

# **75 BIBLE QUESTIONS**

**Your Instructors  
Pray You Won't Ask**

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This book is dedicated to

**Bob and Rose Weiner**

the founders of *Maranatha*,  
the "hardest core" campus  
ministry of this generation





# Introduction

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(it could change your life)

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There is a war on, a *war between Christianity and humanism*. Since 1975, hundreds of thousands of Christians in the United States have become aware of the threat to Christianity posed by humanism. It is amazing how long it took for Christians to recognize that humanism is a rival religion: about a century.

Humanism comes in many forms: secular humanism ("man is the measure of all things"), religious humanism ("man is evolving into god"), and even a self-proclaimed Christian humanism ("God's laws and logic and autonomous man's laws and logic really aren't in conflict"). This book deals with the mistakes and outright lies of Christian humanism, since Christian humanism has not yet been seen for what it is by most Bible-believing Christians.

Today, there are tens of thousands of Christian students who attend supposedly Christian colleges. Every day, they are being exposed to the religion of humanism, but always disguised as conservative, fundamentalist, or evangelical Christianity. The Christian student on a secular campus at least recognizes that he is being indoctrinated by representatives of an alien religion; the Christian attending a Christian college or seminary may not recognize this fact. In fact, he probably would be shocked to discover this, and so would the donors to the college.

Back in 1976, I edited a hardback book called *Foundations of Christian Scholarship* which outlines many of the humanist presuppositions that undergird various academic disciplines: psychology, history, education,

economics, sociology, mathematics, and philosophy. The book also introduces Christian students to a consistently Christian set of alternatives. The fact is, the presuppositions of *all* the academic disciplines, as taught in secular universities, are hostile to what the Bible teaches about God, man, and law. (You can order a copy of this book from Thoburn Press, P.O. Box 6941, Tyler, TX 75711; \$7.50. If you're a college student, you need this book.)

In certain fields, such as psychology, anthropology, and sociology, professors who hold the Ph.D. are virtually always self-conscious humanists and should be regarded by their students as theologically suspect until they can prove their innocence by affirming a biblical view of sin, redemption, and restoration rather than a Freudian or clinical view of sin. Anyone who doubts that Freud was totally incorrect, and self-consciously hostile to Christianity, from start to finish, should read R. J. Rushdoony's short book, *Freud*, published by Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Co., which also publishes Jay E. Adams' excellent books on counselling, especially *Competent to Counsel*. I would say that any instructor who is forthrightly hostile to Adams' "nouthetic counselling" techniques should also be regarded as guilty until proven innocent. (Note: you can get most of the in-print titles mentioned in this book at a *substantial discount* by joining the Puritan Reformed Book Club for \$5/year: 1319 Newport Gap Pike, Wilmington, DE 19804.)

Nevertheless, the sad fact is that many, if not most, of the instructors on Christian campuses share several of the basic philosophical and theological premises of humanism even though they are not self-conscious humanists themselves. They have been taught certain assumptions about the Bible and Christianity that

are simply not true, but they really believe that they are true. Even in the Bible departments, these humanist presuppositions have crept in, and the brand of Christianity that emerges is almost helpless in challenging secular humanism, precisely because of their *shared presuppositions* about God, man, and law.

Amazingly, this is even true of some of the most prominent conservative Bible preachers in the nation. I don't mean the less disguised humanism of a Robert Schuller, with his "self-esteem" or "bootstrap" Christian humanism; I mean fundamentalist pastors who have adopted some of the basic principles of humanism, never suspecting that these are the first principles of Christianity's major rival religion.

What this little book provides is 75 simple Bible questions in three subject areas that enable students to test themselves and their instructors to find out if latent humanist presuppositions have compromised their thinking. (I stress the fact that this book is first of all a means of *testing yourself*; Jesus warned us to remove the beam in our own eye before we attempt to remove the splinter from our brother's eye.)

I am not saying that everyone who denies the validity of some or even all of these 75 questions is a humanist. What I *am* saying is that anyone who rejects most of these 75 questions does hold a *compromised* form of Christian doctrine which is incapable of successfully challenging secular humanism. Why? Because of the presuppositions this person shares with the secular humanists.

Readers of this book may be startled to discover that they are already compromised. They may think to themselves, "This can't be true. I'm a Christian, not a humanist. I believe exactly what good Christian teach-

ers have taught me since my youth. They couldn't have been wrong about these matters." Yes, they could have been wrong. In fact, they *were* wrong, which is why for over a century in the United States, conservative, Bible-believing Christians have allowed the secular humanists to take over every area of life: education, psychology, entertainment, business, politics, the arts, communications, the media, and on and on. Because Christians have held to humanist presuppositions in certain key areas, they allowed the secular humanists to take over *by default*.

I want Christians to reconquer this lost territory. I think it's possible, and I think God expects it. I have shown how we can begin to do it in my little paperback book, *Backward, Christian Soldiers?* (Institute for Christian Economics, P.O. Box 8000, Tyler, TX 75711; \$4.95). But Christians can't do it if they share humanist presuppositions with the humanists. Third-rate humanists can never defeat first-rate humanists. Christians must purge out all traces of humanism before they can successfully battle humanism.

### Why Questions?

There is an old slogan that says "one picture is worth ten thousand words." I have a variation: "One good question is worth fifty assertions." (And 75 good questions are worth . . . ? Let's see . . .)

A well thought-out question opens many possibilities. People who react negatively against an assertion may be willing to think through a good question. If you ask a question properly, it can lead another person to consider a whole new set of ideas. That's why Socrates developed the so-called Socratic method. That's also why Jesus used questions to disarm his opponents, as well as to lead His followers into the kingdom.

When He asked, "What does it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his soul?" He was making a very important spiritual point. His question sticks in the mind in a way that an assertion wouldn't.

That's why this book is a book of questions. They stick in the mind. They enable people to explore new ideas. They don't threaten someone in the way that an outright assertion does. They enable people to think through certain issues, and then *come to their own conclusions*.

This isn't to say that everyone who reads these questions won't feel threatened. On the contrary, some people will feel *extremely* threatened. Not by the questions, but by the answers the Bible gives to these questions. A lot of people who sit down and start to read this book will never get beyond the first three or four questions. In panic or outrage they will toss this book aside and never come back to it.

Why? (A question) Because (here comes an answer) a lot of people have been misinformed about what the Bible teaches. They have come to believe on Jesus Christ as the author of their salvation, which is the proper thing to believe, but they have also come to believe in a lot of other doctrines that Jesus never taught and that the Bible doesn't teach. They have mixed up their commitment to Christ with their commitment to *man-made doctrines* that glorify man rather than Christ. When they begin to think through the implications of just a few of these questions, they run for cover. They say to themselves, "Well, if that's the kind of God this book believes in, I'd rather not believe in Him." *This is why they are compromised!* The important question is: *What kind of God does the Bible really proclaim?* That's the God we're required to

believe in. If you read all 75 questions, and think about them, you'll begin to question yourself about the kind of God others have told you that the Bible supposedly proclaims. And once you start rethinking such issues, it's hard to stop, if you're serious about your faith, meaning your faith in God (rather than your faith in what you've been taught in the past).

Maybe you'll wind up temporarily confused. People don't like to be confused. It's painful. But that's what growth is all about—spiritual growth and intellectual growth. That's what it means to become spiritually mature. At some stages of your spiritual life, you're fed milk; at a later stage, you're fed meat. Some of you may not feel that you're ready for meat. You probably won't finish the book. (Question: When *will* you be ready for meat? In a year? In a decade? When you're three score and ten?)

Some of you may be in college or seminary. You're paying big money and spending many hours to chew what you have been told is meat. Maybe it is meat, but maybe it's just leather: tough to chew, but not that nutritional. As long as you're paying to get answers to questions, take advantage of the opportunity. Get these questions answered.

I'm saying that *you've been misinformed* about what the Bible has to say about three things (at the very least): 1) the sovereignty of God, 2) the law of God, and 3) the kingdom of God. Am I overstating my case? There are ways to find out. The first step is to check out everything I say. I've provided a lot of Bible references. Read them. Think about them. Pray about them. Talk about them with other students. See if I'm quoting the Bible erroneously. Remember: it's not what I say, or your instructors say, that matters. *What matters is what the Bible says.*

But maybe after you've read all the Bible verses I cite, you'll still be unconvinced. You'll conclude that those who disagree with me deserve their "day in court." That's what I think right now. That's why I think you should start asking your instructors to give cogent, Bible-based answers to these questions, assuming that they don't agree with the answers I've given (and they won't agree, I can assure you). *Get some answers.* You're paying for them. Then evaluate their answers by the teachings found in the Bible. Go back to the verses I've cited and read them again. Compare my explanations with the answers you received from your instructors. Then make up your own mind. *All I expect is an open hearing.*

### **Suppressing the Evidence**

What I've found over the years is that a lot of Bible instructors object to their opponents getting *their* day in court. These instructors know all about the material in this book, but they don't want their students to know about it. Unless pressed by students, they never even mention that there is a whole different way of looking at the Bible. They would almost rather have students reading *Playboy* than this book, since they have answers (and disciplinary procedures) for students who read *Playboy*. There is one college administration in the South which not only expels any student caught with this book (or materials teaching similar doctrines), it then refuses to send out the student's transcripts. Students can't graduate, and they can't transfer their credits. Theft? Probably. Immoral? Certainly. All done in the name of Jesus? You bet.

(If you now attend such a school, have your transcripts sent out to one or two other colleges immediately, and every semester thereafter, whether you

read this book or not. You're vulnerable to the administration's coercion. They are ready and willing to control your conscience by using this threat against you. If necessary, have your transcripts sent out to cooperating business firms that will keep them for you in case you ever get expelled. You can subsequently have these second-party-held transcripts sent to other colleges that know just exactly how perverse certain administrations are, and that will provisionally accept your credits, even though they didn't come directly from your present college's registrar.)

So everyone should get his day in court. You're paying money (or your parents are) to get answers to the big questions in life. This book is designed to help you get biblical answers to legitimate questions. They aren't trick questions. They're Bible questions. You can use them to get answers about:

Your own state of mind

Your commitment to getting answers

Your present knowledge of the Bible

Your church's commitment to the Bible

Your teachers' understanding of the Bible

Your school's commitment to open discussion

Your readiness to join the fight against humanism

**Warning:** this book could get you in trouble. You may not want to show it around just yet. It's not designed to get you in trouble, but some people who should be spiritually mature and ready to answer hard questions aren't spiritually mature and aren't ready to answer hard questions. They're ready to put pressure on students who ask hard questions. So be discreet. There are many ways to get legitimate questions answered. I've discussed this at length in **Appendix A**. Before you rush in where angels fear to tread, think



about the proper strategy in your position. If you're dealing with self-confident, spiritually mature, well-informed instructors, you don't have a problem. If you aren't, you do.

I want to stress the fact that *all I'm asking for is an opportunity to be heard*. I honestly believe that many Bible colleges and churches have been deliberately and unfairly suppressing the information found in this book. On the other hand, I also believe that many others simply haven't been exposed to the arguments I've raised. They are operating out of ignorance. As Paul said of the Hebrews, "they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2). They have been well-intentioned in the past, but not according to knowledge.

### Honest Discussion

If people are really well-intentioned, they won't object to honest discussion. They may still reject my arguments, but at least they won't resent the fact that you're thinking about these Bible questions. If you conduct yourself graciously, there will be no trouble with well-intentioned instructors. Christian gentlemen will respect the integrity and sincerity of other Christian gentlemen. But if they attack, scream, complain, or threaten you, know for sure that you're not dealing with Christian gentlemen. If they dismiss your questions with some variation of "No Christian could believe such things," or "Those are heretical questions," then they probably don't have any answers. In short, if they refuse to answer legitimate questions, know for sure that *you're dealing with people who are insecure about their own beliefs*. Be gracious at all times, even when they "stonewall" you, but make up your own mind. You're responsible before God for your own mistakes; let them be responsible for theirs.

If your instructors can't give you accurate answers to these 75 questions, or even answers to the half a dozen or so that bother you the most, then you owe it to yourself to keep on studying, reading, thinking, and praying. Just because *they* can't successfully handle these theological issues doesn't mean that nobody can. Follow through on your own. Find others who are willing to get involved with you. Read some of the books I recommend, where you can get answers. Remember: **"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him"** (Hebrews 11:6). If you seek Him diligently, you will be rewarded. Don't be like the man described by James: **"For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was"** (James 1:23-24). If you start to ask yourself these questions, but then get scared or lazy and refuse to seek out biblical answers, you are very much like the person James described.

### Why I Wrote this Book

I became a Christian in the summer of 1959, just after I had graduated from high school. If I had been given a book like this one to "chew on" before I entered college, I think I would have saved myself a lot of trouble. But no book like this was in print back then.

I met a pastor who was a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary back in 1961. He provided me with biblical evidence that eventually convinced me of the validity of questions 1-25. He eventually earned a Th.D.

from Dallas. But he himself has never been willing to go on and affirm the validity of questions 26-75. It took me until the spring of 1964, when I was a seminary student, to complete the transformation of my thinking. [Just for the record, I was taking a class on the Book of Romans from Professor John Murray, and his lectures on Romans 11 were what finally swung me over. His arguments are available in his book, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1965). His arguments on Romans 9 are no less eloquent, for those of you who don't agree with questions 1-25.]

I had to learn the hard way. It took me five years after my conversion to figure out what was going on theologically—that I had been misled by most of my Christian teachers and all of the humanist ones. My hope is that this little book will help you, and will speed up your learning process. The book is very simple. The questions are straightforward. There's nothing complicated about them. People may try to make them seem more complicated than they really are. But this, in my view, is a kind of intellectual smoke screen. People who don't like someone else's conclusions have a tendency to say things like, "You're making things too complicated," when in fact the conclusions follow easily from the evidence.

Of course, I could provide lots of complicated evidence, with hundreds of footnotes, but I'm trying to save you time. I'm trying to make things easier for you, not more difficult. This book is nothing more than a very brief introduction, a kind of handbook. You can go on and study the more detailed materials that I list at the end of each section and at the end of the book. But you don't have to. The 75 questions ought to be sufficient.

### Before You Begin

I want you to ask yourself a question: "Do I really believe that the Bible is God's absolutely authoritative and inspired word?" If you *can't* honestly answer "yes," then you already accept the number-one pre-supposition of the humanists. You probably will be repelled and outraged by all 75 questions. But if you do answer in the affirmative, you should be willing to *subordinate your thinking to whatever the Bible plainly teaches*. If you're really willing to do this, then these 75 questions will open up a whole new world to you. Now, are you ready to ask yourself 75 very serious Bible questions? And are you ready to seek out answers if you find that you don't agree with them?

# **Part I**

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SOVEREIGNTY: GOD'S OR MAN'S

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## Introduction to Part I

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Who is sovereign over history, man or God? This was Satan's great temptation in the garden: "ye shall be as gods" (Genesis 3:5). Eve decided that she would test God's word by an experiment. She would violate God's law and see whether she would die that very day, as God had promised. She, the "neutral observer," would determine who was correct, God or Satan.

The problem was, by *testing* God's word, she was *violating* God's word. She was setting herself up as the sovereign agent in a cosmic experiment. But God said that He was in charge. He would determine the course of events if she or her husband violated His word. It was clear: either He is sovereign, or He is a liar. Satan tempted men by implying that man is in charge rather than God. By believing that man is in charge of the great cosmic test of God's word, and then acting in terms of this belief, mankind fell into sin.

God's word tests God's word. God's word is the authority, not man's puny attempts to test it. That's where the Christian must start: with the sovereignty of God's revealed word, the Bible. If this isn't his starting point, then he is in sin, pursuing the old sin of Adam and Eve. The man who elevates his supposedly neutral logic or his experimental techniques above the sovereign word of God has committed a gross sin. *We do not test God with our so-called logic; the word of God tests our logic.*

With this in mind, consider the following 25 Bible

questions. They are all concerned with the question: Is God absolutely sovereign over His creation, or is man in any way sovereign? The humanists want to argue that *only* man is sovereign, to the extent that any conscious force is sovereign. As you will see when you read the next 25 questions, the Bible teaches that God, and God alone, is absolutely and comprehensively sovereign. But there are many, many Christians who can't make up their minds between what the Bible teaches and what the humanists teach. They don't want to accept either position.

The Bible doesn't teach a middle position. (That's my assertion.) Are you willing to see what the Bible teaches in this regard? Are you willing to *test my assertion* by asking yourself 25 questions, and then seeking biblical answers?



# Question 1

## Didn't God Hate the Unborn Infant Esau?

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated (Romans 9:11-13).

God prophesied to Rebekah the future of her two sons. Esau would serve Jacob. Paul is clear: God pronounced this judgment against Esau, the elder brother, before the two sons were born or had done anything evil.

The text means precisely what it says, which is why it bothers so many Christians. They jump to a false conclusion: "Esau never had a chance to prove himself. Yet it says that God hated him. That's not fair of God. God is fair, so the text couldn't mean what it says. It must mean something else."

Paul knew that this is what people would say, so he immediately asked a rhetorical question which makes sense only if God's hatred of Esau really did begin before Esau had done good or evil: **"What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."** Paul then goes on to speak of the Pharaoh of the Book of Exodus in similar terms (Question 2).

Paul was quoting Malachi 1:2-4. In verse 3 we read that God even condemned all of Esau's heirs, Edom: **"And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste. . . ."**

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## Questionable Answer

"God really didn't condemn Esau before either of the sons was born. He condemned Esau because He foresaw the evil deeds that Esau would do later on. So God isn't unfair. Esau fell by his own evil deeds."

