our faith and the blood of Christ. We should remark on our humility and desire that we be at peace with all (Rom. 12:18).

**“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”**

This, of course, is a good prayer for the morning, as a new day is beginning. Pray that the steps you take might lead you in the opposite direction from temptation (Luke 22:40, 46). All Christians are susceptible to some form of temptation that particularly entices them. We should pray and strive to steer clear of those things. Whether it be staying off the alcohol aisle at the market or away from friends (1 Cor. 15:33) who are given to a flood of dissipation (1 Peter 4:1-4), we should desire to remain free (Rom. 6:16).

In times of temptation, we should remember that God is our best friend. To him, we should draw near and flee from the devil. In enticement, God always provides the route of escape (1 Cor. 10:13), if we will look for it. Through prayer and meditation, we learn to see that escape more clearly and escape temptation more often. Pray for strength to endure the fiery darts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:16).

**“For Yours is the Kingdom and the power and glory forever.”**

The model prayer ends as it began by magnifying the name of God. Some have remarked that the church belongs to them or this is “my church.” That is most untrue, for the church always belongs to God or it ceases to have anything to do with him at all. If we realize this, we will not name churches for

men or doctrines or governments, but be content to let the church be “of Christ” or “of God.” We will recognize that all authority belongs to Jesus (Matt. 28:18, Heb. 4:12). We will not seek to confer special titles or undue honor upon mere men, but will each serve as brethren. We will not try to warp the church to fit our own agendas, but will serve the Lord’s

We pray by the advocacy, or authority of Christ. We will conclude many of our prayers by saying something to this effect: “In Jesus’s name, I [or we] pray ...” A phrase like this is good to use, but more important is the attitude behind it that recognizes the glory and majesty of our advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).

### **“Amen.”**

This phrase simply denotes agreement with what has been said. We use this to end private prayer, to stamp our fervor and trust upon it. We believe God can deliver what we have prayed about, for we are not doubters, (James 1:5-8). We use it to end public prayers so that each person in attendance can lend his own heart and approval to the petitions. One should not “amen” a prayer he has not heard or paid attention to. He should not “amen” a prayer with which he disagrees. “Amen” tells God you concur with the prayer.

### **Conclusion**

Prayer should be a regular thing with Christians. When we begin to neglect it, we should expect anxiety and trouble and our faith to weaken and fade. We should not expect to reach heaven without a healthy prayer habit.

### **Questions**

1. How often did Daniel pray each day? What should this impress upon us?
2. What type of prayer does the Lord condemn in Matt. 6:5-8?
3. What is the merit of using “vain repetitions”?
4. Because God knows what we need before we ask, should we stop praying? Why, or why not?
5. How may we address God? Is it necessary to use the “King’s English”?
6. May we come to God with the idea of bargaining for what we want?

7. May we still pray for the kingdom to come? Why, or why not?
8. How may we pray regarding the kingdom still?
9. What does praying that God's will be done do to our desires some times?
10. What types of things fit into praying for daily bread?
11. Do we pray for these only before we receive them?
12. What does it mean to seek God's mercy as we show mercy?
13. What does God do for us when we are tempted?
14. What should we do regarding temptations?
15. By whose authority do we pray?
16. What word generally concludes our prayers and what does it literally mean?
17. Should this word be used lightly?
18. Should prayer be a last refuge or a first resort?
19. What happens when prayer habits slip?

# Lesson 6: *Fellowship*

## Introduction

As Christians, we are committed to calling Bible things by Bible names and giving Bible definitions to Bible concepts. One great theme of the New Testament is that of “fellowship.” Very few in our day can properly define fellowship as the Bible uses the word. Indeed, fellowship has been perverted in the world to mean most anything but what is right.

## Modern Idea of Fellowship

Say the word “fellowship” to most people in the world and their minds immediately conjure up images of gymnasiums, banquet halls and field trips to the amusement park•and all this sponsored by the church’s finances and promotion. Is this what God envisioned when he uttered the word 15 times in the pages that testify to the power of the death and resurrection of his son? Are fun, food and frolic synonymous with fellowship?

Around Thanksgiving, many churches use their budgets and facilities to provide hot meals for the homeless. More than one recipient has been heard to appreciate the fellowship that day. Was this man, outside the body of Christ, suddenly in fellowship with God and his people?

To the world, food and recreation fulfill the demands of fellowship. There is little or no requirement for belief in God or a joint participation in the work of the church in the Lord’s service. So long as hamburgers and tennis balls are being served, we are in fellowship.

As stated before, “fellowship” is used 15 times in the New Testament and is derived from three similar Greek words. Additionally, the main word for fellowship is translated differently in a number of places, but conveys the same basic idea.

The main Greek word translated “fellowship” is *koinonia* (κοινωνία), meaning “fellowship, association, community, joint participation, intercourse” according to Thayer. He defines the Greek word as it might be used secularly or religiously in Greek literature. To define the term as God uses it, we must consult the various texts where it is employed.

There are four basic lines of meaning when “fellowship” is used in the New Testament. Each of them carries the idea of joint participation, but the context reveals how their association was conducted and what its purpose was.

We understand that in the world, “fellowship” may mean an association of any sort, with any purpose and conducted by any means. But, in the church, “fellowship” is limited to God’s word and will on the matter. Hence, we reject the way “fellowship” has been coopted by most religious bodies.

## An Intimate Bond Which Unites Christians (Acts 2:42, Gal. 2:9)

The first line of meaning describes the “intimate bond of fellowship that unites Christians” (Thayer). It is an abstract idea or sense among fellow saints.

Fellowship is used in this way in Acts 2:42 where the new brethren were said to be continuing “...steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship...” Here, the word describes that sense of brotherhood that was born when these men and women obeyed the gospel and became members of the same spiritual family.

Fellowship is used in the same way in Galatians 2:9 as James, Peter and John extended “the right hand of fellowship” to Paul and Barnabas upon understanding that they all shared in receiving the grace of God. Here was the understanding that these five were on the same team with the same goal in mind. They knew that they all jointly participated in the grace of God and its spread.

When used this way, “fellowship” describes that innate bond between brethren who perhaps have little or nothing else in common.

## **The Dignity and Blessings of Christianity (1 Cor. 1:9, Eph. 3:9, Phil. 2:1, 3:10; 1 John 1:3, 7)**

A second line of meaning is “fellowship in the dignity and blessings of the son of God (Thayer).” This use describes the bounty of blessing that is ours because we belong to Jesus. It is a fellowship that enriches our souls and edifies us spiritually simply by the knowledge that it exists and that blessing passes to us because of it.

Fellowship is used in this sense in many places. First, in 1 Corinthians 1:9, it describes the relationship that exists between redeemer and the redeemed. In Ephesians 3:9, it denotes “the unsearchable riches of Christ” (verse 8, cf. 1:3).

In Philippians 2:1, “fellowship” concerns our relationship with the Holy Spirit that ought to influence the way we choose to live amongst each other. And in Philippians 3:10, Paul uses “fellowship” to show a participation in the sufferings of Christ.

In the first chapter of John’s first epistle, the apostle uses “fellowship” several times to prove that this joint participation among Christians must exist by God’s sanction and involvement. It requires vertical association between man and God and horizontal association between brethren (verses 3 and 6). The interest of this fellowship is “eternal life” in Jesus, the “Word of life.” Such fellowship requires that one walk in the light to maintain a joint participation with others who are doing right (verse 7).

In this sense, fellowship denotes the blessings that come from Christianity, sharing in the grace of God as joint heirs of salvation.

## **Intercourse with Darkness (1 Cor. 10:20, 2 Cor. 6:14, Eph. 5:11, 1 John 1:6)**

On four occasions, God uses fellowship to describe the forbidden relationship of Christians with the works of evil.

In 1 Corinthians 10:20, Paul proscribes “fellowship with demons” in idolatrous, false worship. To join one’s hands to those of idolaters in their religious service is sinful.

In 2 Corinthians 6:14 and Ephesians 5:11, the apostle demands that Christians abstain from fellowship in the evil works of those outside Christ. Christians should be exposing the dangers of such sin rather than participating in them.

In the midst of his discussion of the fellowship of saints to one another and to God above, John notes that this association is only maintained as long as the Christian avoids “walking in darkness” (1 John 1:6). This type of evil fellowship would sever our association with God, and therefore, each other.

Used in this sense, fellowship is a forbidden communion of a consecrated person with unholy deeds.

## **Benefaction (2 Cor. 8:4, Phil. 1:5)**

Twice the apostle Paul uses “fellowship” to refer to the financial and other support he received from churches for evangelistic and benevolent endeavors. This fellowship takes the joining of hands one step further and accomplishes a good work by scriptural means.

In 2 Corinthians 8:4, Paul praises the Christians in Macedonia for their aid in ministering to the needy saints in Judea, while encouraging the Corinthians to do likewise. This fellowship is benevolent in nature and is aimed at fellow Christians only.

Later, Paul thanks his brethren in Philippi for supporting him in preaching the gospel around the world. Their fellowship allowed him to feed himself while preaching Christ to lost people. Their support was obviously more than monetary, but still is an act of benefaction.

## **Conclusion**

Fellowship is a great thing, but it is cheapened when men reduce it to fun and games. That is a secular fellowship, rather than a scriptural one and denies God his chosen place in the association. It is a fellowship that is oriented toward the physical entertainment and enjoyment of men, rather than their

spiritual salvation.

### Questions

1. What kind of a definition should we give to a Bible concept?
2. What do most people imagine religious fellowship to be?
3. How many times is “fellowship” used in the New Testament?
4. How does Thayer define *koinonia*?
5. What are the four basic lines of meaning of “fellowship” as God uses the word in the Bible?
6. How was the bond of Christians expressed by five preachers in Galatians 2:9?
7. What fellowship is Paul describing in 1 Corinthians 1:9? What do we receive from this fellowship (Eph. 3:9)?
8. What type of fellowship is absolutely forbidden?
9. What kind of fellowship involves money?
10. How is fellowship cheapened today?



# Lesson 7: *Eternity*

## Introduction

What is the fate of the soul after death? This is a question that confounds a world that looks everywhere but the Bible for the answer. Many Christians likewise have deep questions about the subject. God chose to disclose the details sparingly in different areas and abundantly in others. This seems to correspond to the areas in which we can and can not affect in our lives. We want to respect God's voice as well as his silence in this lesson—we will not attempt to define things with guesswork, rather we will depend on the scriptures.

The old King James Version uses the English word *hell* to translate three different Greek words. This obviously leads to confusion for, although the three Greek words are related, they still are different. Later translations have sought to show distinctions, as we will in this lesson.

## What Happens At Death?

At the point of death, body and spirit separate. The body, of course, is the physical part of man while the spirit is the eternal vapor that truly defines who a man is. We see the principle of death in the case of Jesus. When he was crucified, the Bible says he yielded up His spirit—his body remained there on the cross, but it was lifeless now. A soldier came to break his legs, but found that unnecessary because piercing his side showed the convicted to be already dead. Jesus's spirit, his eternal part, separated from his body, the temporal part. But where did his body and spirit go?

His body went to the tomb, where if not for the intervention of God, it would have decomposed and returned to dust, as Job pronounced about life. However, his spirit went to a place called *hades*.

All this had been prophesied in Psalm 16:10, where the psalmist used the Hebrew word *Sheol* to describe where Jesus's spirit would go. Peter quoted the psalmist in Acts 2 when he preached on Jesus's death, burial and resurrection (Acts 2:29-31). The apostle used the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew *Sheol*, which is *hades*. The two then are synonymous words from different languages, much like *coche* is the Spanish equivalent of the English *car*. Hades is not the hell that most think it is.

Jesus's spirit went into *hades* but it did not stay there. Many use the words *hades* and *hell* synonymously, but they are not the same place. Hell is the place of eternal punishment, of fire and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Conversely, *hades* is the general home of *all* spirits separated from their bodies at death. Jesus did not go into *hades* alone on that day, though (Luke 23:39-42). The penitent thief on the cross went with him into what Jesus called Paradise. We know that Jesus's spirit did not go into heaven, but instead into *hades*.

This Paradise where he and the penitent thief were going must, then, be a part of *hades*. What we will learn in a moment is that the other thief also went to *hades*, but to the other part that is not Paradise at all.

## Two Departments of Hades

Hades, as we have said, is the general home of all disembodied spirits that await final judgment at the end of the world. Both good and wicked people go there. Hades is not hell, but an intermediary state between earth and eternity. However, *hades* is not Catholic purgatory, for as we shall see, eternal life cannot be snatched from eternal death there, contrary to the Romish doctrine.

Jesus taught that there were two departments of *hades* in Luke 16:19-31. Many dismiss this as a parable, but it does not bear the marks of a parable, for Jesus or the recorders identified parables as such and in this story, Jesus uses real people, not fictional characters.

The first department of *hades*, he called *Paradise*. *Paradise* is from the Greek for that part of Hades...which is the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection. When Christ died, he went into *hades*, but he did not go into torment, he went into paradise of *hades*. Jesus told the penitent thief that he would join him in paradise that day and they both died bodily and their spirits went down

into hades. But they went to the department of hades known as Paradise. The penitent thief joined Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, awaiting God's final judgment.

The other thief also went to hades, but joined the wicked rich man on other side of hades, which is apparently referred to as *Tartarus* in 2 Peter 2:4. *Tartarus* is also translated as hell, but more specifically, it is from the Greek for that part of hades which is the abode of the wicked dead. In 2 Peter 2:4, final judgment has not yet happened to those in Tartarus and so it completely reflects the holding cell Jesus described in Luke 16. The resurrection to judgment has not yet happened and those in Tartarus wait, not in paradise, but heated torment.

Though disembodied spirits wait here for final judgment, it is too late to change their fates, according to 2 Corinthians 5:9-10. The great gulf fixed in hades simply continues the dividing line that men ponder in their lives. Each man chooses one side or the other—good or evil. Lazarus chose the good while the rich man chose the evil in life. Both died and their souls were separated from their bodies. Good Lazarus went to Abraham's bosom where he was treated as he never was in life—with respect and love and comfort. The wicked rich man was sent to the tormenting department of hades where he suffered. Between them, Abraham said, was a great gulf fixed that prevented anyone from ever crossing from torment to comfort. There is no communication with the living (no seances or channeling).

When judgment comes it will be according to deeds done in the body which crumbles in the tomb (2 Cor. 5:9-10). When the body is separated from the spirit, it is too late to change one's eternal fate in heaven or hell.

## Two Eternal Homes

When the eternal place of punishment is intended instead of the temporary one, Hell is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna*. In Jesus's day, *Gehenna* was a valley south and east of Jerusalem where children had been sacrificed to Molech and where Jews then disposed of refuse and bodies. Jesus used it in his teaching as a symbol of penalty:

- in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:22)
- judgment for sins of lust (Matt. 5:29-30)
- destruction of both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10:28)
- sons of hell made by proselyting Pharisees (Matt. 23:15)
- punishment of evil people (Matt. 23:33)

This is the eternal home of the wicked following the final judgment. Of eternal hell, Jesus taught more on the subject (Matthew 25:30-41 and Mark 9:42-48) than any other preacher. We know simply that it is just as eternal as heaven and that it is a place of wailing and gnashing teeth, where the wicked suffer justly forever.

*Heaven* is the eternal home of the righteous following the final judgment. It is a place of rest and an abode with God (Matt. 25:19-21), where God has always been, where Jesus ascended, and where we shall be if found faithful.

## Questions

1. What is the problem with the English translations, concerning hell?
2. What happens to the body at the point of death? What could people have expected to find in Jesus's tomb after three days?

3. What did Psalm 16 prophesy about Jesus's fate after bodily death? How does Peter describe its fulfillment?

4. Isn't Hades the place of eternal torment?

5. Define Hades.

6. Draw the layout of hades:

7. Can the great gulf fixed be crossed to give or attain comfort? Can it be crossed so that one's eternal fate is altered after death?