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**My Reply:** But the text is specific: God *did* condemn Esau before he had done anything evil. The text does not mention Esau's future deeds. The point is: *all men are condemned automatically before they are born*. That is what the doctrine of original sin means. Esau was a son of rebellious Adam, just like all the rest of us, and was therefore innately evil and hated by God, just like all the rest of us, before he had done anything moral or immoral. The amazing fact is not that God hated Esau. *The amazing fact is that God loved Jacob!*

Didn't God tell Rebekah that the elder would serve the younger? Could Esau have lived a good life and have reversed that promise? Isaac thought so, and he was ready to give the blessing to Esau (Genesis 27:4). But Isaac was wrong; God made it possible for Jacob to receive the blessing despite his father's act of rebellion (Genesis 27:6-29).

Was Esau helpless? Yes. Was it inevitable that Jacob get the blessing? That is what God told Rebekah (Genesis 25:23). Could she rely on God's promise? Absolutely. Did Esau have a chance of overcoming God's promise? Not a chance. Question: *Is there any meaning to the word "chance" in God's plan?*

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For further study: Ps. 5:5; 11:5; Rom. 11:7-10; Eph. 2:3; Heb. 12:16-17.

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## Question 2

# Could Pharaoh Have Repented?

**For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth (Romans 9:17).**

Did God raise up Pharaoh for the wrong purpose? Or was magnifying His own glory a sufficient purpose for raising up Pharaoh? But if He raised up Pharaoh for this purpose, then how could Pharaoh have overcome God's purpose by repenting and allowing the Hebrews to depart Egypt in peace?

Before Moses began his mission to the people of Israel, God promised that He would harden Pharaoh's heart. **"And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt . . ." (Exodus 7:3-4a).**

God actively hardened Pharaoh's heart, *in order that* He might "lay His hand upon"—judge—Egypt. This is what He told Moses about His plan well in advance of Moses' first confrontation with Pharaoh. Could Pharaoh have overcome God's hardening of his heart? How? **"The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).** Result: **"And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses" (Exodus 9:12).** The Bible is clear: *Pharaoh was under the sovereign control of God.*

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## Questionable Answer

"But the Bible says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Exodus 8:15, 32). We are not to blame God for this hardening of Pharaoh's heart. Pharaoh was exercising his own free will. God judged him for his own sins."

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**My Reply:** The Bible unquestionably says that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. He was a *responsible moral agent*. But this does not answer the initial question, namely, could Pharaoh have repented? Could he have softened his heart, despite God?

**And the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh: for I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might shew these my signs before him: And that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son's son, what things I have wrought in Egypt, and my signs which I have done among them; that ye may know how that I am the LORD (Exodus 10:1-2).**

If Pharaoh had repented of his sins, and had turned the Hebrews free, how could God's word have been fulfilled? Can we ever say that the will of sinful man (or even righteous man) can prevail against the declared intent of God?

And if He did this to Pharaoh, why not to other rebels?

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For further study: Ex. 4:21; 7:13, 22; 9:12, 35; 14:8; Isa. 6:10; 63:17.

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## Question 3

# Does God's Absolute Predestination Make Him Unfair?

**Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? (Romans 9:19).**

Paul was a logician. He knew exactly what confused (or rebellious) men would ask themselves, once he had described the hardening of Pharaoh's heart by God. The person who was unwilling to accept the truth of Paul's words would reply: "You are saying that God didn't give Pharaoh a fair shake. Pharaoh might have repented. But God didn't allow him to repent. What kind of God is that? You say He is omnipotent. Then He isn't fair. Who could resist the will of an omnipotent God? But such a God is not a God of ethics, for He restricts men's ethical behavior. I don't believe in your God. In other words, Paul, you have misrepresented God. You have borne false witness against Him. God is either righteous or else He is sovereign — a predestinating God. But He cannot be both. I prefer to believe in a righteous God who grants men autonomous free will. Better a world of chance than a predestined world."

Paul's response to such logic is offensive to autonomous men: **"Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"** (vv. 20-21). In short, *be silent, complainer!* God is sovereign. Do not raise a logical paradox: "righteousness vs. omnipotence."

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## Questionable Answer

"The sovereignty of God really doesn't mean predestination. It means that God is powerful, but in His mercy, He allows men an area of free choice, so that in no way is God the author of sin. Men are given free will and free choice. He is fair because He voluntarily limits His own total power."

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**My Reply:** Then what is the meaning of the phrase, "**vessels of wrath fitted to destruction**" (v. 22)? What is a vessel made by a potter *unto*—for the purpose of—destruction? If it is not made for a purpose, is it random? But Paul spoke of two sorts of vessels, with both kinds *made* for respective purposes. Listen to Isaiah's warning to those theologians who place the sovereignty of God in opposition to the fairness of God:

**Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!  
Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of  
the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashion-  
eth it, What makest thou . . . ? (Isaiah 45:9).**

Some questions should not be asked. One of them is this one: "If God is omnipotent, how can He be fair in judging men for their sins?" Another is: "If man is morally responsible, how can God predestinate all events?" Paul's answer: "*Be silent!*"

Test your commitment to the Bible. Are you trying to judge the truth of the Bible by your own logic? Are you disobeying Paul?

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For further study: Job 9:12-15; 33:12-13; Isa. 29:16.

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## Question 4

# If We Can't Work Our Way INTO Salvation, How Can We Work Our Way OUT?

For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy (Romans 9:15-16).

We cannot work our way into salvation. This is the doctrine of grace. But the question needs to be raised: Can we work our way *out* of salvation?

If God says that he will have compassion on someone, how can that person escape God's compassion? How can the will of God be thwarted by rebellious man? If we say that rebellious man can reject God's compassion, aren't we saying that rebellious man can defeat the plan and providence of God?

The context of Paul's words is familiar by now: the question of God's hatred. Esau was hated by God before he was born. Pharaoh was destroyed by God in order to demonstrate God's power. So Paul's readers may ask: **"Is there unrighteousness with God?"** (Romans 9:14). Paul's reply: **"God Forbid."** God can vent His wrath on anyone He chooses to destroy, and the person who is a vessel unto dishonor can't do a thing about it.

With this as his basic argument, Paul then shifts his focus. God's mercy is as irresistible as His wrath. Even as the objects of His wrath cannot escape, so the objects of His compassion cannot escape. What else could his argument mean?

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## Questionable Answer

"But Paul really wasn't arguing that the wrath of God is inescapable, so therefore he could not have meant that the mercy of God is inescapable. Men have the free choice: to continue to be objects of his wrath or not. The vessel of wrath and the vessel of honor can switch places. It's a question of human choice, not God's foreordained decision."

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**My Reply:** What does the text say? It says that God hated Esau before Esau had done good or evil. It also says that He loved Jacob, before Jacob had done good or evil. They were not yet born, yet God had already made His decision as to which was a vessel of honor and which was a vessel of dishonor. And from that decision God never wavered.

What about Pharaoh? Paul tells us precisely what Pharaoh was: an object of dishonor. Pharaoh could not become a vessel of honor, any more than Moses could become a vessel of dishonor. God showed mercy to Jacob and Moses. They could not escape. God's will is irresistible.

It is the force of Paul's words regarding the vessels of dishonor which undergirds his words concerning vessels of honor. Those who are vessels of honor are as *safe* as those who are vessels of dishonor are *doomed*. It is not our willing or our running that establishes either condition. God's decision does.

Do you understand now why you never hear sermons on Romans 9?

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For further study: Ps. 115:3; Isa. 14:27; Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 4:35; Acts 13:48; Eph. 2:4-6.

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## Question 5

# How Can God GUARANTEE Good for His People Without PREDESTINATING Good?

**And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).**

All things? Does this mean each and every thing? That's what the text says.

Consider the implications of this promise. It means that the whole of a regenerate person's life is under the guarantee of God. Each act, each decision has meaning. Even evil acts have a part to play—a part that works together with all other parts. The whole is assured; therefore, the parts must be equally assured. But if the parts are assured, in advance, to fit together in a whole, doesn't this mean predestination? How else could God guarantee the outcome of "all things"? What does the next verse say?

**For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.**

Could Christ have become the firstborn among *few* brethren? Among *no* brethren? God says no. Christ was the firstborn among *many brethren*. God has *predestinated* their presence, in time and in eternity. Can any man—even the individual whose conversion has been predestined—void God's guarantee? How?

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## Questionable Answer

"When God says 'predestinates,' He really means 'foreknowledge.' God knows in advance who will accept or reject him (or accept His grace, and then later fall from grace), and He guarantees the *potential* for all things working together for good. But He does not guarantee actual good. He only foreknows the potential for good."

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**My Reply:** The text is clear. All things work together for good. Not some—*all*. Unless usage says otherwise, we have to take the word seriously.

Then Paul raises the issue of predestination. This follows his discussion of "all things." How much plainer could he be? God guarantees all things because He predestinates all things to benefit His followers. Yes, Paul says that God "foreknew" His followers, but then he says that God predestinates. What does predestinate mean? Doesn't Paul say that it means the guaranteeing of all things (events) to fit into the overall plan of God? His guarantee makes sense only within the framework of His sovereign power to bring all things to pass in a way that produces good for those called according to His *purpose*.

Foreknowledge and predestination go together, Paul says. You can't have one without the other. Can anyone show how the biblical definition of foreknowledge negates predestination?

If "predestination" means "foreknowledge," why does Paul use both words in the same sentence?

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For further study: Dan. 2:20-21; 5:25-31; Matt. 11:27; 20:15; 22:14; Luke 10:22.

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## How Can We Escape the Love of God?

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**Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:30-31).**

The order of salvation is clear enough. Once God designates a person for eternal blessings, there is no escape. There is *no escape out of wrath* for those who aren't predestinated, called, justified, and glorified. There is *no escape out of blessing* for those who are. This is Paul's doctrine of election.

This passage is God's assurance of victory to His people. What more glorious cry is there anywhere than **"If God be for us, who can be against us?"** Will Satan defeat God? Can he conceivably defeat God? If Satan is said to have a possibility of beating God in *particulars*, then there is no way for God to accurately guarantee His followers of victory *overall*. The whole, after all, is made up of the parts. If Satan can snatch *one* of God's chosen people out of the pathway to eternal life, then he can conceivably snatch them *all* out. Then Christ is left by Himself, the firstborn, potentially, of *no brethren*. But this is precisely what Paul *denies* in Romans 8:29! How can Satan overcome the decision of God to regenerate someone?

But then the contrary must be true: *since God guarantees the overall victory, He also guarantees the individual victories.*

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## Questionable Answer

"God limits the potentiality of Satan's victories in individual cases. Satan is allowed to be successful in separating *some* of God's chosen people from God's love, but not everyone. Of course, God could have guaranteed that all regenerate men persevere to the end, but he leaves the possibility open for some to perish."

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**My Reply:** The text is clear. Paul specifically argues that there is no power on earth or in heaven that can successfully challenge God's electing grace. What else do these verses mean? What sense can be made out of them if they don't mean this?

If God opens the possibility for some men to fall from grace, then can He guarantee that all the others are safe? Is His predestinating grace assured for at least *some* people? Does anyone want to argue that God picks the raw number of His elect who cannot fall from grace, but not the actual people? Then how can God affirm that all things work for good to those specific people who are called according to His purpose? All things work together for good in *which people's lives*? If He doesn't determine which people are elect, how can He guarantee the *specific details* of the *total blessing* to *all* His chosen people? Does God affirm His love to mere numbers of *indeterminate* people, but not *specific* people? God loves numbers?

If Satan can separate *one* person from God's grace, why can't he separate *everyone*? Does *autonomous man* decide?

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For further study: John 6:37-39; 13:18; 15:16, 19; 17:2, 6, 9.

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## Question 7

# If We Can "Fall From Grace," Isn't Christ's Intercession Ineffective?

**Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us (Romans 8:33-34).**

The word "elect" means chosen of God. If God makes this choice, can Satan negate it, by working through a rebellious heart? How? How can an elect person have a rebellious heart after he is saved by God's grace? Isn't the very idea of regeneration based on the changing of a person's heart by God?

Once a person is elect, can Satan make a successful accusation against him—an accusation that will persuade God to hand over the person to Satan? If we argue this way, aren't we arguing that Christ's death and resurrection are not all-powerful? Is there some missing bit of power or authority in Christ's death and resurrection?

Furthermore, Paul says that *Christ makes intercession before God the Father on our behalf*. Is being at the right hand of God not an affirmation of His total power—the power He said He possessed after His resurrection (Matthew 28:18)? If Christ is making intercession for His elect, are His prayers and arguments questionable? Is there some likelihood that God will not listen to His Son, and not respond as Christ asks? *Doesn't God the Father trust the judgment of His Son?* Think about it.

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## Questionable Answer

"The meaning of 'elect' is not what you think. To be elect means that you have only a *chance* for eternal life after Christ regenerates you. Nothing is certain, however. When God says 'Who is he that condemneth?' He doesn't mean that a regenerate man can't decide to become unregenerate and thereby condemn himself. Regenerate man always has the option of condemning himself by sinning."

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**My Reply:** In other words, *I* am powerful enough to condemn myself, even though Christ makes intercession for me to God the Father. My power is so great that I can overcome the election of God and the intercession of Christ. God grants me this power, of course, but I do possess it. And therefore Satan can tempt me the same way he tempted Adam and Eve. He can appeal to my autonomy—my God-granted limited autonomy—in order to get me to condemn myself. He can thereby snatch me away from the electing power of God. Christ's intercession fails again.

Why does God not honor the prayers of His Son? Are Christ's prayers half-way prayers? Aren't they meaningful, honest prayers to preserve His elect from disgrace? If Satan has the power to reverse God's very election of His people, in the face of Christ's intercessory prayer, *then what confidence can Christians have in their own prayers?* Are God's answers to prayers *random*? If autonomous man can overcome Christ's prayers, then hasn't Satan defeated Christ? Hasn't Satan destroyed the power of prayer?

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For further study: John 10:28-30; Rom. 11:2, 5-7; II Thess. 2:13.

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## Question 8

# Are We LESS Than Conquerors?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us (Romans 8:35-37).

Can we fall from grace? We will no doubt be tempted: by tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword. You can understand why Paul wrote this passage to the church in Rome. But what is his answer to the question? *No!* In all these things we are more than conquerors.

Here it is again: *all these things*. Again, do all things work together for good to them who are called according to God's purpose? Yes, they *certainly* do. But how can God guarantee this? How can He guarantee this victory, if He has reserved to man and Satan areas of *potential* rebellion by which His elect can become ethical rebels, cursed of God? After all, the potential can become actual. This is what "potential" means.

Is going to hell what God means when He promises His people good? A most peculiar meaning of "good"! But if they cannot go to hell, then they are truly elect, truly guaranteed the victory. They can be persecuted, but not separated from God's love. If God's elect can perish, then where is God's victory?

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## Questionable Answer

“Actually, Paul’s question is not what it looks like. It looks rhetorical, but it isn’t. He only sounds as though he is saying that nothing can separate us from the love of God. In fact, we can separate ourselves from God’s love. Besides, the “us” he refers to are indeterminate people, though perhaps a determinate *number* of people. After we die, *then* nobody can separate us—those of us who never actually get separated before we die—from the love of God.”

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**My Reply:** How can anyone be threatened *after* death by tribulation, distress, persecution, and so forth? Of course dead Christians are safe then from being separated from God’s love by these threats. They aren’t threats any longer. But Paul is talking about not being separated from God’s love during life on earth, when these threats are real. So who are the “us” on earth he refers to?

Doesn’t “us” refer to all regenerate people, all of whom are protected from separation from God’s love *before* they die physically? Who among “us” can fall? If this isn’t what “us” means, why does Paul mention all those trials and tribulations?

Also, why does he use what is obviously a rhetorical argument—“Who can separate us from the love of God?”—if he really believes that someone can? How could a master of biblical logic misuse words this way? How can an elect person fall from grace?

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For further study: Jer. 32:40; John 5:24; 10:27; Phil. 1:6; I Thess. 5:9, 23-24; II Thess. 3:3; I Pet. 1:4-5, 9.

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## Question 9

# Doesn't God Make "Vessels Fitted For Destruction"?

What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory . . . ? (Romans 9:22-23).

Paul contrasts two kinds of vessels, some fitted for destruction and some fitted for mercy. He uses a similar contrast in verse 21: vessels unto honor and vessels unto dishonor. He also describes God as a potter, a maker of vessels. But vessels are designed by their maker. They are assigned a purpose by their maker. Does this mean that God actually designed people as vessels to be filled with His wrath?

We know that the vessels of mercy were **"afore prepared unto glory."** He endures vessels of wrath, Paul says, not in order to save them, but in order to display His glory to vessels of mercy. Vessels of wrath therefore have a purpose in God's plan of salvation. He prepared one kind of vessel before time began: vessels of mercy. What about the other kind?

Can we discuss God, the creator of vessels of mercy, without discussing God, the creator of vessels of wrath? Paul discusses both. He indicates that one type (wrath) exists only to demonstrate God's mercy to the other type. If He predestinates some men to salvation, how can the others escape wrath?

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## Questionable Answer

"Paul's use of the words 'potter' and 'vessel' are figurative. He did not really mean to convey the idea of a master craftsman molding living vessels. Thus, Paul did not mean that God actually designed certain specific 'vessels,' meaning people, either to receive His mercy or His wrath. A vessel is simply a type, a design; men decide which type they wish to become. God offers each person this choice."

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**My Reply:** Yes, Paul's use of the words "potter" and "vessel" are figurative, symbolic—figures of speech. But what, exactly, are these figures supposed to convey to us theologically? We know that God is the Creator. Doesn't that point to the analogy of the potter? And if the analogy of the potter is proper, then shouldn't we regard ourselves and all people as vessels? And if we are vessels, aren't we *designed* vessels? Doesn't each of us have a role to play in God's cosmic drama? Satan does; why not equally specific men? Satan and specific rebellious angels are specific beings for whom hell was specifically designed (Matthew 25:41). Why not specific rebellious men, too?