8. From where does the idea of hadean "paradise" come? From where does the idea of hadean "Tartarus" come?

9. What did Jesus use to illustrate the torment of eternal hell?

10. What preacher taught most on hell in the Bible? What is one significant aspect to this fact?

11. Where do the faithful go for eternity? Who else is there?

## Lesson 8: *Calvinism*

### Introduction

The great religious uprising against the excesses of the Catholic church at the end of the dark ages gave birth to Protestantism. Strictly speaking, those rebelling against Rome were doing so in protest to Catholicism. When they arrived outside the cathedral, however, they needed a religious philosophy of their own to replace the one they had disregarded at Wittenburg and beyond. A theologian named John Calvin (1509-64) filled the void with the system of spirituality that now bears his name, Calvinism, in his *Institutes of Christian Religion*. To one degree or another, most all Protestantism practices his doctrines. Despite their obvious differences, everyone from Baptists to Methodists to Presbyterians works with the Calvinistic form. The church of Christ is neither Catholic nor Protestant; its members do not follow any man, pope or protester.

Calvinism is a protest against Catholicism's great failing: the attempt to earn heaven by a system of meritorious works. With Luther and Calvin, however, the pendulum swung violently to the other, equally improper, extreme. That by belief alone is a man saved and assured of heaven. Somewhere right in between lies the truth about grace and faith and obedience, but neither extreme can lay claim to it.

### Five Facets to Calvinism

Calvinism is built around five premises. Each is rooted in a mistaken belief that is ironically shared by Catholicism to the downfall of each. The Roman doctrine of "original sin" is much like the Calvinistic doctrine of "total hereditary depravity." In each, a child is born in the filthy sin and condemnation of Adam's sin. Each child is born with a burden of guilt regarding a sin committed thousands of years before his conception.

The five facets of Calvinism can be formed into an acronym, TULIP. The five initials of the acronym designate:

- Total hereditary depravity
- Unconditional election
- Limited atonement
- Irresistible grace
- Perseverance of saints

### Total Hereditary Depravity

This is the beginning place for Calvinism. It is asserted by their creeds that each man inherits the sin and condemnation of his father, Adam, upon birth. Just as one might inherit land or money, a little baby inherits the gloom and doom of another's iniquity.

The Baptist creed is especially insistent upon the sinfulness of each baby: "the guilt of the sin [Adam and Eve's] was imputed (and corrupt nature conveyed) to all their posterity .... whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil (The Hiscox Guide for Baptist churches)."

By virtue of this creedal belief, Baptists must look into the cribs of their babies and see filthy, vile, evil and corrupt beasts. Mothers must dwell upon the wickedness conceived in their wombs and growing by their nourishment. Is it true that sin is passed from father to son?

Calvinists use four basic passages as proof that God holds us accountable for the sins of our ancestors. First, Isaiah 64:6 which calls man's righteousness before God as filthy rags. But how does this teach man is born in sin? Ephesians 2:3 is employed to show we are born children of wrath. But the passage, properly translated by Greek authorities like Thayer, shows we become children of wrath by habit and continual practice. Romans 5:12 is supposed to teach that men are born is sin passed through

generations, however, the passage actually says that all sin themselves and face death because each chooses to sin of his own volition. Psalm 51:5 reports that David was conceived iniquity. But sin is attributed here to the one who conceived (his mother), not the one who was conceived.

The truth is made very clear in a number of passages. Ezekiel 18:19-20 shows plainly that the son will not bear the iniquity of his father nor die on account of another's sin. 2 Timothy 3:13 says that evil men will wax worse and worse, but this could not be if man is totally depraved to begin with. 1 Peter 1:18-19 says that men are bought back from sin by Jesus, but if man is born in sin, he never belonged to God and cannot then come back to where he has never been. Titus 3:5 shows man's regeneration, proving he had been in the favor of God before he fell.

### **Unconditional Election (Predestination)**

Here, Calvin takes a Bible word and defines it to fit his doctrine, which violates truth. The Baptist manual teaches that "... By the decree of God...some men and angels are predestined or foreordained to eternal life...others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation." Further it says that no man can change his fate and that the saved are recipients of God's grace and love. What then is the case with those whom God created just to destroy?

If this is true, God is responsible for man's sin and his condemnation. God is also a respecter of persons, then.

This Calvinistic theory of predestination is unbiblical and false. First, there are some things that God chose not to know (Abraham's faithfulness in offering Isaac (Gen. 22:12) and Judah's idolatry with Molech (Jer. 19:5) are examples. Second, there are some things God obviously did not fix for certain. Nations were rebuked and could repent to prevent God's judgment on them (Jer. 18:7-10, Ezek. 2:17-21). Nineveh repented at Jonah's preaching and was spared as God relented from his plan. Third, some of God's conditional decrees were changeable. Hezekiah was given 15 extra years of life after God told him he would die and he prayed about it (2 Kings 20).

Predestination is a Bible phrase and a Bible definition will supersede Calvin's. In Ephesians 1:4-11, the word is used twice, but only refers to God's foreknown plan to save the penitent in Christ. The penitent would make themselves known by coming to the Lord. Romans 8:29-30 describes the predestined as those called to be conformed to Christ. But men are called by the gospel and justified by adhering to it by choice, not force (Acts 10:34).

Further, Exodus 20:13-16 and Israel's history show that man is capable of choosing right or wrong. Matthew 11:28-30 proves he is capable of learning what is right. James 1:13-15 put the burden of guilt on man for choosing sin, not on God for foreordaining it.

### **Limited Atonement**

The limitation of Christ's sacrifice is a totally artificial doctrine. Calvin teaches that access to the blood of Christ is denied to those whom God chose to torment before ever taking a breath. Calvin taught that Jesus did not die for everyone but just for those certain individuals whom God respected and predestined to save.

Three passages are used to prove that Christ's sacrifice is limited to the Calvinistic elect. John 10:11-15 is supposed to show that not all are entitled to the gospel, but is guilty of getting the horse behind the cart. Goats and sheep are separated by virtue of their response to the gospel, not before they are given a chance. Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25-27 are supposed to prove that only those in the church have access to the blood of Christ that redeems souls. Again, the horse is behind the cart•only those in the church took advantage of the opportunity that all had.

The Great Commission was to broadcast the gospel seed to every creature in the world because whoever believes can be saved (John 3:16). Jesus died that all might have access to his saving sacrifice (2 Cor. 5:14, 1 Tim. 2:3-6, Heb. 2:9, 2 Peter 3:9). If Christ did not die to give all men access to salvation, then he is a respecter of persons and a liar who arbitrarily selects certain men to be preserved and others to be tortured forever.

## **Irresistible Grace**

Calvin teaches that man is so bad off that it takes a miracle to get him converted. Though it doesn't require the devil to use a miracle to enslave man, God must resort to the supernatural to get him back. This makes the lie and the devil more powerful than the truth of God.

Calvin teaches that the Holy Spirit must operate directly on a man's heart, apart from the word of God. But the Bible says that the Spirit uses the word to convert sinners (Eph. 6:17) and proves it throughout the book of Acts. The Spirit works, not by forcibly invading a man's heart, but by influencing his soul through the gospel message that the Spirit inspired (Rom. 1:16-17, 2 Thess. 2:13-14, 1 Cor. 4:15, 15:1-4; James 1:18, 21; 1 Peter 1:14-25).

Calvinists teach that the Holy Spirit cannot be resisted, but Stephen disagreed (Acts 7:51). The Jews resisted the Holy Spirit here by refusing the word of truth that Stephen preached to them.

## **Perseverance of the Saints (Once Saved, Always Saved)**

Calvin taught that once a man was saved, he could never sin so as to be lost again. Hear Calvinist preachers express their doctrine: One said, "A child of God can go from the arms of a harlot to the arms of Jesus." Bill Foster wrote in *The Weekly Worker* (Mar. 12, 1959) that "If I killed my wife and mother and debauched a thousand women, I couldn't go to hell—in fact, I couldn't go to hell if I wanted to. If on the judgment day, I should find that my loved ones are lost and should lose desire to be saved, and should beg God to send me to hell with them, He couldn't do it ..."