God doesn't send "designs" to hell; He sends specific people to hell. Paul says that God designed His chosen people to be vessels of mercy, and that He endures vessels of wrath (such as Pharaoh) in order to demonstrate His power. Was Paul wrong? If he was wrong, then what *is* a vessel of wrath fitted for destruction? A potentially empty concept?

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For further study: Gen. 15:16; Isa. 10:5-15.

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## Question 10

# When Did God Decide to Give Us Eternal Life?

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Ephesians 1:4-5).

**"Before the foundation of the world"** God actively chose us. He had a purpose: that we should be holy and without blame before Him.

What about adoption? Did God adopt us because we had already become holy and without blame? Obviously not. Then why did He adopt us at all? In order to conform us to His will. Then why doesn't He adopt everyone? Why leave anyone outside the family of God? We can only answer, "Because He chose to."

All men are created. Adam was God's created son; so are all men. But Adam rebelled. He was cast out of the garden by God—*disinherited*. God must adopt sons if any are to be saved. He transforms them *ethically*. But when does He decide to do this? Immediately after a person repents? Paul says that we were predestinated for adoption before the foundation of the world. We were predestined, meaning *destined before*. And what was our destination? First, an ethical condition: ethical conformity to God. Second, a place: heaven, and then the reconstructed earth. If God established our destination before the foundation of the world, how can any man tell God "I'm not going"?

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## Questionable Answer

"What Paul means is that as a whole unit, the church was predestined to adoption. God set up His adoption agency before time began. But as to who gets adopted, that is decided by the orphans. God predestined the *whole church*; he did *not* predestine *individual church members*."

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**My Reply:** Quite frankly, how was God so sure that anyone would accept His offer of adoption? Pharaoh didn't. Judas didn't. Hitler and Stalin didn't. If Saul of Tarsus had had his way, there would never have been an Apostle Paul. So how did God predestinate the church to adoption without predestinating certain individual members? How does God guarantee the future existence of the whole without guaranteeing the future existence of the parts?

Was Jacob adopted? Obviously. When? Before the foundation of the world. Was he adopted because of his fine qualities? No; he was adopted before he was born. Paul makes all of this inescapably clear in Romans 9.

But what about Esau? Was he adopted? Obviously not. Why not? Why couldn't he have signed up to accept God's universal offer of adoption? Because God chose not to adopt him. Without God's personal selection of a person—His declaration that "This person is my adopted child"—there is no adoption. But once this declaration is made, how can man "unadopt" himself?

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For further study: Ps. 33:11; Isa. 46:10; Matt. 25:34; Rom. 9:11-16; II Tim. 1:9; Rev. 17:8.

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## Question 11

# Isn't Our Heavenly Inheritance Fully Guaranteed?

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1:11).

Who is "we"? Paul was writing to someone. He said that **"we have obtained an inheritance."** He included himself among that select group. Therefore, it must have been a group made up of *specific individuals*, namely, Christians who believed Paul's message concerning God's salvation of His people.

He says explicitly, **"we have obtained an inheritance."** The inheritance has already been set aside. True, God has not delivered it. He has made a *down payment* on it, however. In Paul's language, God has offered us an *earnest*. He says to the readers to whom he was writing, **"ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory"** (vv. 13b, 14).

Does the Holy Spirit of *promise* lie to us? Does he offer us (including Paul) a down payment on spiritual blessings that He may not be able to deliver, because "we" later depart from the family into which we have been adopted? Can we trust Him or not? If not, why does Paul call Him the Spirit of promise? Why not "the Spirit of Possibilities"? Is God's promise a "maybe"? Is the Holy Spirit a "Spirit of Maybe"?

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## Questionable Answer

"The text speaks of 'an inheritance, being predestined,' but this only means that the predestined inheritance will never be removed as a *possibility* for men to attain through faith in Christ. It will always be there *in general*, but it is *not* predestined to be there for each *specific* person who may at one point in time become regenerate. He can fall from grace, and thereby lose his inheritance."

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**My Reply:** A down payment is a promise. To whom is it a promise? To "us," Paul says. This clearly means the members of Christ's spiritual body, the invisible church.

If God gives a person a spiritual down payment—a guarantee of future payment to an adopted son—how can He ever cancel the promise? If the promise is conditional on man's part, then in what sense is the inheritance predestined? How can God or man be certain that on their death beds, all Christians will not repent away from God and renounce their status as adopted children of God? If men can fall from grace, why couldn't this take place? In short, what *guarantees* that it won't? The heart of man? How reliable is the heart of man (Jeremiah 17:9)?

Does God waste the down payment on the predestined inheritance on people who will renounce His presentation of sonship? Isn't His adoption of His people equally as secure as it is predestined?

If this isn't the meaning of adoption, what does "predestination" mean?

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For further study: Prov. 28:26; Jas. 2:5; 1 Pet. 1:4.

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## Question 12

# Aren't Our Good Works Predestined?

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**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10).**

These words are less well known than those that immediately precede them: **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"** (2:8-9). The order of salvation is set forth: 1) by God's grace; 2) through faith; 3) unto predestined good works.

The words **"before ordained"** are crucial. Ordained by whom? By God. When? Before. Again, we find that Paul's letter to the Ephesian church focuses on what God has done *before time began*. His word is sure, and their salvation is sure.

God does not simply predestine a man's moment of salvation, in time and on earth. He also predestines a man's lifelong response to that salvation: his good works. Since men are rewarded in terms of their works (I Corinthians 3), God establishes men's inheritance before the foundation of the world. They will work out on earth their assigned roles, according to the decree of God.

If this is an incorrect interpretation, then what is it that God ordains beforehand? Bare possibilities? Could we be saved by grace through faith, and then do nothing but bad works? We would not then be Christians (I John 1:3-6).

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## Questionable Answer

"What God ordains is a lifetime of good works that Christians have the *possibility* of performing. He establishes beforehand the *possibilities in general* but it is up to men to make them into *specific actualities*."

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**My Reply:** Paul returns to his theme of God as the master craftsman. "**We are his workmanship.**" Poor workmanship? Broken vessels? Unreliable performers? A discredit to His name? People who will take on the name of God as adopted members of His family, and then go out and sin continually?

On what basis can God be confident that His people will walk in the good works that He ordained beforehand, if He cannot (or will not) see to it that what He has ordained comes to pass, case by individual case? What good is the bare possibility of performance in a world which is essentially uncontrolled by God and random as to the outcome of events? What good are God's pre-ordained *general possibilities* in a world governed by the hearts and minds of *specific individuals*—especially individuals who can fall from grace, if they refuse to honor God's "pre-ordained possibilities" for doing good works?

Do all things work together for good to them who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28)? Isn't this promise possible because God has already ordained our good works?

Is God totally dependent on our autonomous good works in order to make all things work together for good? How would a humanist answer this question?

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For further study: I Cor. 12:3; Col. 3:12; I Pet. 1:2; II Pet. 1:3-10.

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## Question 13

# Didn't Jesus Deliberately Hide His Message so People Wouldn't Repent?

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given (Matthew 13:10, 11).

The disciples did not always understand Jesus' parables. They had to come to Him for an explanation. They asked Him about this, for if *they* needed an explanation, how much more did the masses who gathered to hear Him only occasionally need an explanation? Why didn't He speak more plainly?

If His goal was to communicate His message clearly, and to a large audience, then the disciples had a good point. They must have assumed that Jesus did want to communicate to a broad audience. Jesus told them that, quite the contrary, His message was not for the masses of Hebrews who came to hear Him. His was an *elitist message*, at least at that stage of His ministry:

**For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that [which] he hath (v. 12).**

But weren't these people in need of the clear message of salvation? Certainly, just as Judas and Pharaoh were in need. Need is not what determines man's response to the gospel.

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## Questionable Answer

"Jesus knew that these people were not ready for a complete version of His message. They had to be spoon-fed. He did intend eventually to present a clear version of His spiritual truths, but His ministry was cut short by the crucifixion. His intention was to introduce all people to the mysteries of the faith."

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**My Reply:** What Jesus said was not that He intended to give them a better picture of the gospel later on. What He said was that the multitudes had not been given the opportunity to know the mysteries of the kingdom. He said nothing about speaking to them more clearly later on. On the contrary, He specifically said that *He intended that they should perish*:

**For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them (v. 15).**

Does this mean that Jesus did His best to keep these people from repenting, to hide the mysteries of the gospel from them? If it doesn't mean this, what else could it mean?

And more to the point, why *did* Jesus speak in parables that even the disciples couldn't understand?

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For further study: Matt. 11:25-27; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; 10:21-22; John 12:39-40.

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## Question 14

# Could Judas Have Refused to Betray Jesus?

**But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! (Luke 22:21-22).**

Judas had a part to play in God's cosmic drama, just as Pharaoh did. The text is specific: 1) there was no other way for Jesus to have died, except by betrayal; and 2) woe unto the man whose act of betrayal was long before determined.

It is obvious that the crucifixion was in God's decree before the foundation of the world. On what other basis could God have chosen to redeem those sinners whom he had predestinated to adoption (Ephesians 1:4-5)? The crucifixion was not a random event. It had to take place. It was only on the basis of the crucifixion that mankind after Adam's rebellion was enabled by God to exist. Without the crucifixion, on the day Adam ate of the fruit, he would have died physically as well as spiritually.

If man has free will, why was this act of Judas inevitable? Why couldn't he have decided not to betray Jesus? Because the crucifixion was predestined. *Someone* had to betray Jesus. Someone had to sin against God in this way. Woe unto the man by whom Christ was betrayed, yet someone must do it, Jesus announced. Jesus knew who it would be. It was not going to be one of the other disciples. Judas will be held responsible throughout eternity, yet there was no escape. Christ had to die as planned.

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## Questionable Answer

"Yes, Jesus had to die. He said that He had to be betrayed. He knew Judas would do it. But it could have been someone else. It didn't have to be Judas. It was Judas' decision, and he is fully responsible. He was not determined by God to do the deed."

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**My Reply:** If Jesus had to die by betrayal, then someone had to do it. Someone would have to bear the consequences of this supreme act of rebellion. It was Judas. *Inescapable* woe unto him.

Why Judas? Because God had so determined. Judas was determined, and not by impersonal fate. Judas was a sinner, a thief (John 12:6). He was determined—self-determined, yes, but determined also by the decree of God—to pursue his evil plan.

Someone had to do it. Someone had to suffer the consequences. Why Judas? Why *not* Judas? God's plan is not indeterminate. It wasn't that one person *in general* had to do it; it was that one person *in particular* had to do it. Acts of rebellion are performed by persons. They are not empty boxes that are left open for anyone in general to wander into. Predestination isn't performed in a personal vacuum. There is nothing in the Bible that says: "God has determined that a particular event will take place, but it is completely random as to who will perform the deed." Any given event is part of a determined mosaic: *each part fits*.

If each event in history were not predestined, God's plan would not be whole. History would become random.

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For further study: Matt. 18:7; 26:24; Mark 14:21.

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## Question 15

# Don't Evil Men Also Glorify God?

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**The LORD hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil (Proverbs 16:4).**

The Psalmist announced: **"All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD"** (145:10a). The whole creation testifies to His power and majesty. God does not tempt men to do evil; their own lusts tempt them (James 1:13-14). But these acts do not reduce the glory of God. God makes evil men for Himself, not to save them, but to demonstrate His sovereign power over them and their sin. Like Pharaoh, evil men are judged, and when they are judged, God's name is glorified.

Did God make evil men? Of course; God is the creator. Did God make men evil? No; he hates evil. Did He make evil men in terms of His unshakable and totally inescapable decree? How else? Did He make them randomly? Are they evil only by chance—impersonal chance, which God does not control and may not fully comprehend? (Some Protestant theologians actually say that God does not fully know the future, and that His ignorance is the basis of man's free will and moral responsibility.)

The day of evil for the wicked is the day of final judgment. God made them for this day, just as he made Satan: **"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"** (Matthew 25:41). The fire was actually designed for them. Weren't they, as vessels of wrath, also designed for it?

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## Questionable Answer

"God does receive glory from His punishment of all sin, and even sinners. Nevertheless, God is not the author of sin. To say that God makes evil men for His own purposes is the same as saying that God is the author of sin. The text means only that God is glorified *despite* evil men."

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**My Reply:** Is this what the text says? Doesn't it say that God is the Creator who makes *all things* for Himself? Does it imply that sin is the result of a "cosmic accident," over which God had no control, or chose not to exercise any control—an event that thwarted His plan for the ages? Was Satan successful in thwarting God's plan? Or shall we argue that God has no comprehensive plan for the ages? And if we argue this way, what explicit Bible references will we appeal to in order to prove our point?

Are we using human logic—"God is not the author of sin, and therefore sin was never a part of God's plan"—in order to reject what the text says? Are we using human logic—"sin could not be part of the plan of God unless God is the author of sin"—to demonstrate that Satan and his followers autonomously overcame God's hopes and plan for the ages? Have we elevated Satan to a position of "almost God" in power—a being who can, has, and may continue to thwart God's plan? Are we hiding in logic from the teaching of the Bible? Can we trust anti-revelational logic?

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For further study: Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Jud. 14:4; Ps. 76:10; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6; Acts 3:18; Rom. 8:28; 11:36.

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## Question 16

# Can Satan Repent and be Saved?

**Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41).**

Is it possible that demons condemned to hell will ever receive eternal life? No. The contents of hell will be dumped into the lake of fire on the day of judgment. **"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** (Revelation 20:14-15).

If hell was *long ago* prepared to hold Satan and his angels, then how can they escape? It would be like saying that God's kingdom is equally uncertain, even though it, too, was prepared by God: **"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"** (Matthew 25:34). Each place was prepared by God for *specific* creatures.

Isn't Satan a living creature? Can't he feel pain? Isn't hell an eternal horror for Satan and his demonic angels? Why does God condemn them inescapably to eternal torment? If we acknowledge that Satan's doom is absolutely sure, then we are saying that *Satan has no "chance" of being saved*. And if we admit that he and his angelic followers are *inescapably doomed*, why is it so shocking to say that his *human* followers are equally inescapably doomed? Is God being unfair to Satan and his followers?

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## Questionable Answer

"Satan and his followers are already in hell. While humans live, they can escape this judgment. Satan can no more escape judgment today than a sinner will be able to after he dies."

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**My Reply:** All this is true, but totally irrelevant. The question is: *Could Satan have repented after his rebellion?* Man is given an opportunity to repent after his rebellion, but what about Satan? The Bible never even hints at such a possibility. Is God unjust, therefore, in refusing to give Satan a "chance" after his rebellion? Have you ever heard a Christian say so?

God offers the gospel to fallen humans, but apart from their *prior* regeneration, they cannot respond in faith (Question 19). So what is the difference in *effect*? An offer of salvation *which cannot be received by any rebellious person whom God chooses not to regenerate* is not any different in its eternal effects from eternal punishment apart from an offer of salvation.

The issue here is the justice of God. Is God unjust in His treatment of Satan and his angelic followers? If not, then how can anyone legitimately conclude that God is unjust in damning *any* ethical rebel whom He has chosen not to regenerate? The issue here is *the justice of condemning any rebel inescapably to eternal punishment without a prior possibility of his repenting*. If such inescapable condemnation is fully justified in Satan's case, why not in the case of human rebels?

And if it is unjust in the case of Satan's human followers, don't we have to argue that it is also unjust of God in Satan's case? Satan would *love* that argument!

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For further study: Acts 5:31; 11:18; II Tim. 2:25-26.

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## Question 17

# Aren't Men Ordained in Advance to Eternal Life?

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed (Acts 13:47, 48).

The text is clear. There were Gentiles who heard the preaching of Paul and Barnabas. Some were ordained to eternal life, and some were not. **"As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."** It could not be any clearer. Not one fewer believed the gospel of salvation than had been ordained to eternal life, and not one more. *Just as many as:* a "one-to-one" relationship.

Is there a random aspect to salvation? Are some men chosen by God to attain the status of adopted sons, and then they thwart God's choice, either by refusing to believe the gospel initially, or by believing, becoming converts, and then departing from the faith? Are others not ordained to eternal life, but somehow, by the grace of God (yet not by His plan), believe the message and receive salvation? In other words, is there biblical evidence to indicate that the *relationship between those ordained for salvation and those who attain it* is not one to one? Is what is described in Acts 13:48 itself random—a unique event which is not representative of God's plan of salvation? In short, is there a discrepancy between those ordained and those who are actually converted?

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## Questionable Answer

"The Greek word translated as 'ordained' is mis-translated. It really means something like 'predisposed to.' There is only an inclination to be saved. There is no one-to-one relationship between God's ordaining a person to be saved—which God does not do, in any case—and a person's response."

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**My Reply:** Try to locate any translation of the Bible which does not use "ordained" or some variation of "ordained." The American Standard Version says "ordained." The Revised Standard Version says "ordained." The New English Bible says "marked out." The New American Standard says "appointed." The New International Version says "appointed." The verb is passive.

Is there any reason to believe that what is described in the Book of Acts, the story of the spread of the gospel in the earliest days, should not be understood as representative of the effects of the gospel in general? Is there some reason to believe that the testimony of Luke in Acts concerning the early church's experience is in no way comparable to the church's experience throughout history? Is there some biblical reason why Luke would insert into his account of the conversion of the Gentiles of Antioch information about God's ordination of those to be saved, if such information is historically unique—a one-time event which cannot be understood as universal? If we argue that Luke's account doesn't describe a universal phenomenon, aren't we saying that God has altered the way of salvation? Dare we say this?

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For further study: Rom. 11:2, 5-7; I Cor. 1:27-31; II Tim. 2:10.

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## Question 18

# Doesn't God Compel Men to Believe in Jesus?

**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw [drag] him: and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:44).**

The context makes it clear that Jesus was speaking here of eternal life. He was not speaking of a general call to all men to listen to the gospel. He was speaking about God's drawing men so close to Jesus ethically that they will be raised up at the last day. In other words, He was speaking of salvation.

The Greek word which is translated here as "draw" could be translated as "**drag**." (It could also be translated as "**attract**.") But the point is the same, whichever of the three English words is used to express the meaning of the Greek: God the Father brings a person to faith in Christ.

Didn't Jesus say that "**I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me**" (John 14:6)? Yes, He did. So if we are to take His words seriously, we must affirm a *reciprocal relationship*: God the Father alone can draw men to a saving faith in His Son, yet apart from the Son, no man comes ethically to God the Father.

Can anyone come to faith in God without the initial act of compulsion—dragging—by the Father? If God the Father refuses to draw the person to Christ, can anyone attain salvation? No, says the Bible: "**. . . no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father**" (John 6:65).

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## Questionable Answer

"God the Father is involved in salvation. But He is only partially active. He leads the unbeliever to Christ, but He does not *drag* him to Christ. That word is too strong. It is more of a mild attraction. He just *introduces* men to His Son. From then on, it is up to them to decide."

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**My Reply:** Why did Jesus use a word that points to dragging? If this were the only verse in the Bible that pointed to active predestination by God in saving men, then the use of a softer, less active word to translate the term might be acceptable. But this is another example of God's *active* role in salvation on the one hand, and the *exclusionary* aspect on the other. If He ignores an unsaved man—if He refuses to draw him to His Son—then there is no hope for that man. After Adam's rebellion, *the exclusion is automatic!*

Jesus said: "**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you**" (John 15:16a). This act of free choice is not man's act, but God's. Can we legitimately speak of man's free will and God's free will at the same time? How? If Jesus says that He chooses us, and men do not choose Him, then *the free agent is God*, who elects men and chooses them, not man. When God the Father chooses those who will serve His Son, how can they refuse this obligation? If God the Father has ordained them to serve His son, then how can the person refuse to serve? Men are *dragged* into loving service.

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For further study: Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:26-27; John 1:13; 3:3-8; 5:21; Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13.

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## Question 19

# Didn't God Choose Us Long Before We Accepted Him?

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thessalonians 2:13-14).

First, God chooses a person as His own. He does this **"from the beginning,"** meaning at least from the beginning of time, before the foundation of the world. The person was not consulted about this decision by God. It is a wholly active decision by God, since God alone existed at the beginning. Where was man's response in the days before the creation of man?

Second, God calls men to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. He calls men by means of the gospel message. This takes place in time and on earth. It is God's historical and personal confirmation of the choice He made from the beginning. *God, not man, is the free active agent in regeneration.* Jesus said:

**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you (John 15:16).**

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## Questionable Answer

"Paul was writing to the church of Thessalonica, not to specific individuals. His letter was also aimed at the church as a whole through history, but not to specific individuals. God chose the church as a plural whole for salvation. This does not mean that any specific person was actually chosen by God from the beginning."

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**My Reply:** If God chose the church as a whole, why was He confident that there would ever be a church? If He did not select specific individuals to fill this invisible church, then he selected a box—a potentially *empty* box. In fact, it was a *predictably* empty box, for He would have had to rely on the hearts of unregenerate, rebellious men to choose Him, in order to fill up the church as a whole. But unregenerate men don't receive spiritual ideas (Question 20).

Do unregenerate men choose Christ? Christ said specifically that He chose His followers; they did not choose Him. Did He also choose "followers in general" but not specific followers? Did His "followers in general" choose Him? How do "followers in general" do anything? *Specific people make decisions, not organizations in general.* People choose or fail to choose, and are rewarded or cursed by God in terms of their choices; "institutions in general," apart from specific members, don't exist. In any case, nobody chose Him; He chose people—the people He loved. The text is clear: the brethren who were "*loved of the Lord*" were chosen by God "*from the beginning.*"

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For further study: Rom. 9:6-26; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; 2:9-10.

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## Question 20

# How Can an Unregenerate Man Accept Christ?

**But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14).**

The text is clear. The “natural man,” meaning the unregenerate person, doesn’t receive the things of the spirit. All such topics are regarded by him as foolishness. **“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (I Corinthians 1:23-24).** The unregenerate person refuses to believe in such “foolishness.”

The contrast is between the *natural* man and the *called* man, meaning the regenerate man. Why does one man regard the gospel as foolishness, and the other man recognize the power of Jesus Christ? The message is the same. There is only one explanation: each man interprets the message differently. What determines each interpretation? Isn’t it the *presuppositions* each man has concerning the true nature of the universe: God, man, and law? The natural man *assumes* the gospel is foolish.

If the natural man interprets the gospel as foolishness, how can he ever be converted to faith in Christ? By grace (Ephesians 2:8). He is first regenerated by God; *then* He accepts the gospel. God must regenerate him—an act of sovereign grace—if he is to become an “unnatural” man capable of saving faith.

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## Questionable Answer

"The Bible says, 'Whosoever will, may come.' Anyone may come to Christ who wills to. Whether he exercises saving faith or not is a matter of free will on his part, not God's electing grace. The natural man sees the truth well enough to make an autonomous decision."

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**My Reply:** Just for the record, the Bible *doesn't* say "Whosoever will, may come," although Revelation 22:17 says something close. The question still must be answered: Can an unregenerate person *will* to come to Christ? Is his will "free," meaning *autonomous*?

What does I Corinthians 2:14 say? Does Paul give any warrant for believing that the unregenerate man is capable of properly interpreting the gospel message, and then responding in faith to its offer of salvation? Can the unregenerate Jew do it? Can the unregenerate Greek? The text says *no*.

Both the "called Jew" and the "called Greek" *can* interpret the message properly. What is the difference in response, "natural" vs. "called"? God's *electing grace*. God has elected some before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). He has not elected others. **"Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"** (Romans 9:18). It's God's decision, not man's, since the natural man cannot receive the things of the spirit. We are first saved by God's sovereign grace, and immediately we accept Christ. Redeemed men *believe through grace* (Acts 18:27b). Without electing grace, men cannot believe.

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For further study: John 6:44, 65; 8:34; 10:26; Rom. 3:10-12; 6:20; 8:7-8; Eph. 4:17-19; II Tim. 2:25-26; Titus 3:3.

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## Question 21

# Could the Authorities Have Acted Righteously and Released Jesus?

For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:27-28).

This prayer of the early apostles before the chief priests and elders was made publicly to God. They affirmed by this prayer the sovereignty of the God of the Bible over the affairs of that day. It was a reminder to the rulers that they were under God's authority, and they could do nothing to thwart His designs, even when they thought that they were overcoming His designs and His people.

The rulers released Barabas, not Christ. The crowd yelled "Give us Barabas," and Pilate did. Did they overturn God's plan for the ages? Hardly; they made a decision to crucify Christ, the *turning point* of the ages. This turning point had been foreordained before the foundation of the world.

Something similar happened to Joseph when his brothers sold him into slavery. He saved their lives from famine years later. He said to them: **"As for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good"** (Genesis 50:20). God ordains the good; men plan evil; but the historical event is the same. The greatest good and the greatest evil—the cross—was ordained.

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## Questionable Answer

“God did not really foreordain the personal decisions of men that led directly but not inescapably to the crucifixion. The crucifixion as an event was inevitable, but not the events that led to it. The specific decisions made by the authorities were made in perfect free will; God did not ordain them. Only the *general event* was foreordained, *not the specific decisions* of men that led directly to the general event.”

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**My Reply:** If the events leading to a particular event are not foreordained, but the event itself is—to the very day—then how was God sure that the foreordained event would, in fact, result from the decisions of the leaders? If they could have released Jesus, how was the crucifixion inevitable?

The text, however, is more specific: Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, and Israelites were all gathered together, **“For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”** It was not simply the crucifixion which was foreordained; it was the *decisions of the people* who were gathered in Jerusalem that week. **“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain”** (Acts 2:23). The events that led directly to the crucifixion were as foreordained as the crucifixion. How can an event be determined and not the acts leading to it? Was God going to rely on the autonomous will of men as the basis of the most important event in history?

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For further study: John 7:30; 8:20; 19:11; Rev. 13:8; 17:8.

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## Question 22

# Isn't God's Grace Irresistible?

**[It is God] who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (II Timothy 1:9).**

God's purpose was to create a people called by His name. These people have a *holy calling*, meaning a God-assigned task to subdue the earth—to exercise *dominion* in His name under His authority, both before the final judgment and after (Genesis 1:27-28).

This assignment was in the plan of God before He created the world. The rebellion of man was also known to God and part of that plan. Therefore, Paul tells us, God granted His people grace in Jesus Christ before the creation. Paul's words are quite plain.

If God granted His people grace before time began, how can any grace-designated man escape that grace? Aren't we talking about *irresistible grace*? Can man thwart the purpose of God? Can any man reject this specific calling to salvation, through the use of something called "free will"? If so, then what becomes of God's purpose to select people to serve Him in a holy calling?

Is the *exercise of faith* a *work of man*? It *can't* be a work. Doesn't Paul say specifically that God selects His people, not on the basis of their works, but by His grace? Isn't saving faith an *irresistible gift*?

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## Questionable Answer

"God predestines the church as a whole to believe in Christ and to carry out its holy calling. But God never predestined individual members. At the most, He predestined a specific number of believers over time, but He selected them in terms of His original knowledge of whether they would exercise faith in Christ. Men can reject the offer of salvation. God does not force them to believe."

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**My Reply:** The purpose of God is to separate out from fallen humanity a remnant, His people. They are to have a holy calling specified by God. But to achieve His purposes, God must specify each individual's calling. He has planned to achieve certain goals, many of which were announced by God to His people in the form of *prophecies*. Won't God see to it that His prophecies come to pass? Doesn't God *make* His prophecies come to pass?

The Bible doesn't say that God predestined a *group in general* apart from predestinating *members in particular*. The Bible speaks only of God's granting His grace to us in Christ, irrespective of any works we perform. How can we talk about a *work of faith* or a *work of unbelief* as the foundation of salvation or damnation? Isn't the issue *God's sovereign grace*? We are saved by grace through faith (a gift of God), not by works.

If man is saved by his own autonomous work of faith, then the *lie* of Satan is true: *man is partially autonomous*; he has become a little god.

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For further study: I Ki. 8:58; Jer. 31:3; John 8:36, 42; Eph. 2:1-10; II Cor. 4:6; Titus 3:5-6.

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## Question 23

# Isn't the Will of God Absolutely Sovereign?

**He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Daniel 4:35).**

The sovereignty of God is asserted throughout the Bible. The question is: Does God voluntarily withdraw Himself from millions of events, especially the event of salvation, but also all evil acts of men, and thereby turn control over these historical events to men or angels? Does He abdicate from His position of total potential power, in order to open zones of pure freedom for men? Does He bring His will to pass only by intervening into history sporadically?

In Hebrews 1:3, we read of Christ that He *upholds* all things by the word of his power. All things? He is **"above all, and through all, and in you all"** (Ephesians 4:6). God spoke through Isaiah: **"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"** (46:9-10).

How powerful is God's word? **"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it"** (Isaiah 55:11). Comprehensive!

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## Questionable Answer

"God prophesies concerning the future, and the events do take place. But *in between* the prophesied events, God leaves men free to make their own decisions. These decisions do not lead inevitably to the prophesied event, or else they would themselves be inevitable. Instead, God intervenes occasionally to bring men's events into line with His specific purposes."

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**My Reply:** Can't events be two-fold: 1) God's purpose and 2) man's purpose? Can't the same event be the product of God's sovereign plan, yet involve man's responsible decision? Can't men plan evil and God bring good from it? Can't an event be predestined by God and still be a matter of human responsibility? If not, then why was Christ's crucifixion a blessing from God, and at the same time, an act of evil on the part of rebellious men?

If God's providence undergirds all creation, shouldn't Christians be confident that all things work for the good of those who are called according to His purpose? Shouldn't they rest confidently in the absolute sovereignty of God? Why argue that most events are determined solely by men, and not by God? Look at Egypt: **"For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favor, but that he might destroy them, as the Lord commanded Moses"** (Joshua 11:20).

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For further study: Gen. 41:32; I Kings 22:28, 34; Ps. 24:1; 47:7-8; 103:19; Prov. 16:33; 21:1; Isa. 45:7; 46:10-11; Lam. 3:37-38.

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## Question 24

# Isn't Faith in Christ the Gift of God?

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (II Timothy 2:24-26).

God gives men repentance. Paul couldn't be clearer. The faith through which the grace of God comes is itself an aspect of the grace of God. It isn't an *autonomous work* which *unregenerate* man brings before God in order to receive salvation. It is a gift from God. James wrote: **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"** (James 1:17). Salvation is no exception. It is all God's grace.

This is why we can legitimately pray for the conversion of others. God is in a position to grant us that prayer request. Yes, we should add, "If it be thy will, O Lord." But bear in mind that it's *His* will which is decisive, not the will of the person we are praying for.

**"His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue"** (II Peter 1:3). All things that pertain to life and godliness? Even salvation? Yes!

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## Questionable Answer

"If exercising faith is simply an automatic response to God's offer of salvation, then 'salvation by faith alone' is meaningless. Salvation would then be 'by grace through grace,' rather than 'by grace through faith.' Faith is different from grace; man is responsible to respond to God's offer of salvation. He must choose for himself."

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**My Reply:** Is faith a work or a gift? If it is a work—something of man's own doing which man brings to God in order to attain salvation—then are we justified by works? If it is a gift, then the phrase "by grace through faith" means that *God initiates the offer, but then He enables man to respond*. The natural man must first become the spiritual man, so that he can understand and respond in faith to the message—a message which is foolishness to the unregenerate (I Corinthians 2:14-15). *Then* he responds in faith. The words "through faith" simply point to man's response—a *God-ordained, inescapable response*—to God's offer.

If this interpretation is incorrect, then what are we to make of Paul's words to Timothy? He also wrote to Titus: **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"** (Titus 3:5). Is it right to look at faith as if it were a "work of righteousness"? Do we work our way into heaven? Shouldn't we take the words of the Bible seriously and affirm that faith itself is God's gift, as surely as grace is?

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For further study: Matt. 16:16-17; John 6:44-45; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 18:27; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29; Heb. 12:2; II Pet. 1:1.

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## Question 25

# Did Christ Die for All Men?

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**For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).**

We have already asked the question about “whosoever will,” which is a variant of “whosoever believeth” (Question 20). The question raises the issue of the ability of unregenerate men to come to saving faith in Christ, if the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:14).

To understand John 3:16, you need to have come to grips with the previous questions in this book. What is “the world” that God loves? Is it “all men in general”? Then why did He despise Esau and promise to curse him, before Esau had done good or evil? Why do Christ’s prayers of intercession convert some but not all? If He prays for all men to be saved, and some resist and perish, can we say that Christ’s prayers are efficacious? Do they really work? Or are the results random?

God loves the whole creation. He sustains it moment by moment. This is the doctrine of *providence*. He sustained it after Adam rebelled. Why? He promised to bring death to Adam, yet He allowed the world to continue. He preserved it for the sake of the as-yet unborn elect. He preserved it for the sake of Jesus Christ, His incarnate Son, who came to die for His chosen elect. God loves His creation; He does not love all men, irrespective of their relation to Jesus Christ.

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## Questionable Answer

"Jesus died for all mankind. Some accept, and others refuse, but He died so that all men might experience the possibility of being saved from hell. This is the meaning of 'the world.' It means 'all men.' God brings the world under judgment. It is not saved; men are saved."

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**My Reply:** All good things that we receive are gifts from God (James 1:17). Is life such a gift? Then it is a gift from God. Do unrighteous men deserve gifts? No, they deserve death. Do they receive good gifts? Yes, they do. God gives them gifts for the sake of the elect, so that life can prosper through the co-operation of both elect and unregenerate. He also gives them gifts *in order to heap extra coals of fire on their heads* when they do not respond in faith—the reason Paul gave us for treating sinners decently (Romans 12:20). Look it up!

God sends rain on sinners and saints alike (Matthew 5:45). This can be called God's *common grace*. It is common to all men. But this says nothing about God's *special grace* to individual sinners whom God has chosen to regenerate, by grace. The fact that God gives unmerited, *non-saving* gifts to all men in no way proves that anyone can respond to the equally unmerited offer of salvation. Both kinds of grace—common and saving—are possible only because of Christ's work. So all men benefit *generally* from Christ's death, but only Christ's elect benefit eternally (see Question 75).

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For further study: Matt. 20:28; John 6:37-39; 10:11, 15, 26; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:4-7; 5:25-27; Heb. 5:9.

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## Supplement to Part I: Historic Creeds

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Your instructors may take the following approach when you begin to ask them these questions, or when you show this book to them. They may say: "This material is heretical. Only a handful of people in the history of the church have ever believed such things about the sovereignty of God. What I have taught you is what most Christians have always believed for almost 2,000 years."

This answer is incorrect. On the contrary, what the great theological leaders of the church have proclaimed is that God, and God alone, is sovereign over His creation, and therefore God predestinates men to heaven or hell. Man is morally powerless to accept God's salvation unless God specifically empowers him to believe in Christ. This was certainly the teaching of St. Augustine, and he wrote a lengthy criticism of a man who taught the opposite, the heretic Pelagius. You can read his analysis in Volume V of *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, edited by Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co.): *Saint Augustine's Anti-Pelagian Works*. This was also the teaching of Martin Luther. You can read his devastating criticism of the humanist Erasmus, who argued as Pelagius did, that man has free will to accept or reject the gospel. Luther's response is titled *The Bondage of the Will* (1525). It is one of the most important documents of the Protestant Reformation. It is still in print.

This was certainly the belief of Charles H. Spurgeon,

the great Baptist preacher of the late nineteenth century. He preached a famous sermon on "Election," based on II Thessalonians 2:13-14, which is reprinted in his *New Park Street Pulpit*, Vol. I. His position is summarized in the book by Iain Murray, *The Forgotten Spurgeon* (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth Trust). But be sure to get the original versions or photographic reprints of the originals. In the 1950's, "expurgated" editions of Spurgeon's writings were reprinted by an unscrupulous fundamentalist leader who deliberately removed all references to predestination from the revised sermons by Spurgeon (and admitted that he did it in a letter I have personally seen). As I've said, there has been a deliberate effort on the part of many instructors to mislead students with respect to certain doctrines of the faith.