John 3:36 says the believer has eternal life and Calvin assumes that he cannot lose what he has. But the New Testament teaches that the saint has eternal life in hope (Titus 1:2, 3:70 and in promise (Titus 1:2, 1 John 2:25). One can leave the faith and forfeit his hope (1 Tim. 4:1, 2 Tim. 2:28, 1 Tim. 5:12, 1 Tim. 1:19-20). Although Romans 8:35-39 teaches that nothing can separate man from Christ's love, it does not prove that nothing can separate man from Christ and salvation. The Bible says man can fall away from grace (Heb. 12:15). Concerning John 10:27-29, it is true that no one can pluck a sheep from God's hand, but it is equally true that a sheep can wander away (Matt. 18).

Further, Paul warned that he could be disqualified if he fell into sin (1 Cor. 9:27) and that some had already turned after Satan (1 Tim. 5:15). Peter rebuked Christians who had gone back to the world, leaving Christ for their old sins (2 Peter 2:14-25). Where was their eternal security when they wallowed in their mire like old times?

Eternal security is conditional, as the Bible teaches when it attaches the word "if" to salvation. Men are disciples of Jesus if they keep his word (John 8:31), are saved if they remember the truth (1 Cor. 15:1-2), reconciled if they continue in the faith (Col. 1:21-23), kept from falling if they obeyed (2 Peter 1:10 and saved if they walk in the light (1 John 1:7).

## **Conclusion**

Calvinism is false and it is dangerous. Most of the nominal Christians in the world have been lulled into false security by its tenets that cast off personal responsibility and make blurred distinctions between right and wrong. Calvinism places all blame for sin and condemnation on God.

Calvinism is no better than Catholicism. Between the two extremes is Bible truth. Salvation by grace through faith reconciled with faith working through love. There is true New Testament Christianity.

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The author of this material is grateful to the work of our brother Tom O'Neal and his article on "Calvinian Theology" in "Walking in Truth" (Vol. 20, Num. 1). Much of this material comes from that article.

## Questions

1. What relation does Calvinism have to Catholicism? What relation does Calvinism have to the church of the New Testament?
2. What acronym describes the five facets of Calvinism? What do the initials denote?
3. According to Calvinism, in what spiritual state is a newborn?
4. What does the Bible say about inheriting sin (Ezek. 18)?
5. What Catholic doctrine does this mimic?
6. Is Predestination a Bible term?
7. Has God ever chosen not to know something or to change his plan after declaring it?
8. Were certain individuals set aside as saved by the predestination of Ephesians 1 or was a certain class of the penitent predestined to salvation?
9. If God predestined John and Sally to be saved, while ordaining that Ron and Louise should be damned before any of the four were even conceived, what does that make God (Rom. 2:11)? Why?

10. Is access to Christ's blood limited to a select group or is the gospel for all to hear?

11. What would be true of God if the gospel were only accessible by a select group?

12. If a miracle is required to save a man lost by natural means, which is more powerful, the truth or the lie, God or the devil?

13. Does the Holy Spirit operate on a man's heart directly or by agency of His word? Can man be saved without the gospel message?

14. Can the Spirit be resisted?

15. What would be the effect on morality if these denominational preachers are accurate about eternal security?

16. Is it true that no man can pluck a saint from God's hand? What is also true?

17. Could Paul have fallen out of grace?

18. How do you know eternal security is conditional?



## Lesson 9: *Mormonism*

### Introduction

The sect popularly known as Mormonism was established in the early nineteenth century by Joseph Smith, Jr. in the American northeast. The group is also often known as the Latter Day Saints.

Smith claimed that an angel appeared to him in response to his prayer for knowledge concerning sectarianism and religion. The angel supposedly instructed him that all sects were evil and that God had determined to restore the New Testament church through Smith.

The Mormon church today is a powerful political and social force based in Salt Lake City, Utah, the location of Brigham Young University. Mormons are diligent personal workers, but express a great reliance upon emotionalism and the Book of Mormon, called a newer testament of Jesus Christ.

### Joe Smith's Era

The early nineteenth century was marked by a religious revival among Americans and the rise of Protestant denominationalism, opposition to all doctrines Catholic, and the restoration ambitions of Stone and Campbell. Doctrines of sprinkling, infant baptism, and the scheme of salvation were under intense scrutiny and churches of all colors were swelling in membership as tent revivals were packed everywhere they sprang up. The problem, one must admit, that Joe Smith rightly recognized was the religious confusion and sectarianism that was tolerated and even encouraged. How could this stew of theologies be the church of the Bible, he, Campbell and Stone wondered.

The solution they all arrived at was that they could not all be the church of the Bible for they did not speak the same things; though they practiced union by holding joint revivals, they lived in disunity when they separated believers into varying and contradictory doctrines. Stone and Campbell and many others decided to search the scriptures to find the Bible pattern for all doctrine and the identity of the church while Smith claims to have experienced this unverifiable vision. His claim is that God chose him to restore the church of Christ to its original condition and doctrine as its new latter day prophet. This is the basis of the Mormon sect's reason for being.

### The Plates

Seven years after his alleged vision, Smith says he was led by an angel named Moroni to dig up a set of golden plates in New York that supposedly contained the inscribed text of the Book of Mormon in the completely unknown tongue of Reformed Egyptian. He took them (somehow despite the incredible weight of such golden plates) to Pennsylvania to translate. A man named Oliver Cowdery became his assistant, but stayed behind a curtain and never actually saw the plates (he later apostatized with the other two chief witnesses). The book was printed in 1830 and the Church of Christ, as Smith called his group was organized within two weeks in Fayette, New York.

### Six Fatal Flaws of Mormonism

#### *Fatal Flaw #1: Subjective Faith*

When Mormon elders talk with you, they will use some Bible passages and some Book of Mormon (BOM) passages, but if you express any doubts as to the elders' veracity, they will retreat to their feelings. The Mormon faith is highly subjective, rather than objective; it finds comfort not in knowing truth but in feeling right. They will ask you, "Why would devote our lives to this and be out here every day if we didn't feel it was right?"

I have no doubt they feel it is right, but does that make it right? Consider Saul of Tarsus who persecuted the church of Christ, approved of Stephen's martyrdom and chastised Jesus. He was a man sincere in his convictions, who said he had "lived in all good conscience" (Acts 23:1), a devout Jew who

thought destroying the following of Jesus was right: he felt it was true, but he was truly wrong. Consider the crucifiers of Jesus whom Peter accused of sinning in ignorance—they felt they were right, but were so wrong.

The ultimate test of divine truths is not feelings but knowledge: Jesus's words proved these examples wrong (Rom. 10:17, Eph. 3:4, John 20:30-31). Appealing to feelings is a tactic of every group that is cornered by one with Bible answers to human errors. Feelings are a faulty guide built on human emotion and tainted by experience

#### *Fatal Flaw #2: Unbiblical Assumption About Religious Confusion*

Smith reacted to the confusion among believers in Christ with understandable dismay. Remember that God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33), the devil is, though. God gave us the pattern for discipleship and the church in the New Testament. The key to religious unity is found here for Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom to his apostles (Peter, James, John, etc.) and then unlocked the will of heaven through their inspired works.

Paul inscribed the platform of unity in Ephesians 4:1-6: one of each. The solution is go back to the Bible, for the pattern is neither tattered nor torn, only ignored (Titus 2:6-8, Rom. 6:17). "... [W]hen you read you can understand my insight..." (Eph. 3:4).

Archaeological discoveries support the fact that our Bible is what God inspired 2000 years ago and beyond: nothing has been lost nor added to alter or confuse it, save for the expected shortcomings of translation which are remedied in careful study anyway.

Mormons will test your resolve by asking, "When you study the bible, doesn't it seem like they weren't writing for us, but for someone else?". Their point is, aren't you confused out of your mind when you read. None of us knows everything and there are difficult passages, even according to Peter, but to jump from that to an indictment of the book is too much. The point is the Bible was written for us•every word of it (Rom. 15:4, 1 Cor. 10:1-11, 1 Peter 1:10-11) and is everlasting (1 Peter 1:23-24).