I have selected relevant statements from a number of ecclesiastical traditions to prove my case: Episcopalian (Anglican), Baptist, Congregationalist, Lutheran, Reformed, and Presbyterian. Anyone who tells you that the sovereignty of God hasn't been the primary belief of *orthodox* Christians through the ages is either lying, or he is ignorant about what he is saying, or he defines "orthodox" differently from what the historic creeds have taught. But in any case, the history of the church stands against him. Will it stand against you, too?

## Baptist

### Chapter III—Of God's Decrees

1. God hath (Isa. 56:10; Eph. 1:11; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15, 18) decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things whatsoever come to pass; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin (James 1:13; I John 1:5) nor hath fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will

of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather (Acts 4:27, 28; John 19:11) established; in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness (Num. 23:19; Eph. 1:3, 4, 5) in accomplishing his decree.

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all (Acts 15:18) supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed anything, because he (Rom 9:11, 13, 16, 18) foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, (I Tim 5:21; Matt. 25:41) some men and angels are predestinated or foreordained to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the (Eph. 1:5, 6) praise of his glorious grace; others being left to act in their sin to their (Rom. 9:22, 23; Jude 4) just condemnation, to the praise of his glorious justice.

4. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed; and their (II Tim. 2:19; John 23:18) number so certain, and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. Those of mankind (Eph. 1:4, 9, 11; Rom. 8:30; II Tim. 1:9; I Thess. 5:9) that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love; (Rom. 19:13, 16; Eph. 2:5, 12) without any other things in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereunto.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained (I Pet. 1:2; II Thess. 2:13) all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam (I Thess. 5:9, 10), are redeemed by Christ, are effectually (Rom. 8:30; 2 Thess. 2:13) called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith (I Pet. 1:5) unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect (John 10:26;

17:9; 6:64) only.

7. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his word and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their (I Thess. 1:4, 5; II Pet. 1:10) eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter (Eph. 1:6; Rom. 11:33) of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and (Rom. 11:5, 6, 20) of humility, diligence, and abundant (Luke 10:20) consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

#### Chapter IX—*Of Free Will*

1. God hath indued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is (Matt. 17:12; James 1:14; Deut. 30:19) neither forced, nor by any necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

2. Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that (Eccl. 7:29) which was good, and well pleasing to God; but yet (Gen. 3:6) was mutable, so that he might fall from it.

3. Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost (Rom. 5:6; 8:7) all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and (Eph. 2:1, 5) dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to (Tit. 3:3, 4, 5; John 6:44) convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto.

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, (Col. 1:13; John 8:36) he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him (Phil. 2:13) freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his (Rom. 7:15, 18, 19, 21, 23) remaining corruptions, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

5. The will of man is made (Eph. 4:13) perfectly and immutably free to God alone in the state of glory only.

## Chapter X—Of Effectual Calling

1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto life he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call (Rom. 8:30; 11:7; Eph. 1:10, 11; II Thess. 2:13, 14) by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation (Eph. 1:1-6) by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to (Acts 26:18; Eph. 1:17, 18) understand the things of God; taking away their (Ezek. 36:26) heart of stone, and giving unto them a heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them (Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 36:27; Eph. 1:19) to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come (Ps. 110:3; Cant. 1:4) most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone (II Tim. 1:9; Eph. 2:8), not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, co-working with his special grace (I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 2:5; John 5:25), the creature being wholly passive therein, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less (Eph. 1:19, 20) power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.

3. Elect infants dying in infancy, are (John 3:3, 5, 6) regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit; who worketh when, and where, and (John 3:8) how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word (Matt. 13:20, 21; 22:14; Heb. 6:4, 5) and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will nor can truly (John 6:44, 45, 65; I John 2:24, 25) come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men that receive not the Christian religion (Acts 4:12; John 4:22; John 17:3) be saved; be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess.

*London Confession, 1689*

It is no novelty, then, that I am preaching; no new doctrine. I love to proclaim these strong old doctrines, which are called by nickname Calvinism, but which are surely and verily the revealed truth of God as it is in Christ Jesus. By this truth I make a pilgrimage into the past, and as I go, I see father after father, confessor after confessor, martyr after martyr, standing up to shake hands with me. Were I a Pelagian, or a believer in the doctrine of free-will, I should have to walk for centuries all alone. Here and there a heretic of no very honourable character might rise up and call me brother. But taking these things to be the standard of my faith, I see the land of the ancients peopled with my brethren—I behold multitudes who confess the same as I do, and acknowledge that this is the religion of God's own church.

**Charles Spurgeon**  
***The New Park Street Pulpit, Vol. I (1856)***

There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified; unless we preach what nowadays is called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else. I do not believe we can preach the gospel, if we do not preach justification by faith without works: not unless we preach the sovereignty of God in His dispensation of grace; nor unless we exalt the electing, unchangeable, eternal, immutable, conquering love of Jehovah; nor do I think we can preach the gospel unless we base it upon the special and particular redemption of His elect and chosen people which Christ wrought out upon the cross; nor can I comprehend a gospel which lets saints fall away after they are called, and suffers the children of God to be burned in the fires of damnation after having once believed in Jesus. Such a gospel I abhor.

**Charles Spurgeon**  
***Autobiography (1897)***



## Congregationalist

### Chapter 3—*Of God's Eternal Decree*

1. God from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

2. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

4. These angels and men thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he by the eternal and most free purpose of his will fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by the Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified,

adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

7. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

8. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

### Chapter 9—*Of Free Will*

1. God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

2. Man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.

3. Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

4. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good; yet so as that, by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

5. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.

#### Chapter 10—*Of Effectual Calling*

1. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time effectually to call by his Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

3. Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither do nor can come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess: and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

***The Savoy Confession of Faith, 1658***

## Episcopalian (Anglican)

### *X. Of Free Will*

The condition of Man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith, and calling upon God. Wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

### *XVII. Of Predestination and Election*

Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity . . . the godly consideration of Predestination, and our Election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things, as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal Salvation to be enjoyed through Christ as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God.

***The Thirty-Nine Articles, 1563***

## Lutheran

It is, then, fundamentally necessary and wholesome for Christians to know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His own immutable, eternal and infallible will.

The Christian's chief and only comfort in every adversity lies in knowing that God does not lie, but brings all things to pass immutably, and that His will cannot be resisted, altered or impeded.

God has surely promised His grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of Another—God alone. As long as he is persuaded that he can make even the smallest contribution to his salvation, he remains self-confident and does not utterly despair of himself, and so is not humbled before God; but plans out for himself (or at least hopes and longs for) a position, an occasion, a work, which shall bring him final salvation. But he who is out of doubt that his destiny depends entirely on the will of God despairs entirely of himself, chooses nothing for himself, but waits for God to work in him; and such a man is very near to grace for his salvation.

**Martin Luther, 1525**

## Presbyterian

### Chapter III—*Of God's Eternal Decree*

I. God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

II. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions; yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

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VII. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men at-

tending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel.

### Chapter IX—*Of Free Will*

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I. All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased, in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by his word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God; taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart

of flesh; renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

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III. Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

IV. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved: much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

***Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646***

## **Reformed**

### ***XV. Of Original Sin***

We believe that, through the disobedience of Adam, original sin is extended to all mankind; which is a corruption of the whole nature, and an hereditary disease, wherewith infants themselves are infected even in their mother's womb, and which produceth in man all sorts of sin, being in him as a root thereof; and therefore is so vile and abominable in the sight of God, that it is sufficient to condemn all mankind. Nor is it by any means abolished or done away by baptism; since



sin always issues forth from this woeful source, as water from a fountain; notwithstanding it is not imputed to the children of God unto condemnation, but by his grace and mercy is forgiven them. Not that they should rest securely in sin, but that a sense of this corruption should make believers often to sigh, desiring to be delivered from this body of death. Wherefore we reject the error of the Pelagians, who assert that sin proceeds only from imitation.

#### *XVI. Of Eternal Election*

We believe that all the posterity of Adam being thus fallen into perdition and ruin, by the sin of our first parents, God then did manifest himself such as he is; that is to say, merciful and just: Merciful, since he delivers and preserves from this perdition all, whom he, in his eternal and unchangeable counsel of mere goodness, hath elected in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any respect to their works: Just, in leaving others in the fall and perdition wherein they have involved themselves.

***The Belgic Confession, 1561***



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(an asterisk marks outstanding works)

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## **Part II**

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LAW: GOD'S OR MAN'S

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## Introduction to Part II

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The question of the law of God has been controversial in Protestant circles for over a century. Most churches today believe that the laws found in the Old Testament are no longer binding. This has not always been the belief of Christians. The Puritans of New England established their colonies specifically in terms of their belief in the continuing validity of the laws of God. Certainly, Christians have affirmed their faith in the so-called *moral* laws of God. But in the late nineteenth century, in certain fundamentalist circles, people began to abandon any faith in the continuing validity of Old Testament law. In fact, many prominent pastors and theologians have actually said that it is illegitimate to preach the Ten Commandments in New Testament times. One such pastor was the Presbyterian leader of the 1950's, Donald J. Barnhouse.

Does the New Testament teach such a doctrine of law? Does the New Testament abandon Old Testament law? That's what this section of the book deals with.

Let me ask you a question: When you hear the words, "the *principles* of the Bible," or "the *moral teachings* of the Bible," don't you instinctively think to yourself, "the *laws* of the Bible"? If the principles are binding, aren't they laws? A lot of Christian teachers are "fudging" by switching words on you. They claim that "we're not under the law," yet they try to take a stand against immorality by proclaiming the validity of a group of biblical *principles*. But what specifically *are* these principles? Where do we find them, if not in the Bible? How can we even define "immorality" if we re-

ject the idea that God's laws are still binding?

If we reject God's definitions of immorality, haven't we thereby become *humanists*, inventing our own definitions of immoral behavior? Isn't one of the most important aspects of secular humanism the attempt to substitute man's laws for God's laws? In short, how can anyone successfully fight secular humanism if he already accepts the premise of humanism's ethics, namely, that the laws of the God of the Old Testament are no longer binding?

I propose the following principle of biblical interpretation (or hermeneutic) because I believe it was the one which Paul adopted in his epistles. First, we must assert that all the revealed laws of God are always binding *in principle*, for they reflect His unchanging moral character. Second, we must admit that the *applications* of some of God's laws have been changed by God as a result of Christ's death and resurrection. For example, the moral necessity of a blood covering for sin is always binding, but we no longer sacrifice animals, because Christ's sacrifice is behind us historically. Third, we must affirm that *unless* the New Testament explicitly announces that the *former application* of a *still morally binding* law has been changed by God, we should still honor it in its Old Testament details. If you disagree with this approach, consider the following 25 questions.

The very first question is "hard core." It will shock some people. But it gets my point across early: if the New Testament is the Christian's only guide for moral behavior, we are in big trouble morally. We need the Old Testament, too.



## Question 26

# Isn't it Immoral for People to Have Sex with Animals?

**Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion** (Leviticus 18:23).

What Christian wouldn't affirm the immorality of such an act? Why even include it in this book? Simple: the New Testament doesn't mention bestiality. It's an Old Testament prohibition. So the question now arises: Is Old Testament law still morally and legally binding on church members?

There are many Christians who say that Old Testament laws no longer apply to Christians unless the New Testament reaffirmed a particular Old Testament law. But the New Testament doesn't mention this Old Testament prohibition. Are we to conclude that this issue is morally an "open question"? But God says that bestiality requires the death penalty: **"Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death"** (Ex. 22:19).

On the other hand, if we accept the principle of biblical interpretation that all Old Testament laws are still completely binding on Christians unless a New Testament passage has released us from the obligation, then we can say in confidence that such an act is an "abomination." **"Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants"** (Leviticus 18:24-25).

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## Questionable Answer

"Everyone knows that such an act is immoral. The New Testament writers assumed that Christians would know this. The light of redeemed wisdom shows this to all Christians. The Spirit would not lead Christians to do such things. We are morally bound, not legally bound, to obey such a prohibition."

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**My Reply:** Are we bound to obey this law because it is a universally recognized evil practice? It certainly was not recognized as evil by the Canaanites. And if Christians should gain political influence, shouldn't they make such practices illegal, so as not to have the land vomit out an entire population?

Are we bound by this law? If so, why? Because it is "logical"? Logical for whom? *By what standard?* Or because "all righteous men know not to practice such acts"? But how can we measure righteousness apart from the prohibition?

If we are bound by this law, then why are we supposedly not bound by all Old Testament laws? What about marrying your sister or brother, or an aunt or uncle? The Old Testament prohibits such marriages (Leviticus 18:6-18); the New Testament doesn't. If God's word isn't authoritative, both Old and New Testaments, then what is? The temporary morality of some temporary nation or church? The temporary morality of mankind? How can we understand right and wrong if we exclude the Old Testament's legal precepts? How can we avoid humanism's "situation ethics"? How can our nation avoid God's judgment?

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For further study: Lev. 22:31-33; Matt. 5:17-20; 23:23; Rom. 8:3-4.

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## Question 27

# How Can We Love God But Ignore God's Law?

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him (1 John 2:3-5).

The problem that John was dealing with was *self-knowledge*. How does a Christian know if he really is "in Christ" as a redeemed person? John's answer is *the law of God*. It is not emotionalism, or a one-time profession of faith, or the ability to speak in an unknown tongue, or the ability to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. It is our adherence to the commandments of Christ.

The question will come up: Are Christ's commandments different from Old Testament laws? To answer this crucial question, we need to ask ourselves some preliminary questions. First, is there an *ethical* difference between God the Father and God the Son? Second, did Christ subordinate His will to His Father's will? Third, is the ethical condition of sinful men or redeemed men different in principle in New Testament times than in Old Testament times? Fourth, are the ethical problems faced by people today fundamentally different from those faced by Old Testament people? Fifth, are the social and economic problems fundamentally different? (The numbers are no doubt larger—more people, larger cities, more wealth—but are the issues different?)

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## Questionable Answer

"The death and resurrection of Christ released men from the bondage of Old Testament law. Old Testament statutes are a dead letter today. Only those laws announced by Christ and the New Testament authors are morally binding, let alone binding in terms of civil law."

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**My Reply:** Why did the New Testament authors, especially John but also Paul, continue to return to the theme of *God's commandments as ethical indicators*? Why did they point to each man's need for a standard of evaluation for his spiritual condition? Why did they believe that one's ethical standing before God is reflected by his outward performance of God's commandments? Why did Christ and John especially argue that *inward life* is to be judged by *outward conformity to God's law*? Where do we find God's law?

They understood that what a man *does* is in close conformity to what he *really believes*. Christ criticized the Pharisees for not giving their parents money, because they said they needed to give it to God. **"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition"** (Matthew 15:6). **"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law: judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone"** (Matthew 23:23). He criticized their *hypocrisy*, not Old Testament law.

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For further study: Ex. 20:6; Deut. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; Dan. 9:4; Matt. 22:37; John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3.

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## Question 28

# Is Profession of Faith Enough, or Do Our Acts Also Count?

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

"Taking the Lord's name in vain" is not just cursing. It is also the *unbeliever's* proclaiming of God's name while performing works that impress men but not God. The Pharisees gave charity in public so that all men could see them. **"They have their reward,"** Christ said sarcastically—their prestige among men, but also final judgment. Seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out demons in Jesus' name, and a demon leaped upon them and drove them out of the house, naked and bruised (Acts 19:13-17).

Jesus knew what spiritual impostors would do. **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"** (Matthew 7:22-23).

How can a person test himself, or anyone else, to determine whether he is a spiritual counterfeit? **"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit"** (Matthew 7:15-17).

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## Questionable Answer

"Jesus was speaking of spiritual gifts of the Spirit, not the details of Old Testament law. Without love and charity, and a willingness to forgive men, all men's works mean nothing (1 Corinthians 13)."

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**My Reply:** But what are "spiritual gifts"? They are not exclusively invisible gifts, because Christ spoke of *visible fruits*. They are acts that can be evaluated by a standard. The question is: *By what standard?*

In contrast to gifts of the spirit are *evil fruit*. Evil acts are called "**the works of the flesh**" by Paul. What are they? "**Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance [quarrels], emulations [jealousy], wrath, strife, seditions [intrigues], heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like**" (Galatians 5:19-21a). These are acts of *lawlessness*.

"**But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law**" (Galatians 5:22-23). This implies that there *is* a law against the other acts—not necessarily civil law, but God's law. The specific nature of evil acts makes Paul's point clear: do these, and you do not enter heaven (5:21b). Thus, *our standard of ethical evaluation is God's law*. As Christ warned: "*Beware of false prophets.*" They will teach you to pay no attention to God's law.

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For further study: Ps. 19:7-11; 119:105, 129-30; Prov. 6:23; Isa. 8:20.

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## Question 29

# If Men Won't Obey God's Law, Are They Saved?

**They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate (Titus 1:16).**

Reprobation is normally discussed in terms of a denial of faith in Jesus Christ's divinity, death, resurrection, second coming, and eternal Lordship. A reprobate person is someone who denies the necessity of a substitutionary atonement to God for sin. Yet Paul here links reprobation and lawlessness. A man who does evil works testifies to his condition as an ethical rebel who does not love God and who has not been regenerated by God's grace. *Doing evil works is equivalent to denying Jesus Christ.* Yet these reprobate men professed Christ verbally.

In Revelation 3:1, we read: **"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest [a name for being alive], and art dead."** This is New Testament doctrine.

Ezekiel cried out to God in opposition to the Israelites of his day: **"And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness"** (33:31). A true profession of faith is what you say and *do*, not just what you say. Your way of life must conform to your confession.

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## Questionable Answer

"All this talk about doing good works is misleading. Paul says over and over that we are justified by faith, not works. What saves a man is his profession of faith, not doing good works."

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**My Reply:** James said: "**Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: Show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?**" (James 2:17-20).

How could anything be more clear? Faith is not merely a set of intellectual beliefs concerning the nature of God. Devils know there is one God, yet they are destined for eternal punishment. So are verbally professing, evil-doing Church members, he implies. *Faith is a way of life—a way of life which has outward manifestations in men's actions.* James made it clear: he judged men by their works, for works testify to the specific character of their faith. In short, *a valid profession of faith cannot be separated from Bible-based, Bible-judged works.*

Redemption is ethical. Ethics and faith are inescapably related. If what a man does denies what he says, what he does constitutes his profession of faith. His acts reveal his god. Your acts testify to your God, too. *By what standard do you judge the legitimacy of your acts?*

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For further study: II Cor. 5:15; Titus 2:14; 3:8; Jas. 2:14-26.

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## Question 30

# Are We "Once Saved, Always Saved"?

**They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us (I John 2:19).**

The test of whether a person stands with Christ or is self-deluded is his *perseverance in the faith*. People are sometimes self-deluded about their Christian faith. Paul spoke of Hymenaeus and Alexander, whose faith was "made shipwreck" (I Timothy 1:19-20). He mentions Hymenaeus again as a heretic (II Timothy 2:17). Demas was Paul's fellow laborer (Philemon 24). But Paul later spoke of Demas as a man who **"hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica"** (II Timothy 4:10). He only *thought* he was saved.

A famous passage dealing with people who once profess faith in Christ but who later reject the faith is Jesus' parable of the four soils: wayside, stony ground, thorny soil, and good soil. Only the good soil produced permanent abundance (Matthew 13:3-8). The message was the same: the gospel of the kingdom of God. Those who hear the message don't respond in the same way. In the case of the wayside, the man doesn't respond at all. In the next two cases, men respond temporarily, and then their (non-saving) faith dies (Matt 13:19-23). Yet in these latter cases, there was an initial commitment, until things got hot or full of cares (the deceitfulness of riches: v. 22).

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## Questionable Answer

"The Bible is clear: once you make a profession of faith, God honors that profession (Romans 10:9-10). If a man makes that profession of faith in Christ, he is forever sealed by the Holy Spirit."

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**My Reply:** Paul wrote in Romans 10 that we must *confess* Christ and believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead. Problem: What if we cease to confess Him or to believe that God has raised Him from the dead? What if by our public acts of sin or our public confession of faith, we *renounce Christ and His gospel*? Then the promise no longer applies. We never possessed true saving faith.

"Once saved, always saved" is quite correct. But is "saved" the same as "I made a confession of faith 23 years ago, when I was young and foolish, and which I no longer believe"? Some expositors argue erroneously that "Once confessed, always possessed." There is nothing in the Bible that supports this interpretation. Demas once confessed. So did Hymanaeus. It did them no good. In fact, it did them worse harm, for they had been given much, and **"unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"** (Luke 12:48b). Men sometimes change their confessions.

How do we know if we still believe in Christ? Jesus said: **"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me"** (John 14:21a). *We test our faith by His commandments.*

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For further study: John 15:10; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:22-23; Heb. 3:12-14; 6:4-12; 10:26-39; 1 John 2:3-4.

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## Question 31

# How Can We Accurately Define Sin if We Deny God's Law?

**Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4).**

It is unlikely that any Christian wants to argue that the New Testament writers wanted to promote sin. Throughout the Bible, the warning against sinful thoughts and behavior is repeated, from Genesis to Revelation. But the question inevitably arises: What exactly constitutes sin? The first epistle of John focuses on this question. Few sermons are preached from this epistle.

At the center of any biblical discussion about *sin* is the issue of *biblical law*. (As a matter of fact, at the very center of discussion of the foundations of any civilization is the question of some form of law.) What is the relationship between the biblical definition of sin and biblical law?

Men are to do good works and shun evil works. But how are Christians supposed to define sin? How are they to discover which act or thought is sinful, and which is good? James said: **"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"** (James 4:17). But this still doesn't answer the question: What is good? *By what standard do we determine what is good?*

What other answer can there be for a Christian? *Our standard is biblical law*. Where else can we go to find a valid standard? To human logic? To antichristian religions? To our own feelings? Why look anywhere else but in the Old and New Testaments?

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## Questionable Answer

"To attempt to enforce biblical law on people would involve setting up a theocracy. We all know what *that* means! It would be a tyranny. We are under grace, not law."

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**My Reply:** On the contrary, *we are under some other god's civil law*. Christ made this plain: *there is no neutrality*. Law is an *inescapable concept*. It is never a question of "law vs. no law"; it is a question of *whose* law. This is why Christ said: **"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light"** (Matthew 11:29-30). Christ never offered His followers a world without a yoke. No such world exists. He offered His people a better yoke, a lighter yoke. If we don't bear Christ's yoke, we bear Satan's yoke.

Christ challenged the traditional, legalistic interpretations of the Pharisees and scribes. He said: **"For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers"** (Matthew 23:4). But Christ *never* challenged the validity of Old Testament law. After all, He wrote it! In contrast to the *traditional, humanistic law of the Pharisees* stands God's law. **"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous"** (1 John 5:3). Has anyone taught you that God's laws *are* in some way grievous?

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For further study: Ps. 119:2-3, 9-11; Isa. 51:7; Dan. 9:11; Mark 7:1-23.

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## Question 32

# Does God Answer Prayers of Lawbreakers?

**And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight (1 John 3:22).**

A Christian's prayer life is a very important aspect of his daily walk with God. Even if he ignores it, it is nonetheless very important. So it is understandable that Christians should look to the Bible in order to discover what God has to say about prayer. What He says is not always discussed by Bible teachers.

Consider the words of Solomon: **"He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"** (Proverbs 28:9). Does this mean that people who violate biblical law cannot get their prayers heard by God? He knows when men pray; physically He is not deaf. But He turns a "deaf ear" to all such prayers. **"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear me"** (Psalm 66:18). God *ignores* such prayers.

Sacrifices in the Old Testament were a form of prayer: a cry unto God to forgive men for their sins. But sacrifices without obedience were like prayer without obedience. God did not respect them. **"Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"** (1 Samuel 15:22). In short, **"The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD"** (Proverbs 15:8). God stated this repeatedly (Jeremiah 7:22-23; Micah 6:6-8).

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## Questionable Answer

"It is ridiculous to argue that God doesn't hear the prayer of a Christian who no longer obeys the laws of the Old Testament. We no longer offer bulls and rams to placate God. Those laws don't apply any longer. Neither do the civil laws of Israel. God hears our prayers, and has for 2,000 years."

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**My Reply:** The *outward manifestation* of some of the Old Testament laws no longer are the same. We do not sacrifice animals. But the epistle to the Hebrews makes it clear why we don't: the Old Testament sacrificial system had pointed to Christ's final sacrifice, so it is no longer binding. But sacrifice is still binding: Christ's, and then our own personal, living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). God did not abolish sacrifice; He replaced a *temporary* sacrificial ritual.

Does God answer prayers of Christians who categorically reject the doctrine of the binding nature of all Old Testament laws that *have not been explicitly restated in the New Testament*? Yes, He does. But doesn't this deny the teaching of the Bible? Not at all. Jesus Christ intercedes for us constantly before the throne of God (Romans 8:33-34). So does the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26). Jesus Christ fulfilled all the terms of God's law (Matthew 5:17-18), so God honors His intercessory prayers on our behalf, even if we sinfully fail to obey His laws. Does this mean we should now sin with abandon? God forbid! (Romans 6:1-2).

So, if you want more of your prayers answered, start obeying God's laws.

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For further study: Prov. 15:29; 21:27; Isa. 1:10-15; Amos 5:21-24; John 9:31; Jas. 4:3.

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## Do We Really Love the Brethren if We Disobey God's Laws?

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**Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments (1 John 5:1-2).**

John's argument is not instantly clear. We have to think about what he is saying. First, if we believe in Jesus, we are born of God. But how do we know if we *really* believe in Jesus—believe in Him in a saving sense? Because we are born (meaning born again, or born from above [John 3:3]) by God. Third, others are born by God. Fourth, we must love the children of God as brothers if we are to consider ourselves as adopted (ethical, regenerate) sons of God.

But what does "love" mean? Warm feelings? Sometimes. A personal closeness to others? Sometimes. Trust in others? Sometimes. But what must it *always* mean? What is love's *defining characteristic*? John tells us: *keeping God's commandments*.

Paul tells us much the same thing. **"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law"** (Romans 13:8). Paul meant that if we do our best to regard the other person's best interests, we have fulfilled the law. But how do we know his best interests? *By what standard* can we properly evaluate those interests? We are back to the issue of *biblical law*. If this isn't our standard, what is?

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## Questionable Answer

"Loving the other person means to have a right relationship with that person. It has nothing to do with biblical law, if you mean Old Testament law. Personal relationships are what count, not the killing details of Old Testament law."

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**My Reply:** If Old Testament law was so "killingly restrictive," consider Romans 13:8. It forbids *all* personal debt. But Deuteronomy 15 allowed at least a 7-year emergency debt. So which is more rigorous? (And is the critic 100% out of personal debt?)

Personal relationships were just as important in the Old Testament era as they are today. That is *why* God gave His law. God gave Old Testament believers biblical law in order to reduce outward sin, thereby reducing disputes. Old Testament law also reminded men of inward sin, and their own lack of personal merit—the need for a substitutionary blood sacrifice.

The important fact to observe is Paul's explanation of what "love as the fulfilling of the law" means. It means Old Testament law: **"For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"** (Romans 13:9-10). If you really love your Christian brethren, will you deliberately violate God's laws regarding personal relationships?

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For further study: Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:39; John 13:34-35; Gal. 5:14; Jas. 2:8; I John 4:20-21.

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## How Can We Identify Christians if We Ignore God's Law?

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**In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother (1 John 3:10).**

The doing of righteousness and the loving of the Christian brother are inseparably linked by John. We can identify Christians and Satanists by means of God's standards of righteousness.

Two questions immediately come to mind. First, what are the specific details of righteousness, by which we can identify other Christians? Second, what is the meaning of "loving the brother"?

We have already surveyed the meaning of biblical love. It means doing righteously, in terms of the specifics of biblical law (Question 33). Thus, when John directs our attention to *righteousness* as the identifying characteristic of the Christian, he is directing our attention to *biblical law*.

Sometimes righteousness doesn't involve relationships with Christian brothers. Does this destroy the meaning of John's message? Not at all. Doing righteously means doing unto others as we would have them do unto us. This same rule governs *all* our relationships with other men, Christian and non-Christian. So "doing righteousness" means honoring the specifics of God's law. If we fail to honor His law, then we are separating ourselves from the family of God. We are identifying with Satan.

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## Questionable Answer

"Christians are led by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit personally guides them in all their relationships with other men, believers and non-believers. This leadership of the Holy Spirit is crucial. He is the source of righteousness and love. Old Testament law has nothing to do with the leading of the Spirit."

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**My Reply:** "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). This is the heart of the matter. We must try the spirits.

How do we "try the spirits"? How do we know that it was the Holy Spirit who spoke? There are other spirits — familiar spirits, the Old Testament calls them — that whisper in the minds of men. We test the spirits in the same way that we test prophets: *by the law of God*. In Deuteronomy 13, God warns men not to listen to any prophet, dreamer of dreams, or worker of signs if he calls the people of God to worship a different God (13:1-3). Immediately thereafter, we read: "**Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD**" (13:4-5a). We use God's law to test the spirits. If we abandon God's law, how will we test what we think is the Spirit's guidance? God's Holy Spirit doesn't tell us to disobey God's holy law. But unholy men do.

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For further study: Ex. 19:5-6; Ps. 1:2; 40:8; 119:35, 47, 72, 92, 97; Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; Rev. 22:14.

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## How Can We Know if We are "Dead to Sin" if We Ignore God's Law?

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**What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1-2).**

Paul argues in Romans 5 that by the sin of one man, Adam, sin entered the world, and death by this sin (v. 12). Without law, sin is not imputed to man (13), Paul says, but since death reigned from Adam until Moses (14), we know that the law existed and was binding. God gave men the law, that man's offense "might abound," and therefore that the grace of God might abound even more (20). In other words, the law points out the deadly nature of our sin. Our sin is in every area of life, in the whole fabric of our being. God's law is therefore comprehensive, in order to reveal to us just exactly how evil we are in *all* areas of life.

Should we sin therefore that grace might abound? No! Christians are *dead* to sin. The *knowledge* of sin killed Paul, he says, and it was the law that brought him this necessary knowledge (Romans 7:9-11). Christ then raised him from the dead.

We dare not live in sin, he says (6:2). But how do we know when we are *living* in sin? The same way we knew, as unregenerate people, that we were *dying* in sin before: *by God's law*. We are *dead to sin* because we can now escape *its deadly effects*.

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## Questionable Answer

"By returning to a fear of Old Testament law, we place ourselves under the bondage of law. Law is to reveal sin to us, in order that we might trust Christ. Once we trust Him, we are released from any requirement to obey Old Testament law."

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**My Reply:** Biblical law creates fear of God's final judgment in those who are perishing. It is not designed to create this kind of fear in the regenerate. We are dead to sin through Christ's grace. We cannot die the "second death" of eternal punishment (Revelation 20:14). So the law of God has no terrors for us!

The law is an *ethical spotlight*. It reveals the dark deeds of evil men, who prefer light to darkness (John 3:19). But it is no threat to Christ's redeemed, for it is this spotlight which enables us to walk the path of righteousness. Like the speed limit that is a threat to speeders and reckless drivers, but a source of safety to other drivers and pedestrians, so is biblical law. We should obey the speed limits because we are good drivers who care about everyone's safety, including our own. So should we obey the law of God.

Would critics of biblical law also encourage us to drive as fast as we can, whenever we choose? If not, then why do they tell us to ignore the specifics of biblical law? *How can we live ethically without God's ethical guidelines?* Doesn't God's law function analogously to the speed limit, to protect us and those around us? Should we reject protection?

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For further study: Deut. 4:1-2; 12:32; Ps. 37:30-31; Eccl. 12:13-14; I Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21.

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## Question 36

# How Can We "Walk in Newness of Life" if We Disobey God's Law?

Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

It is our spiritual death with Christ in baptism which makes us dead to sin. Sin kills, by means of the law. There is no escape from death for man. He either dies *eternally* as a result of sin's effects on his life, or else the old unethical Adam dies in Christ's death. *Death is an inescapable concept.* There is no way to escape this effect of Adam's transgression. God told Adam he would surely die if he rebelled. God did not lie; Satan lied when he denied God's warning. We are *born ethically dead*. The consequences of this "physically living death" are our eventual physical death and eternal judgment.

The "**newness of life**" referred to by Paul is *ethical regeneration*. We live ethically acceptable lives before God now, for God looks at the life of His Son and imputes (judicially declares) Christ's righteousness to us. So we can walk before God as living creatures who are not doomed to eternal destruction.

Should we walk as before, pretending that this world isn't governed by God's law, pretending that we were ethically alive in our own sinful autonomy, content to act as we pleased? No. We should walk in the paths of righteousness. Question: How do we know what path this is at any point in time? *God's law!*

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## Questionable Answer

"The words 'newness of life' refer to a life no longer governed by concerns about the specific details of Old Testament law. Old Testament law has nothing to do with Christ's commandments. We walk free because we walk without concern over God's law."

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**My Reply:** We walk free without fear of eternal death which resulted from our sin, and was *revealed* to us by God's law. But does this mean that we walk free because we no longer need to conform our thoughts and behavior to the requirements of God's law? On the contrary, *we walk free because God's law is in our hearts*, and we progressively discipline ourselves to the requirements of God's law, making our righteous behavior more and more automatic.

This is New Testament doctrine. Citing Jeremiah 31:33, the author of Hebrews wrote: **"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"** (Hebrews 8:10). He was so concerned that we understand that this prophecy is fulfilled in the church age that he repeated it a few paragraphs later (10:16). It is not that the law is *over* us like some frightful sword; the law is *in* us, as our very conscience. Yet there are Bible teachers who insist that the law is *neither in nor over* members of His church. Then what did the author of the epistle to the Hebrews mean? Are we to believe that *lawlessness* is in our hearts?

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For further study: Ezek. 11:19; Matt. 5:17-20; 7:15-27; 15:1-9; 23:23; Rom. 8:4.

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## Question 37

# How Can We Stop “Serving Sin” if We Disobey God’s Law?

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin (Romans 6:6-7).

The “old man” is the unregenerate person’s *ethical* position as a spiritual heir to our father, Adam (Romans 5:12). It is this status which is removed from us when we are saved by grace. It is salvation which frees us from sin. Paul tells us to put off **“the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness”** (Ephesians 4:22-24). Again, the regenerate person has **“put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him”** (Colossians 3:10).

What did Paul mean, **“renewed in knowledge”**? Did he mean that we have *less* knowledge than the saints in the Old Testament had concerning righteous behavior? Not at all. We have *better knowledge* than they had: this is the whole message of the epistle to the Ephesians (chapter 3 especially). We have *better revelation*. How can anyone seriously argue that with *greater knowledge* comes *reduced responsibility*? How can anyone seriously argue that with the coming of the New Testament, regenerate people need to pay *less* attention to God’s law and its many applications in our lives? We are *dead to sin*. Why should we fear the law?

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## Questionable Answer

"Being freed from sin means being freed from the specific details of Old Testament law. We are adults now; we don't have God watching over our shoulders in order to punish us for every infraction of His law. We can now obey the Spirit."