#### *Fatal Flaw #3: Continuing Revelation*

The Mormon elders will build upon any hesitancy they perceive in one's commitment to understanding the Bible by appealing to their need for new clarification or revelation. They add the *Book of Mormon* to the canon and revere *The Pearl of Great Price* and *Doctrines and Covenants*.

They adhere to the pronouncements of latter day Presidents and Apostles in Salt Lake City, Utah. But is God's revelation continuing even now (Jude 3, 2 Peter 1:3, James 1:25)? The Bible called it complete 1900 years ago.

Mormon continuing revelation has often contradicted earlier Mormon continuing revelation, even as one Pope contradicts an earlier one. For example, DC 132:1 enjoins polygamy upon the church; DC 132 also includes a revelation to Mrs. Smith to allow her husband his concubines; but President Wilford Woodruff rescinded the allowance in 1890 because it was at variance with US law. Who was right? Brigham Young taught that Adam was God, but recently President Spencer Kimball called this false teaching. Did you ever read Jeremiah call Isaiah's work false?

#### *Fatal Flaw #4: Mormon Church is Kingdom of this World*

Jesus's kingdom is not of this world; in this world but not after its kind. It is spiritual and invisible, composed of souls not soil and defying the borders of human treaties and arms. It is built on a constitution from above, its leader occupying David's throne in heaven (John 18:36 and Acts 2:29-31).

His kingdom, the church, has no earthly headquarters and no universal earthly government, composed of individuals assembling in local congregations under the oversight of appointed pastors. But the Mormon church has a president (scripture?) and is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah (scripture?) where it runs a university (scripture?)

Field representatives are called elders, but do they fit Bible qualifications, especially those

regarding marriage and children (Titus 1:5-6)? Do they shepherd the flock that this among them, or serve under a bureaucratic hierarchy (1 Peter 5:1-2)?

#### *Fatal Flaw #5: Book of Mormon is Unreliable*

Scientifically, archaeologically, medically, historically and naturally, the Bible is reliable as a source of fundamental truth. The Book of Mormon however fails and even contradicts the Bible and itself: Was the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1) or Jerusalem (Alma 7:10)? Was the church established in c. 30 A.D. (Matt. 16:18, Acts 2:47) or 147 B.C. (Mosiah 18:17)? Were disciples first called Christians in c. 43 A.D. (Acts 11:26) or 73 B.C. (Alma 46:13-15)? Would miraculous gifts be done away with when that which is perfect is come (1 Cor. 13:8) or because of man's unbelief (Moroni 10:24)?

The LDS claim that God used Joe Smith to restore the true church, in answer to his prayer about which church to join: "Through him, they restored the truth about the plan of God" (*The Plan of our Heavenly Father, Study Guide 1*). If Smith was to restore the church and eliminate religious confusion in the Mormon following; why then are there more than 60 different and contradicting Mormon sects now? Mormons claim perfect, inspired translation of the Book of Mormon in Joe Smith's 1830 effort with the reformed Egyptian plates. Why then have numerous subsequent revisions made more than 4000 changes in grammar, harmony and doctrine? If the original *translation* was inspired, how could one single word be changed without compromising it? Consider the change from the 1950 rendering of 2 Nephi 30:6 to deflect Smith's racism: *white* was changed to *pure* by the 1989 version.

#### *Fatal Flaw #6: Joe Smith and Latter Mormons are Unreliable*

They claim to be prophets but fail the test given by God in Deuteronomy 18:20-22—even a single error disqualifies a prophet as false. Do these Mormons fit the bill?

Smith taught that the sun and moon were inhabited—moon dwellers are six foot Quakers who live 1000 years, as recounted in *Young Woman's Journal* (3:263). Proven true in 1969? No!

In the mid 1800s, he predicted the overthrow of the government in a few years (History of the Church (HOC) 5:394). He prophesied a great famine in the US in a few years then also (HOC 1:315-6). Smith predicted the Civil War would involve the whole world (DC 87:3-4) and that Christ would return in 56 years from 1835 (HOC 2:182).

Young predicted polygamy would continue forever in Mormonism (Journal of Discourses (JD) 11:269). Kimball predicted Brigham Young would become president of the United States (JD 5:219).

### **Conclusion**

All these facts point out the fallacy of the Mormon claim. The true answer to biblical unity is found in the inspired New Testament, not in the vain imaginations of mere men who offer no proof and raise more confusion than they settle.

### **Questions**

1. Christ's church was established about 30 A.D.—does the Mormon claim to be this church match its date of origin?

2. Name a couple of preachers contemporary to Joe Smith.

3. What about the religion of his day most bothered Smith? Was it proper for him to be concerned about this?
  
4. To what did Stone and Campbell appeal for unity? To what did Joe Smith appeal?
  
5. List every single man, woman or child who claimed to have eyewitnessed the golden plates.
  
6. What did Smith call his new group?
  
7. What is wrong with subjective faith?
  
8. What is wrong with Smith's assumption about Biblical confusion?
  
9. What is wrong with Smith's assumption of continuous revelation?
  
10. What is wrong with the Mormon church's very nature?
  
11. What is wrong with the reliability of the Book of Mormon?
  
12. What is wrong with the reliability of Smith, Young and Kimball?

# Lesson 10:

## *Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*

### **Introduction**

The movement popularly known as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was once called Russellism.

Examination shows this relatively young religion to be an eclectic mixture of Universalism, materialism, Unitarianism, and Adventism.

The Jehovah's Witnesses have been labeled as a cult by society. Indeed, the group exhibits many of the traits associated with cultism: especially mind and behavior control. Members are not permitted to accept or read religious tracts from other groups. Nor are they to read their bibles without a senior member present to lead them.

Their representatives are often on our doorsteps, seeking to leave some of their material and set up studies. Christians should be prepared to deal with them.

### **Foundation**

Charles Taze Russell founded the sect in 1884, teaching initially that Jesus and the apostles came to this earth in October of 1874 and have been here ever since. He advanced his theories under the dramatic title, "Millennial Dawn." The group that so prides itself on being Jehovah's Witnesses and elevating that name above Jesus's was not even called such until 1931.

Russell's character is ill-suited to founding a faithful sect. He was sued for divorce by his wife and was found to have defrauded her by transferring \$317,000 of their money to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society to keep it from her. The divorce was granted on grounds of his "unmanly conduct and familiarity with other women," according to court documents. Court records quote him as describing himself: "I am like a jellyfish; float around here and there; I touch this one and that one, and if she responds, I take her to me, and if not, I float to others." Clearly, adultery was unashamedly present always on his mind.

Russell died in 1916 but his cause lived on. Judge J.F. Rutherford became president. Interestingly, Rutherford's writings used part of Russell's dogma but supplanted Russell's theories in the denomination. Rutherford caused Russell to be denigrated among adherents.

Rutherford was sentenced to prison in 1918 for refusing to support the government in World War I. He is quoted as having said that "Christ came to the temple of Jehovah" in 1918 and that the rest of us just don't see him. Rutherford reorganized his movement in 1922 and began sending out his disciples to our doorsteps with arms full of tracts and magazines published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

### **Rutherford's Workers**

All members who meet in local "Kingdom Halls" are required to give stated hours of time to witnessing or proclaiming the doctrines of Russellism: "Pioneers" are full-time workers, "Special Pioneers" give 175 hours per month and "General Pioneers" give 150 hours per month. The literature flows from a Brooklyn press where the Society is headquartered. In 1948, the door-to-door witnesses distributed 20 million books, 12 million magazines, 18 million tracts and 218,000 bibles. They are commendable in their diligence and interest in labor.

## **Peculiar Beliefs**

### *Denial of the Deity of Christ*

Witnesses do not believe Jesus was God with us (Matt. 1:23) when he came to the earth 2000 years ago. Nor do they believe he is God on par with Jehovah. They refuse John 1:1, 14: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God .... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." More than any other, this passage proves what the Watchtower denies: that Jesus is God.

Witnesses comment that Jesus was "a powerful godlike one" in their book, "The Truth That leads to Eternal Life." They say, "As he is the highest of Jehovah's creation, so also he was the first, the direct creation of God, the only begotten" ("Studies in the Scriptures," Vol. 5, page 84).