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**My Reply:** Does the Holy Spirit tell us to do things that were forbidden by Old Testament law? If so, then was the law imperfect? Rather, shouldn't we argue that the Holy Spirit tells us to obey the law in its entirety, unless a specific application of the law has been altered *by specific revelation in the New Testament*? If the New Testament hasn't specifically told us of a different application—for example, faith in Christ's *past* death and resurrection (the Book of Hebrews) rather than faith in slaughtered animals as a testimony of our faith in the *coming* sacrifice of the Messiah (Isaiah 53)—how can we trust our hearts to guide us if we do not have the law as a guideline? If our hearts are not *law-disciplined* and our actions are not therefore law-disciplined, how do we know when we are pleasing God? By "good feelings" concerning our actions? Then how are we different from the modern pagans, who say, "If it feels good, do it"?

Mature, responsible, self-disciplined adults don't abandon the righteous teachings of their parents when they leave the home of their parents. Rather, *they apply what they have learned*. They *keep* the laws their parents gave them as children, but they keep them as adults, not as children.

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For further study: Deut. 10:12-13; Ps. 119:1-16; Ezek. 18:1-32; Mic. 6:8.

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## Question 38

# Since God's Law Can't Kill Us, Won't it Help Us to Live?

**Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him (Romans 6:8-9).**

Christ did not need to die, for His life was sinless. Nevertheless, He did die, so that we will not die as a result of our sinful lives. When we speak of death, we mean the second death (Revelation 20:14). We still die physically, which points backward to our sinful origins, and points to our continuing ethical rebellions as intermittent violators of God's law.

We shall live with Him, meaning in the world beyond the grave. He was raised from physical death; so shall we also be raised from physical death (I Corinthians 15). Sin results in death—physical death, and then the second death of eternal punishment. Since sin in principle no longer reigns over us, neither does the second death. Thus, Paul wrote (not concerning physical death, but the second death): **“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”** (I Corinthians 15:55).

If death no longer reigns over us in principle, then *the threat of punishment* for our transgression of the law no longer reigns over us in principle. The threat of earthly punishment, yes. God still chastises us for our sins (Hebrews 12:5-7). The threat of physical death, yes. The consequence of Adam's transgression is with us still. But not the second death.

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## Questionable Answer

"Since we are dead in Christ, we cannot die the second death. Thus, we are no longer obliged to respect Old Testament law. Christ has paid the price. We live as free men—free from the burden of the law!"

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**My Reply:** Yes, Christ paid the price. The death sentence which *sin* placed over us—a death sentence *manifested* by the law (but not created by it)—is removed. Our Father in Heaven has punished Christ rather than us. We are adopted ethically back into the regenerate family of God. No longer are we disinherited sons. But should adopted sons turn around and transgress the very laws that manifested their condition as disinherited sons?

We are still to respect Old Testament law, even though we don't fear its post-resurrection consequences. For one thing, we *know its pre-resurrection consequences*. There are earthly *blessings* associated with obedience to the law, and earthly *curses* associated with its transgression (Deuteronomy 28). But far more important, God wrote those laws, and the Father judged His Son for our transgression of them.

Throughout First John, we read that our ability to *test* our salvation—though not the foundation of our salvation—is based on the existence of Christ's commandments. Paul's words aren't opposed to John's. Paul respected the law as a *guideline for personal performance*, as John did. Do you? If not, why not?

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For further study: I John 1:6-7; 2:3-6; 3:4, 10, 22-24; 5:2-3.

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## Question 39

# How Can Sin Still “Reign” in Us if We Obey God’s Law?

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof (Romans 6:11-12).

Paul warned us against letting sin reign in our mortal bodies. Obviously, sin cannot reign over our spiritual nature, which is redeemed, and which will go to be with God at our deaths. This nature will be reunited after the resurrection to perfect, corruption-free bodies (I Corinthians 15:42-44). But our *mortal bodies* still are subject to sinfulness. Never forget, **“the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Matthew 26:41).

How do we know when we are faced with a sinful temptation? How can we distinguish a temptation from an opportunity? Once again, we are back to that age-old question: *By what standard?* Paul tells us that our mortal bodies are still under the reign of sin. He warns us against this threat. The “lusts thereof” are with us still. In other words, *if we are no longer under the reign of sin in principle, because of Christ’s death and resurrection, why should we allow ourselves to be ruled by sin in the flesh?*

The answer is clear: we must not allow our mortal bodies to be ruled by sin. We must discipline ourselves to avoid sin. But what is our criterion of sinful behavior, if not God’s law? Humanism’s standards?

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## Questionable Answer

"The way we escape from the rule of sin over our mortal bodies is to rely on the Spirit of God to lead us in the paths of righteousness. We are not to return to the details of Old Testament law."

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**My Reply:** We are again faced with the task of *testing the spirits* to see if they are of God. If what we believe to be the Spirit of God tells us to do something contrary to the revealed, written word of God, why should we believe that the spirit informing our consciences is really God's Spirit? Satanists hear from spirits, too. Ethical rebels do what is right in their own eyes, but abominable in the sight of God. But how do we know what is abominable in the sight of God? And if we cannot be sure how we know, have we not returned to *ethical relativism*, the curse of modern humanist culture? What will distinguish our acts from the acts of the anti-God rebels? Does God's Spirit reign in us?

How can we rely on some sort of intuition to guide us, when intuition is notoriously unreliable, *unless it is informed by a detailed knowledge of God's comprehensive law*? How can we trust our consciences, *unless they are informed by a detailed knowledge of God's comprehensive law*? People are expelled from schools for reading evil material. What is "evil material," *Playboy* magazine, or this book? (We know which one causes more trouble for school administrators! Hint: it has no pictures.) How can we make righteous judgments about right and wrong if we reject God's standards of righteousness?

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For further study: Ex. 20; Deut. 11:1-32; 28:15-68; Ps. 119:17-32.

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## Question 40

# Aren't Those Who Disobey God's Law "Instruments Of Unrighteousness"?

**Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God (Romans 6:13).**

We are to yield ourselves unto God, **"as those that are alive from the dead."** Why? Because we *are* alive from the dead! We are *ethically alive* and freed from the terror of the second death. But if we are ethically alive, then we should not act as those who are ethically dead. To "yield oneself unto God" is the same as *acting in conformity to God's law*. We are to be *imitators of Christ's perfect humanity*. He followed the law of God; so should we.

If this isn't true, then what can be meant by the phrase, "instruments of unrighteousness"? Doesn't this mean unregenerate bodies and minds? Isn't Paul contrasting these sin-governed instruments with instruments of righteousness? Should Christians walk in the same paths of unrighteousness as sinners do? When he says "members," doesn't Paul mean our thoughts and actions, since they reflect the state of each person's soul? In short, shouldn't *good fruit* be produced by *good plants*?

If sin no longer reigns over our immortal souls in the second death, why should sin reign over our members, meaning our mortal bodies? Isn't this what Paul keeps asking in Romans 6? Don't we need God's law to tell us if we meet God's test?

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## Questionable Answer

"We yield ourselves unto God when we love Him, and when we love His people. We pray to Him and respond to His answers to our prayers. This has nothing to do with Old Testament law."

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**My Reply:** Paul made it clear in Romans 13:10 that love means the fulfillment of the law's precepts. **"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."** But how do we establish the details of what does or does not work ill to our neighbor, if not by God's law? What other standard is as reliable as God's revealed word? If we depart from the specific details of God's Old Testament law, unless we have explicit testimony to each and every alteration by a New Testament author, what will we substitute in its place? *By what standard?*

Our mortal bodies are to reveal our spiritual condition before God. If we are regenerate, shouldn't our visible actions, as well as our thoughts, conform to His eternal standards of righteousness (Matthew 5:28)? If we are immune from the second death, shouldn't our mortal bodies testify to others of God's grace to us in granting us this immunity? Shouldn't our actions point to life beyond the grave, rather than death beyond the grave? Shouldn't there be some sort of *ethical continuity* between our lives now and our lives beyond the grave? Shouldn't we grow in maturity as we grow older? Should we become lawless? How does Paul define lawlessness?

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For further study: Ex. 21; Deut. 6:1-9, 16-25; 29:1-29; Ps. 119:33-56.

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## Question 41

# What Does "Under Grace, Not Law" Mean?

**For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).**

Should we attempt to deal with this verse without surveying the verses that preceded it in chapter 6 of Romans? Obviously not. Yet there are many, many Bible teachers who try to do just this. They read into Paul's words what they would *like* for him to have said. But Paul was a logical man. He built up his arguments, step by step. What precedes a conclusion by Paul is crucial for understanding one of his conclusions.

Sin does not have dominion over our souls. This is a statement of fact, a description of our very nature as redeemed people. Paul argues this way throughout the passage (6:2, 4, 6-7). But sin *can* reign over our mortal bodies; it is still a threat to our witness (6:6, 11-13). He says **"henceforth we should not serve sin"** (6:6b). Got that? *Should* not. This is an *ethical command*, not a description of our redeemed nature. It is an "ought," not an "is."

How can Paul say that we are not under law, if he wants us to honor the law in our daily walk with God? Because he wants us to know that we are not under the *condemnation* of the law. We are not under the *curse* which confronts covenant-breakers. We are not to *fear* the law of God, for it no longer sentences us to the second death, as it did before Christ redeemed us. Instead, we are under grace, to do good works (Ephesians 2:8-10).

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## Questionable Answer

"A person cannot be under the law and not under the law at the same time. It's one or the other. God contrasts grace and law here. We are under grace and not under law. The law is a dead letter for us."

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**My Reply:** It is not that the law is a dead letter to us. Rather, *we are a dead letter to the law*. We have *died ethically* as covenant-breakers, so that we may *live ethically* as covenant-keepers. The law no longer condemns us as regenerate men, who have the *perfect* righteousness of Christ imputed to them. But our *justification* (God's judicial decree of "not guilty") is not the same as our *progressive sanctification*, as we run the race, fight the good fight, and press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God (Philippians 3:14). We receive justification at the time of our salvation, but this does not excuse us from working out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12b)—not in fear of losing our justification, but in fear of not attaining all that God would have us to achieve. (Warning: beware of contrasting God's predestination with our own personal responsibility, with respect either to justification or progressive sanctification. Paul says such logic is evil: Romans 9:20-23.) We honor the law *because* it cannot kill us.

If children grow too old to spank, should they become more rebellious, or should they have matured, showing greater respect? If we, as mature Christians, are free from the *penalty* of the law, shouldn't we be willing to obey it, in thankfulness?

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For further study: Ex. 22; Lev. 18; Deut. 7:9-13; Ps. 119:57-80.

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## Question 42

# Are We Free to Ignore God's Law if We are "Under Grace"?

**What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? (Romans 6:15-16).**

Can a man serve two masters? Can a man serve both God and Mammon? No (Matthew 6:24). Can a man wear Christ's yoke and Satan's? No (Matthew 11:29-30). Paul here has only followed Christ's teachings on the two kingdoms, Christ's and Satan's. Each has its own law-order, courts and sanctions, and promises. You choose to serve one or the other.

How do you know which person you serve? By your obedience. But obedience to what? Laws. Rules and regulations. We sing "onward, Christian soldiers," but do we really believe in this army? Have you ever seen an army without a book to "do it by"? Without a chain of command? Without a Commanding Officer?

Paul is offering us a warning here. *Determine who you serve by seeing whose laws you obey.* This is the very same warning we are given in First John. Yet there are Bible teachers who ignore this warning. They talk as if redeemed people can serve Christ without obeying the law of God—not as a means of *justification*, but as a means of *progressive sanctification*, both granted by God's grace:

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## Questionable Answer

"To tell people that they are under grace, not law, is not to tell them to sin. It is to state a biblical truth. You can't be under grace and still be under law. They are radically separate conditions."

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**My Reply:** You cannot be under law as your means of justification. God won't declare you "not guilty" in His court of law on the basis of your works. To be under law as the basis of your justification is to perish in your sins. But what about your *progressive sanctification*? What about your walk with God? Don't you hope and pray that this ethical walk will improve over time? But if you hope and pray for this, *how will you determine whether your hopeful prayer has been answered?*

This is not a trick question. If you base your test of your walk with God on your feelings, then you are leaning on a weak reed. Bodily chemistry or shifts in your ability to enjoy your life are not God's criteria. There are people who are going to hell who say (and apparently do) feel terrific. Goliath sure seemed to have a progressive, confident, "power of positive thinking" sort of attitude. So did Jezebel.

Isn't the test of your walk with God the *law-revealed* fruit of your faith? **"What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. . . . For the wages of sin is death"** (Romans 6:21, 23a).

If you want God's fruit, you must seek to obey God's law. This is New Testament doctrine.

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For further study: Ps. 50:16; Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; II Tim. 2:19; Jas. 1:22. .

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## Is a Christian's "New Spirit" Opposed to God's Law?

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For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins [sinful passions—NASB], which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:5-6).

If we rely on our own works for our salvation, God's law only points out our sin and increases our guilt. It kills us. It binds us, as with a chain. Nevertheless, chains are useful tools. After all, Satan is bound with some sort of spiritual chain (Revelation 20:1)—or will be, say some Bible teachers. A chain can be used to bind evil men as prisoners or to lower an anchor and prevent a ship from drifting away.

In what way are we delivered from the law? As a supposed basis of our salvation (justification). The law no longer brings forth the second death in us. It no longer *binds* us. We serve God now in the **"newness of spirit, not in the oldness of the letter."** But notice carefully: the contrast is *not* between "the letter of the law" and "the spirit of the law." It's between the *newness* of spirit and the *old* letter of the law. Does Paul say there is no such thing as the newness *for us* of the letter of God's law, when informed by God's Spirit? Of course not. This is what he teaches: we are made new, not God's standards.

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## Questionable Answer

"When we follow God's Spirit, we don't need to honor the details—the letter—of Old Testament law. It's our 'right attitude,' not the specific details of the law, that God honors."

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**My Reply:** Weren't Old Testament people also supposed to have the "right attitude," both toward God and man? **"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"** (Micah 6:8). Many misinterpreted this requirement, which is why Micah and the prophets had to come and remind them about God's ethical demands on them. What was the message of the prophets? God wants *both*: sacrifices *and* a right attitude, but a right attitude was more important than the details of the rituals. (The best example of this is Hezekiah's prayer for the unclean people who wanted to celebrate Passover; God answered this prayer, and pardoned them [II Chronicles 29:17-21]).

Paul says that **"we should serve in newness of spirit."** The question is: How do we know when we are serving obediently? The answer is obvious: the law of God tells us what we must do. But when we obey the specific terms of the law, our *attitude* should be one of joy, not sorrow. We serve as *free men*, redeemed by Christ's shed blood, not as bondmen, trapped by the killing power of God's law. The letter of the law should bring us joy.

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For further study: Ex. 23:1-13; Lev. 19; Deut. 30:1-20; Ps. 119:81-104.

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## Question 44

### Is the Law of God "Carnal," or Holy, Just, And Good?

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**For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin (Romans 7:14).**

Paul has led his readers through a complex argument. He has said that the very existence of the law of God was what made sin's presence known to him, and to all mankind. It was designed originally to give mankind a fuller, more productive life, but Adam and Eve misused God's commandment. **"And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death"** (v. 10). That was not God's fault; that was Paul's fault. His sin destroyed him. **"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me"** (v. 11). Paul's conclusion is unmistakably clear: **"Wherefore the law is holy, and just, and good"** (v. 12).

The law is not to be equated with sin; rather, it is to be *contrasted* with sin. **"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet"** (Romans 7:7). It was not the law which was Paul's enemy, but *sin*. **"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful"** (v. 13).

Question: Why do so many Bible-believing Christians today not respect God's law as our *tool for identifying sin*?

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## Questionable Answer

"God's law was spiritual for the period of the Old Testament, but to regard it as ethically binding on Christians in the New Testament era is to make it carnal. Men are given the spirit of life today, not the spirit of bondage."

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**My Reply:** Did faithful saints in the Old Testament experience release from the ethical bondage of sin? Yes. Did they still place themselves under Old Testament law as a moral guide? Paul said that he did, but the law slew him. Why? Because he was not yet regenerate. Even in his regenerate state, he saw the war between his redeemed spirit and his sinful lusts, called "the flesh." There were *two laws* warring in him: the *law of God* and the *law of sin*. **"But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members"** (v. 23). He cried out, **"Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"** (v. 24). Then he answered his own question—an answer which contrasts the two laws in his life: **"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh, the law of sin"** (v. 25).

Are there two different laws? *Subjectively*, yes. *Objectively*, no. Paul's "old man" was still being killed by the sentence of God's law. But his renewed mind was given life by that same law code.

If we wish to subdue the "old man" in our lives, we must use God's law to do so, just as Paul did. There is no other way.

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For further study: Ps. 119:21; Rom. 3:20; 4:15; 5:13; I John 3:14.

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## How Can We “Walk After the Spirit” if We Disobey God’s Law?

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**There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:1-2).**

Paul has argued that the law was sin’s instrument in killing him. But here he says that the law was also the Spirit’s instrument of putting him back on God’s holy path. When he was an ethical rebel, the law gave occasion to his enemy, sin, to slay him. But once he was converted by grace, that same law gave him light to illuminate the path of righteousness. Had the law changed? Paul never said so. On the contrary, he shows how *he had changed*, not God’s law. God changes sinners, not His law.

Paul argues that the flesh is so weak that *the law did not make the contrast plain enough*, so that he did not fully understand the contrast between sin and righteousness, between spiritual death and spiritual life. It took the advent of Christ to make clear the radical contrast between sinful flesh and perfect flesh. (Warning: not perfect divinity, but perfect flesh — perfect *humanity*.) **“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (vv. 3-4).**

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## Questionable Answer

"The contrast Paul speaks about is between 'law' and 'grace.' It is not some hypothetical contrast between the response of fallen man to God's law and the response of redeemed man to that same law. The law curses us, and the Spirit gives us life. We should follow God's Spirit, not God's law."