But the Bible shows his deity in Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6, John 20:28, Colossians 2:9, Philippians 2:5-9, 1 Timothy 3:15 and John 1:1, 14. The Lord Jesus defied the attempts of the scoffers of his day to deny his deity in John 8:58: "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Jesus referred to himself just as Jehovah had told Moses to have the people call him in Exodus 3:14. Concerning Jesus, Witnesses teach polytheism, that Jesus is a lesser god.

The Witnesses also deny his resurrection. "Our Lord's human body was, however, supernaturally removed from the tomb, because had it remained there, it would have been an insurmountable obstacle to the faith of the disciples. We know nothing about what became of it, except that it did not decay or corrupt. Whether it was dissolved into gases, or whether it is still preserved somewhere as the grand memorial of God's love, of Christ's obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows; nor is such knowledge necessary" (*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pages 125-130). "It was necessary, not only that the man Christ Jesus should die, but just as necessary that the man Christ Jesus should never live again, should remain dead, should remain our ransom-price for all eternity" ("Studies in the Scriptures," Vol. 5, page 443).

The apostle Paul rebuked such arrogant scoffing in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."

### *Denial of the Deity of the Holy Spirit*

The personality of Spirit is denied by the Witnesses. They describe him as "God's active force" ("Let God Be True," page 108 and "The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life," page 24). They deny that the Father, Son and Spirit constitute the Godhead by teaching that neither the Spirit nor the Son is God. Jesus is just a created being and the Spirit is merely an active force, they teach.

But the Holy Spirit has a distinct personality as one part of the Godhead. He speaks (1 Tim 4:1), witnesses (John 15:26), teaches (John 14:26), and guides (John 16:12-13). He has mind (Rom. 8:27), knowledge (1 Cor. 2:11), affection (Rom. 15:30) and will (1 Cor. 12:11). He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), despised (Heb 10:29), blasphemed (Matt. 12:31-32), resisted (Acts 7:51) and lied to (Acts 5:3).

The Holy Spirit has the attributes of deity: eternity (Heb 9:14), omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10-11), omnipotence (Micah 3:8), and omnipresence (Psalm 139:7-10). And He is actually called God in Acts 5:3.

### *Denial That Man Has An Immortal Soul*

Witnesses teach that when a person dies, no part of him continues to live ("Watch Tower," June 15, 1994). Thus, their teaching denies the immortality of the human spirit.

But the Bible teaches that man has a spirit that survives the death of his body (Matt. 10:28, Acts 2:27, Rev. 6:9, 20:4 and James 5:20). Consider Jesus's instruction on the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The scriptures reveal that a person can be "absent from the body but at home with God" (2 Cor. 4:16-5:20). Paul actually desired to die in order that he might be at home with Christ (Phil. 1:21-24). Jesus described Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as living in spite of the fact that their bodies had been dead for centuries (Matt. 22:32). The apostle Peter taught that man has an immortal spirit (1 Peter 3:4).

## *Denial of The Existence of Hell*

Despite the fact that Jesus spoke about the subject more than any one in the Bible (Matt. 5:22, 29; 10:28, 18:9, 23:15, Mark 9:43, 45, 47 and Luke 12:5), Witnesses deny its existence. Jesus described it as “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12, 22:13), a “place of pain” (Rom. 2:5, 8-9), a “place of fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8), a fate worse than death without mercy” (Heb 10:29) and a place of torment (Rev. 14:11).

In response to the Witnesses’ beliefs, hell cannot be a place of punishment for those who disobey God. They believe the soul is annihilated at death. The Bible teaches that the soul is not annihilated at death, but will be raised to judgment (John 5:28-29 and Matt. 25:31-46) and placed in hell for eternal punishment if found deserving.

### **Witnesses’ Plan of Salvation**

The greatest question ever asked is “What must I do to be saved?”. Witnesses answer differently than Peter. They deny water baptism has anything to do with salvation, teaching, like most denominations, that baptism merely shows one’s allegiance to Christ and does nothing more. “What then does Christian baptism signify? It is not a washing away of one’s sins, because cleansing from sin come only through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7). Rather, it is a public demonstration, testifying that one has made a solemn dedication to Jehovah God and is presenting himself to do His will” (“The Truth...,” pages 183-4).

The Bible teaches otherwise (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38 and 22:16 and 1 Peter 3:21).

### **Organization and Structure**

The only organized church of the Bible is the local congregation with her elders and deacons as overseers and servants. Each church is fully autonomous, having no ecclesiastical governing body, legislating or overseeing brotherhood works.

The Witnesses are all under the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society—local groups are called “Kingdom Halls.” The WTBS exercises power over churches by dictating policy and work. This is an amendment to God’s word and is condemned (Rev. 22:18-19, 2 John 9-11 and Gal. 1:6-9)

WTBS has regional servants, zone servants and district superintendents, but what are their scriptural qualifications? The Bible knows no such office.

In the Kingdom Halls, the Lord’s Supper is improperly observed. The church of the bible observed it on the first day of the week and every member was to participate (Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor. 11). Witnesses divide themselves into two groups—the 144,000 and the Great Crowd: the 144,000 expect to be with God in heaven while the great crowd expect to enjoy paradise on earth. Supper is only taken by the 144,000 on a yearly basis. When one takes the supper, he attests that he feels he will be part of the select group and shows a lack of humility, so few if any ever partake of the supper in a hall.

### **The Kingdom**

Witnesses teach that the kingdom was not established on earth until 1914. Jesus disputes that in Mark 9:1. Those in the church were citizens in his kingdom (Col. 1:13-14 and Eph. 2:19). The kingdom was established on the first Pentecost after his resurrection and came with power with the Holy Spirit (Mark 9:1, Acts 1:8, 2:1-4 and 2:47).

## Eschatological (End Time) Prophecies

In its early doctrine, Witnesses taught that Christ will come and lead a righteous army to annihilate the army of Satan. The righteous dead will rise to reign with Christ for a thousand years but the wicked will never be raised from dead (no hell). Rutherford declared in the early 1900s, "Millions now living will never die." Most of that generation are dead now, though and the Witnesses began changing the prophecy in 1996.

Later, Rutherford predicted 1925 as the resurrection of the faithful dead. He built Beth Sarim, a house for Old Testament worthies who were supposed to be resurrected soon. *Children* was written to dissuade Witnesses from marrying until after the impending Armageddon. The Witnesses predicted Armageddon for 1975. Nothing happened.

## Conclusion

The Jehovah's Witnesses is a false organization from start to finish. It is extremely difficult to study with one of its members, because they are forbidden by the organization to accept study or material from non-members. This should be telling, but to many it is not.

## Questions

1. When was the church of the Bible established? When was the Jehovah's Witness established? What does this prove?
2. Who founded the group? How does his character compare to that of the founder of the new testament church?
3. Who began the practice of door-to-door deliveries?
4. What is commendable about the Witnesses?
5. What does the bible say about Christ's deity? What do Witnesses say?
6. What is the case if Witnesses are right about Jesus's resurrection?
7. Is the Holy Spirit deity? What is proof?



8. What becomes of the soul at death? What do Witnesses teach?
  
9. What do they believe on hell? What does the bible say?
  
10. What do Witnesses leave out of the plan of salvation?
  
11. What are a few things wrong with the Kingdom Hall setup?
  
12. When was the kingdom really established?
  
13. How many false end time predictions must they make before we see they are false?

# Lesson 11: *Instrumental Music in Worship*

## Introduction

The use of instrumental music in the worship of God's people was once a hotly debated topic. Even among Catholics and Protestants, the issue was once one of great controversy. Among apostate churches today, only the Orthodox churches of Greece and Russia maintain the Bible precedent of a *Capella* music. For this reason, the church of Christ has become known for insistence upon vocal music only in its worship.

However, we live in an age of tolerance, in which reformers are trying to reshape the church of Christ to extend the right hand of fellowship to churches that use mechanical instruments of music. For this reason, it is imperative that we study and know what the Lord says on the matter.

## New Testament on Musical Worship

We can read many times in the New Testament of Christians singing praises to God. We hear apostles and disciples singing (Mark 14:26, Heb. 2:12, Acts 16:25, Matt. 26:30) and it is something God tells us to do as a sacrifice of the fruit of lips to him (Heb. 13:15). We hear the apostle Paul command it in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19.

Most of these occurrences of our English word *sing* come from two Greek words: *ado* ("to sing; simply to sing") and *humneo* ("to sing a hymn; to celebrate God in song"). In their contexts, texts, and definitions, there is no mention, evidence or hint of any instrument accompanying the command to simply sing.

A third Greek word translated "sing" is the command to *psallo* (which does not mean sing at all, but rather means to "pluck, pull, or twang as of a beard, hair or stringed instrument." Here there may be a mention of an instrument, for this is the only Greek word that will allow for one. Before we know for certain, we will have to check the context to see what that instrument is. To know the use of the word *psallo*, its meaning must come from the context—what is being plucked?

Just as *baptize* means only to immerse and the medium for immersion must come from context, *psallo* means "to pluck" and the thing plucked must be described in the context. It is used in Romans 15:9 (sing unto thy name), James 5:13 (sing psalms), 1 Corinthians 14:15 (sing with spirit and also sing with understanding). But Paul specifies the instrument to be played in Ephesians 5:19—the heart of man!

Greek linguistic scholarship supports this truth: McClintock states, "The Greek word *psallo* is applied among the Greeks of modern times exclusively to sacred music, which in the Eastern Church has never been any other than vocal, instrumental music being unknown in that church, as it was in the primitive church."

Sophocles declares that there is not a single example of "psallo" throughout this long period involving or implying the use of an instrument, but says that it meant always and everywhere "to chant, sing religious hymns." And so the church of God sings a *Capella*, which is derived from a word meaning "in chapel style."

## History of Instrumental Music in Worship

There is no indication, implicit or inferred, that early saints used any instrument other than their hearts and voices to carry out the command to "sing." Although the Old Testament includes it, that is not authority for the old law was nailed to the cross, removed as legislation or permission for man to act or abstain (Eph. 2, Col. 2).

It was 670 years after Christ and his apostles lived and taught with divine knowledge and authority that Pope Vitilian I introduced the organ into Catholic worship. The introduction of the organ threatened to split the Catholic church in two and so it was removed to preserve unity. More than a century later, it was brought out again with some opposition, but eventually won incremental approval and finally, widespread acceptance.

Most religious groups who are neither Jewish nor Catholic are descendants of the Protestant reformation. These are the so-called mainstream denominations. The New Testament church, though, preceded them and even Catholicism, tracing its origin to the day of Pentecost, when Peter made disciples for Jesus by preaching his death, burial and resurrection and by commanding obedience to the gospel, by faith, repentance and baptism. But those Protestant groups all around us that now boast instrumental music once rejected them as too Catholic or too Judaistic.

John Calvin (1509-1564) said, "Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of other shadows of the Law."

Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892) said, "What a degradation to supplant the intelligent song of the whole congregation by the theatrical prettiness of a quartet, bellows, and pipes! We might as well pray by machinery as praise by it."

John Wesley (1703-1791) said, "I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither heard nor seen."

Catholic reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546) said, "An organ in the worship of God is an ensign of Baal."

Catholic Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225-74) said, "Our church does not use mechanical instruments, as harps and psalteries, to praise God withal, that she may not seem to Judaize."

### **Nineteenth Century Emergence**

Dr. L.L. Pinkerton of Midway, Kentucky introduced the melodeon to modern worship, saying, "So far as known to me, or I presume, to you, I am the only preacher in our brotherhood who has publicly advocated the propriety of employing instrumental music in some churches, and the the church of God in Midway is the only church that has yet made a decided effort to introduce it."

He justified its use by claiming that the brethren's singing there was so bad it would "scare even rats from worship." At first, it was only used to practice singing on Saturday nights, then it was used to get the pitch, then a sister started playing the melodeon to accompany the practices. After a sufficient time of incremental acceptance, it was decided to use in Sunday worship, a move that produced disunity. An elder named Adam Hibler had his slave, Reuben, remove it one evening but shortly thereafter, another replaced it and it was back for good.

### **God's Commands On Worship**

Remembering that the things "written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4), we study the account in Leviticus 10:1-3. God had commanded what be done to worship him and things were fine as long as man obeyed. But one day, these two priests decided to introduce their own innovations and God smote them. Naturally, Aaron was unhappy, or so the context seems to suggest would have been a reasonable reaction. Moses, however, teaches him in verse 3 by God's words that his sons had regarded God as unholy or common when they decided to please themselves in worship instead of God. Would it have made any difference if men had kept on offering this strange fire for 500 years: would it *become* permissible over time and by increments?

Jesus in John 4:24, instructs us about the importance of worship. It must be both "in spirit" (with emotion and sincerity, not going through the motions) and "in truth" (by the revealed words of truth and then by authority of Christ). It is possible to have one without the other and it doesn't matter which is lacked, worship is rendered common and displeasing to God.

Worship that is lawful but insincere is a clanging cymbal in God's ears. Worship that is heartfelt but unauthorized is an affront to the divine legislator (Matthew 28:28 and James 4:12). Unauthorized worship, no matter how heartfelt and sincere, is far from the command of God (Matt. 15:3-9) and is in vain.

The church must worship musically—with sincerity and authority. Authority exists for vocal

music, but there is no authority for instrumental music in the worship of the church. Such is going beyond the will of Christ and is condemned as a presumption (2 John 9-11).

### Questions

1. Can we read in the New Testament of Christians singing praise to God? Can we likewise read of them playing instruments in those praises? Why is this significant?
2. Which of the three Greek words translated “sing” could specify an instrument to pluck?
3. What does Paul command we pluck (Ephesians 5:19)?
4. What do linguists McClintock and Sophocles indicate concerning *psallo* and using a mechanical instrument of music in worship?
5. How did the first instrument arrive in a nominally Christian worship service?
6. Should the church of Christ be considered Protestant, Catholic or Jewish?
7. Which of the five Catholic and Protestant theologians noted supported the instrument in musical worship?
8. Who is remembered for introducing the melodeon to nineteenth century churches in America? Was its acceptance immediate or gradual? Why is this significant?
9. What lesson is there for us in Leviticus 10?
10. According to John 4:24, what two elements must rule worship? Define them.

## Lesson 12: *Ready to Give a Defense*

### Introduction

Standards of Bible knowledge have dropped significantly in recent years all across America. It is sad that many saints can not defend their beliefs based on what the Bible says. One wonders how such beliefs can be held dear if their roots are unexamined. Truly the roots of what we profess must be spread out upon the pages of God's express will.

As time-saving devices and appliances were made affordable following World War II, it was contended that our new leisure time would grant us greater opportunity to study the Bible and spread its message. Instead, we became intoxicated on the opium of television and the Bible got dusty. It is past time to shut off the idiot box and open up the word of God again.

How can we contend for the faith if we do not understand it? How can we teach our neighbors if we are uninstructed ourselves? How can we give a defense of the hope that lies within us if we are ignorantly treading on blind and not reasoned faith?

This lesson is a simple one: prove the following propositions *by scripture*. It is not sufficient to know the right answer to certain questions; one must know why it is right. And that reason will only come from the pages of God's word.

There will likely be some questions that you are unable to answer before the class. Try your best to answer them all, though. In class, we will answer every question with scripture and you should take note of each answer in this booklet. Then study these passages and commit their location to memory so that you will always be ready to give a defense of the hope that lies within you.

If you have any other questions of this kind that are not asked here, note them on the back page and we will also discuss them in class.

### Questions

1. Why is the church of Christ not called by a regular denominational name like *Methodist* or *Baptist*?
2. Why do you call yourselves *Christians* and not *Lutherans* or *Campbellites*?
3. Why do you insist upon baptism as a condition of salvation?

4. But nowhere does the Bible say that “baptism saves you,” does it?
  
5. What is your creed book called?
  
6. Why don't you have music in your worship?
  
7. You all sure do talk a good deal about authority. Why should I worry about having God's authority for what I do?
  
8. I heard the church of Christ was established by a man named Alexander Campbell in the 1800s—is this true?
  
9. I believe we can use the Old Testament as authority for certain things like burning incense and instrumental music in worship. Do you agree?
  
10. Why can't I do anything in worship that pleases me emotionally?
  
11. Why don't you refer to your preacher as *Reverend* or *Father*?
  
12. My church has priests—does the church of Christ?
  
13. Why don't you celebrate Christmas and Easter religiously—don't you love Jesus?

14. Why do you condemn gambling (lottery, poker, bingo)?

# Lesson 13: *Homosexuality*

## Introduction

The cultural and moral decline of every nation has been historically marked by greater instance and tolerance of sexual perversion and experimentation. In America, attitudes toward adultery, fornication, homosexuality and pornography have greatly liberalized over the last thirty years.

Adultery is no longer necessary as grounds for a state divorce, fornication is encouraged by sexual education in our schools and a mocking of virginity, homosexuality has become politically correct and preferred and pornography is now behind the shield of the first amendment which protects political speech, not filthy pictures.

The advent of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in the early 1980s has furthered a societal empathy for sexual perversion, especially homosexuality. Rather than recognize sexual immorality as the culprit for the spread of disease, the sick are being treated as martyrs and victims. When a certain Hollywood television actor was dying of cancer a few years ago, it was rumored that he actually had AIDS. In denying the report, he claimed that he wished he did have AIDS and that he would wear it like a badge of honor if he could.

The homosexual movement for acceptance has found a willing home among our cultural elites in television, cinema, and journalism. In turn, these gatekeepers are influencing American families to applaud and accept the homosexual lifestyle. Our public school systems and universities have joined the movement as well.

What we have forgotten is that homosexuality is a sin. It should not cause us to hate the sinner or brand his or her sin any worse than another, but still, it is iniquity and should be treated like it.

## Sodom and Gomorrah

In Jude 7, the inspired writer reminds us of the residents of "...Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them ... [who] having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

The account of Sodom and Gomorrah is the earliest indication that men and women had deviated from God's intention for human sexuality, expressed to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden at the dawn of creation: one man for one woman, companionship and procreation within the marital compact (Gen. 2:18-24). Jude says the Sodomites had gone after strange flesh, engaging in sexual immorality. Just what was that sexual perversion?

In Genesis 19, two angels appeared as male humans at Lot's home in Sodom. As they prepared for rest in his house, the men of Sodom arrived and demanded to "know them carnally." These wicked men desired to have homosexual intercourse with Lot's guests. They refused an offer to take Lot's daughters in heterosexual fornication, continuing to demand homosexuality until the angels put a stop to their predation.

Without doubt, their sin was homosexuality. For this in particular, the cities of the plain were all destroyed by fire from heaven. God's disapproval was clear, certain and striking.

## Mosaic Code

This condemnation of sexual perversion was codified in the law of Moses in Leviticus 18. In this chapter, God spells out his dissatisfaction with all manner of sexuality outside the bond of heterosexual marriage. First incest (Lev. 18:6-18), then adultery (18:20), idolatrous sex (18:21), homosexuality (18:22), and bestiality (18:23) are called abominations and are expressly forbidden.

## Pauline Epistles

Homosexuality was a prevalent problem in the first century bible world. In the first chapter of his



Roman epistle, Paul cautions the saints against falling into this perversion. He calls homosexuality “vile passions” in verse 26 and unnatural in verse 27. The unnatural aspect of homosexuality is easily discerned, both physically and emotionally. Men and women are only compatible with one from the opposite sex. Such crossing of the line is shameful (verse 27). Paul says that those practice such immorality are deserving of death and are not yet fit for the kingdom of God.

Paul writes more in 1 Corinthians 6:9, arguing that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. In his list of specific sins, he includes a series of sexual perversions. Noteworthy among them is homosexuality and sodomy (*effeminate* and *abusers of themselves with mankind* in the KJV). In the original Greek language, Paul’s words are much more descriptive and undeniable as to their import.

Homosexual or effeminate comes from the Greek word *malakoi* (μαλακοί), which literally means “soft.” Thayer says it is used “... in a bad sense ...” here, meaning “... effeminate, of a catamite, a male who submits his body to unnatural lewdness ...” This is the submissive or effeminate partner in a homosexual union.

The second term is sodomy or abusers of themselves with mankind, from *arsenokoitai* (ἀρσενικοῖται), which Thayer explains as “one who lies with a male as with a female, a sodomite ...” This is the aggressive or masculine partner in the union.

Not only is the sin of homosexuality condemned, but it is described in such precise terms so as to eliminate any confusion or obfuscation of the truth.

The apostle goes on to remark that some members of the Corinthian church had been engaged in sins like this but had repented. Those that remained in sin could not inherit the kingdom of God (verse 10-11).

### “God Made Me This Way”

The oldest excuse for continuing in sin is to blame it on one’s Creator. This was Adam and Eve’s tactic in the Garden and it continues to be common.

The claim is made that homosexuals are born with a biological predilection for the same sex. Therefore, so the hypothesis goes, nothing should be done in the interest of changing this attitude, for it is *natural*.

Assuming for the moment that some are born homosexual, how would that prove the contention that they should remain so? Many argue that they are born with short tempers—should their outbursts of wrath be excused? Or should they work to overcome their particular sinful urge? Other sexual deviates argue that their desire for pedophilic sex is inborn—should we excuse them when they come for our children? Or should they strive to overcome their sin?

Arguing an inborn desire for wrong things just doesn’t prove the point. Every single one of us has a weakness for something sinful. It may very well be for heterosexual lust, but this does not excuse that lust (Matt. 5:27-28). Rather, we should do all we can to overcome the weakness and not fall into its snare again (Matt. 5:29-30). Wouldn’t the same apply if we conceded that homosexuality is inborn?

(It should be noted that science has yet to conclusively prove that homosexuals are born that way. No research has sufficiently duplicated claims of evidence that the brains of homosexuals are created differently from heterosexuals.)

Further, the fact that God so ardently condemns homosexuality in the bible is proof that he does not force it upon his creation. The bible clearly shows that God created Adam and Eve, male and female human counterparts to be compatible one with the other. Man’s aberration of this original plan led to homosexuality. It just is not natural.

### Conclusion

More and more, we are being asked to accept homosexuality as just as normal as heterosexuality. Those who disagree are accused of bigotry, hatred and trying to force their morality on others. Interesting that the anti-Christian sentiment in the media is never portrayed as unkind or forcing one’s immorality on the rest of us.

Christians must learn what the book, chapter and verse truth is and stand firm in it. It should be our

desire to convert the homosexual to Christ and to truth. We do not hate the sinner, but we must hate the sin.

### Questions

1. What types of sexual immorality have gained acceptance as politically correct in our degrading culture? Are some forms of sexual immorality still frowned upon?
2. How is homosexuality generally portrayed in American media and class rooms?
3. What does Jude claim as the particular reason that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah?
4. According to Genesis 19, what type of sexual immorality were these people interested in?
5. Where did God first lay out his law on sexuality? What was it?
6. What position did the law of Moses take on homosexuality?
7. How does Paul describe homosexuality in Romans 1?
8. What two words in 1 Corinthians 6:9 are pertinent to this discussion on homosexuality? Does the original Greek leave any room for confusion over this apparent condemnation?
9. How would you answer claims that Paul was a homophobe, writing because he was insecure, but not reflecting God's true will?
10. How would you answer the claim that homosexuals are born that way and should be permitted to be queer and Christian?



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OT3 Taming Canaan  
OT4 The Throne of David

OT5 Israel and Judah  
OT6 The Major Prophets  
OT7 The Minor Prophets  
OT8 Wisdom Lit./Post-Exile

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NT02 Acts of the Apostles  
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NT04 Liberty Epistles  
NT05 First Corinthians  
NT06 Second Corinthians

NT07 Prison Epistles  
NT08 Preacher Epistles  
NT09 Hebrew Epistle  
NT10 Minor Epistles  
NT11 Revelation to John

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