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**My Reply:** If the contrast is between the specifics of God's law and an anti-biblical law (antinomian) position, why does Paul repeatedly tell us that the law is holy and good? Why would God set aside a holy and good thing? Because God's law allows sin to kill sinful man? But Paul rejoiced in the death of the old man, the old Adam who adopts the ethics of rebellion. What a wonderful evangelical tool God's law is: it progressively kills this old Adam.

Law does more than serve as the slayer of the old Adam. Coupled with the gospel of salvation, *it empowers men to live righteously*. The same law that points to the second death at the end of a man's lifetime, and warns him to get off the broad path that leads to destruction, also points out the narrow way that leads to the judgment of God. In principle, God has already pronounced judgment on His people: "Not guilty!" This is the meaning of *justification*. But before He *publicly* pronounces this same judgment on the day of final judgment, we must walk in the path of righteousness prescribed by the law: *progressive sanctification*. God first *declares* us righteous (justification); then we work out the implications of our faith by means of God's law.

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For further study: Lev. 20:8; Deut. 6:25; 24:13; Ps. 119:105-128.

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## Question 46

# Isn't a "Carnal Mind" One Which is Opposed to God's Law?

**For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:6-8).**

We are confronted by the *same contrast* which marks the preceding verses: the carnal or fleshly mind vs. the spiritual mind. The carnal mind is in opposition to God and His will. It cannot obey God's law, so those who are unregenerate cannot please God. This is a variation of Paul's contrast between the natural man and the spiritual man. The natural man will not receive the teachings of the Spirit (I Corinthians 2:14).

What is the characteristic feature of the carnal mind? It refuses to be subject to God's law. Unregenerate people do the deeds of the flesh, but they who are spiritual do the deeds of the Spirit (Romans 8:5). What are the deeds of the flesh? They are actions that violate the law of God. This is what Paul said condemned him before God. **"For the good that I would [should do] I do not; but the evil which I would not [should not do], that I do"** (Romans 7:19).

To what did Paul contrast this condition? Obeying the law of God: **"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man"** (7:22). This is the law of God written on the heart of the regenerate person (Hebrews 8:7-10).

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## Questionable Answer

"Those who are regenerate do righteous actions naturally, for their natures are changed. They do not need to study Old Testament law to tell them what they should do. They know instinctively. The Spirit of God leads them through life, step by step."

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**My Reply:** Will the Spirit of God lead redeemed men to do things in opposition to God's revealed law? Isn't one of the tests that we are supposed to apply to our own decision-making the revelation of God concerning His law? How do we know where we got the idea to do this or that? Did the idea originate in our carnal minds, which are still at war with our spiritual minds, as they were in Paul? Or from some demonic source? Or from God Himself? *We test our thoughts by means of God's law.*

Paul says elsewhere: "**Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**" (II Timothy 2:15). Why study, if we have the law written in our hearts? Because what is written *definitively* in our hearts—imparted at the time of our regeneration through definitive sanctification (Christ's righteousness applied to us)—is not *applied* to our lives until we study the revealed law and begin working out its implications. We know God, too, but that doesn't mean we are to stop studying the Bible in search of a better understanding. We are to study even more!

Christians possess new natures *in principle*. These natures must be worked out *in history*. God's law helps us work out our new natures in history.

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For further study: Lev. 20; 26; Ps. 119:129-152.

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## Question 47

# How Can We “Mortify the Flesh” if We Disobey God’s Law?

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Romans 8:13-14).

Paul contrasts *two different minds*: carnal and spiritual. When we read “flesh,” we must interpret it accordingly. This doesn’t mean that Paul was some sort of materialistic determinist. He didn’t mean that our decisions are a function of our chemistry, or that our bodies control our minds. He meant that there are *two warring principles of interpretation*: the flesh and the spirit. This same contrast was present in the Garden of Eden.

When a person is unregenerate, his attempts to live consistently according to God’s law must fail. The war of his carnal mind against the law of God delivers him into death. Sin captures him, Paul said. *But a regenerate man progressively conquers the lusts of the flesh.* How? Through the empowering of the Holy Spirit—the Spirit’s action in helping him to apply the principles of biblical law to every area of life.

What Paul describes is a *war*. Wars involve conflict. Wars also demand self-discipline in terms of a rule book. The carnal mind has its rule book: defy God and His law. The spiritual mind has its rule book: honor God and His law. We follow “**the Spirit of truth**” who leads us into all truth (John 16:13). Does this Spirit call God’s law (which He co-authored) a lie?

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## Questionable Answer

"We mortify the deeds of the body by avoiding evil acts. The Spirit tells us what is wrong, and then He gives us the power to avoid sin (I Corinthians 10:13). By taking heed of the details of Old Testament law, we become carnal again, submitting ourselves to the law that kills."

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**My Reply:** What has Paul argued? Not that the law of God kills the regenerate, but that it allows sin to kill the *unrighteous*. The law of God he calls holy, just, and good (7:12). How can something written by God, declared to be perfect (Psalm 19:7), and described by Paul as holy, just, and good, be the pathway back to domination by the carnal mind? On the contrary, Paul describes it as a means of subduing the evil deeds of the flesh, but a means that can be used successfully only by regenerate people. God's law is our guideline that tells us the step-by-step program of Christian *self-government*: God's program of *progressive personal sanctification*.

Paul calls the Holy Spirit "**the Spirit of adoption**" (Romans 8:15). This is the biblical doctrine of *ethical adoption*. All men are sons of God in terms of God's creation (Acts 17:26)—*disinherited sons* as a result of Adam's sin. But Christians are adopted sons. "**The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God**" (Romans 8:16). How do we test this Spirit? God's law.

Yet there are Bible teachers who tell us that God's law no longer is a valid test of the spirits. Amazing!

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For further study: Ps. 119:153-176; I Cor. 9:24-27; Col. 3:1-10; Titus 2:11-12.

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## Question 48

# Didn't Paul Believe that the Specifics of God's Law Still Apply?

**For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward (I Timothy 5:18).**

Deuteronomy 25:4 governs the treatment of oxen that are used in the fields. It is one of the more obscure laws in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, Paul cited it in order to demonstrate the moral necessity of paying ministers and elders for their services (I Timothy 5:17). Something as important as financial support of the ministry of preaching and ruling was subsumed by Paul under this "obscure" Old Testament law.

This law is a *case-law application* of the general principle of equity or fairness in the Bible. It is a specific application of the principle, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." But Paul cited Deuteronomy, not Jesus' "golden rule."

The Old Testament law provides both the general principles, which we call the Ten Commandments, and the specific applications, which lawyers call case laws. The specifics of the law were never intended to be divorced from the general principles of equity or fairness. The "spirit" of the law is seen in the general principles of equity; the "letter" of the law is seen in specific examples. Both are required by God.

Why would Paul have cited as morally binding an "obscure" Old Testament law? Because that law was never intended to be obscure! It is obscure to us, not to God (and to the oxen).

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## Questionable Answer

"Paul used this obscure rule only as an example. He did not mean that it would always be immoral to keep oxen from eating corn in the fields. So it is with all of the Old Testament laws: they are only moral examples."

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**My Reply:** Quite true: they are indeed moral examples. Question: Do we honor a moral example by violating its explicit terms? Do we honor this principle by muzzling oxen? Isn't the general principle more likely to become obscured to the minds of sinful men than the explicit examples? Don't the explicit examples keep our eyes fixed on the true meaning of the general principles of equity? *If we close our eyes to the **specific details** of the example, how will we be certain that we are honoring the general principle in other cases?* After all, this is precisely what Paul warned Timothy about: Christians who were unwilling to support the ministry of the church leaders.

We violate the *general principle* when we violate the *details*. A so-called "moral example" is valid morally precisely because it is *morally binding*. If it were not morally binding, how could it be a moral example? Are we to honor the spirit of the law while breaking the explicit example? Aren't the examples binding if the general principle is binding? And if the examples aren't binding, what will pull men back from evil interpretations?

Once again, we must ask that crucial question: *By what standard?*

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For further study: Mark 10:3-7; Acts 23:1-5; I Cor. 9:9-10; 14:34; II Cor. 6:16-18; 13:1; Gal. 5:14; Eph. 6:1-3; Jas. 2:9-11.

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## Question 49

# How Can We Separate the "Moral Law" from God's Laws?

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-19).

Jesus was very clear: *God's law is a unified whole.* The tiniest Hebrew letter, the "jot," or "yode," as we pronounce the Hebrew, is to be maintained, **"till heaven and earth pass."** Have heaven and earth passed away? No? Then how can Bible-believing people legitimately say that *any* Old Testament law is no longer morally binding?

The question is this: Are all Old Testament laws still binding in their details? Not if Christ's life, death, and resurrection have altered a law's *application*. But all Old Testament laws are *moral* laws. Jesus didn't distinguish "moral laws" from "ceremonial laws." We sometimes find specific New Testament teaching that a particular Old Testament law is to be *honored in a different way* in the New Testament era. But we may never *abandon* any Old Testament law in principle.

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## Questionable Answer

"Jesus fulfilled the requirements of all of God's Old Testament laws. We no longer have to honor them, for they are *fulfilled*. They have passed away. We need only honor the spirit of the moral law, not the details."

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**My Reply:** The question is: How can we determine the "spirit" of the "moral law"? *Unless* we have specific New Testament instructions concerning required changes in application of a specific law, do we dare disobey any law of God? Since *all the law of God is a moral law*, we must not distinguish one law from another in terms of a false distinction: "moral law" vs. "ceremonial law."

Yes, Christ perfectly fulfilled the terms of the law. But He spoke not of the law passing away, but of heaven and earth passing away *before* the law passes away. So why should Christians believe that any Old Testament law has passed away ("died") because of Christ's earthly ministry? How can Christians legitimately believe that Christ's perfect life in any way abolished *any* of the laws of God? (Remember: an altered application *isn't* the same as abolition.) Didn't Jesus say specifically that anyone who teaches such a doctrine will be **"the least in the kingdom of heaven"**? Don't you take this warning seriously?

If you disagree, then you need to read Chapter 2 of Greg L. Bahnsen's book, *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. Soon. Your instructor had better read it even sooner. Ask questions.

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For further study: Josh. 22:5; Ps. 93:5; 111:7-8; 119:152, 160; Luke 16:17; II Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 12:14; Jas. 2:10; Rev. 22:14.

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## Doesn't Faith in Christ Establish God's Law?

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**Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law (Romans 3:31).**

Paul could not have made his position any plainer. Nevertheless, there are millions of Bible-believing Christians who teach that Paul was hostile to Old Testament law as a moral guideline for ethical action. They teach that Paul stood against the law of God, recommending in its place a sort of mystical union with the Holy Spirit—a union which is not supposed to be tested by the believer in terms of the specifics of biblical law. They refuse to see that God's law tests *all* spirits!

What could Paul possibly have meant by the phrase, **"yea, we establish the law"**? Isn't this what Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18—that He came not to annul the law but to fulfill (or establish) it? Why are modern expositors so hostile to the words of Paul and Jesus? Is it because they are unwilling to accept the light burden of Jesus' ethical yoke, and instead believe that they can carry a better yoke than Jesus'?

Faith does not make void or empty God's law. The grace of God enables a regenerate man to begin to use the law of God as a *tool of dominion*: first, in his own spiritual life; second, in his external relationships with others; and third, in the progressive construction of the kingdom of God, in time and on earth, and subsequently, beyond the grave, after the resurrection. The law is a *curse* to the sinner and a *blessing* to us.

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## Questionable Answer

"When Paul said that 'we establish the law,' he didn't mean for this age. He meant for the millennial kingdom, after Christians are given perfect bodies and no longer are subject to death, and when they will rule the whole earth—not yet transfigured or even converted to faith in Christ—with a rod of iron."

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**My Reply:** Paul was writing to New Testament Christians living in Rome. If this was not "the church age," what is? He gave the church at Rome a lesson in biblical law. He told them specifically that we establish the law. Who did he mean? Obviously, "we" refers here to Christians living in Paul's day who were working out their salvations with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12b). "We" does not refer to those people who supposedly will reign with Christ in perfected bodies after one resurrection but before another resurrection a thousand years later. "We" refers to those people who called themselves Christians and who were contemporaries of Christians living in Rome in Paul's day.

If we find ourselves preaching sermons (or listening to sermons without at least mental resistance) that attempt to "make void the law," then we are in rebellion morally, not Paul. We are denying the ethical requirement that we establish the law. We are at war with Jesus Christ. We will be disciplined. Therefore we must change our attitude toward God's law: **"For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?"** (1 Peter 4:17).

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For further study: Lev. 22:31-33; Matt. 5:17-20; 23:23; Rom. 8:3-4.

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## Recommended Reading

(an asterisk marks outstanding works)

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## **Part III**

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KINGDOM: GOD'S OR MAN'S

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## Introduction to Part III

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Jesus said, **“by their fruits ye shall know them”** (Matthew 7:20). If this rule applies to every person in his moral life, doesn't it also apply to societies? Wouldn't a society made up entirely of Christians who personally obey God's laws look a lot different from a society filled with humanists who reject God's law? The answer should be obvious. But apparently it isn't obvious, because there are a lot of Christian leaders who openly assert that there is no such thing as Bible-based standards for a New Testament era Christian society, Christian culture, or Christian anything (except a church). Only when Christ comes in person to reign on earth for a thousand years before the final judgment will we see a Bible-based society established. (They believe in a millennium, in other words.) But this period of peace and prosperity will be run as a theocratic bureaucracy—a centralized government with Jesus reigning personally as a total dictator. It will not be a world that comes as a result of the power of Christ's gospel, but only as a result of Christ's personal power as God ruling on earth. (In short, they don't believe in the power of the gospel by itself to transform societies.)

There are some Christian leaders (mainly people with a Dutch background) who argue that there are indeed biblical standards for every area of life, but that these standards will always be rejected by society. There will never be sufficient numbers of Christians to constitute a true Christian society, and therefore these standards will never be applied before Christ's second coming at the end of time. (They don't believe

in the millennium, in other words.) The kingdom of humanist man will triumph.

Which position is correct? Neither.

What the Bible teaches is that God's kingdom, however imperfect, will be established on earth prior to the return of Christ. This kingdom will be visible institutionally. It will be empowered by grace, for large numbers of people will be converted to faith in Christ, though not everyone need be converted in order to have this visible kingdom established. It will be marked by the rule of God's law. It won't be a centralized, top-down authoritarian system over people who resist Christ's rule, for the bulk of the population will voluntarily submit to the rule of Christ's principles in every area of their lives.

This will happen *before* Christ returns physically to render final judgment. Remember, the wheat and the tares grow together in the field until the day of final judgment (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-30). So there *will* be a millennium of peace. There *will* be a rule of Christ's law on earth before the final judgment. There *are* explicitly biblical standards for a Christian society as well as for Christian individuals. In short, *there really is hope*. Our good work today *will* make a difference for Christ's Kingdom.

The humanists deny all this. They believe that the teachings of the Bible will become ever less important. Too many Christians agree with the humanists. They are therefore theologically and intellectually compromised. The Bible says that *the gospel will be victorious*, that it will eventually conquer all institutions. If you think I'm incorrect about this, read the next 25 questions.



## Question 51

# Aren't Those Who Obey God's Law the "Salt of the Earth"?

**Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of men (Matthew 5:13).**

Salt is used to make foods tastier. It is also a preservative, but Jesus was using the metaphor of flavor.

Salt is known all over the world as a valuable resource. It has even served as money in some cultures, since it is divisible, easily recognized, durable, transportable, and scarce (at least in primitive societies). But without its flavor, what good would it be? It would function only as an inhibitor to growth. This is why victorious armies in ancient civilization would spread salt over a defeated city: to "salt it over," so that nothing would grow there in the future (Judges 9:45).

Christians are to improve the world, in the same way that salt improves flavor in otherwise bland, tasteless foods. How are they to do this? With their *good works*, which is the focus of this passage (v. 16). Remove a Christian's good works, and he is no better than tasteless salt in the eyes of the world.

How are we to discern what good works are? We return to that now-familiar question: *By what standard?* And we come up with that now-familiar answer: *biblical law*. We use the revelation of God concerning His character and our standards of action to serve as the salt of the earth.

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## Questionable Answer

"It is true that our good works make us salt in the eyes of men. But to try to enforce biblical law over all men would be to make us worse than flavorless in the eyes of men. They would spit us out and throw us and our message away. Too much salt tastes terrible; it can even kill you."

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**My Reply:** How much salt is too much? Our taste buds tell us. But tastes can change. So are we simply at the mercy of the anti-God, anti-law (antinomian) taste buds of the unbelieving world? Should they tell us how much biblical law they want? Are they the best judges of how much salt is good for them and the society?

*The Bible gives us our standard.* It tells us that we need to use God's law to determine what we should do *personally*. We are to respect it. But then why is it so unreliable in the other areas? Why is the law of God to be "salted over" by Christians who refuse to honor it? Why shouldn't God's law govern everyone?

We start with good works in our own lives. We gain the confidence of the anti-God world. But our goal is *comprehensive flavoring*. We are to flavor all the world's institutions with the flavor of God's law, in time and on earth. We increase men's fondness for the flavor of salt by conducting ourselves honorably. Then, as time goes on, we can extend God's kingdom by flavoring the whole civilization.

And if we refuse, are we not salt that has lost its savor?

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For further study: Ps. 2:7-9; 22:27-31; 72; Matt. 28:19-20; Rev. 2:26-27.

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## Question 52

# Isn't a "City on a Hill" to be an Example for the World?

**Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house (Matthew 5:14-15).**

Christ's basic message to us in this passage is that we are to be examples of righteousness in the world. This light is to be individual, and it is also collective: in the church, and wherever Christians exercise authority in any institution.

The evangelical function of the "city on a hill" parallels the evangelical function of the whole Old Testament commonwealth.

**Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? (Deuteronomy 4:5-7).**

Biblical law is the very foundation of God's civilization.

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## Questionable Answer

"The 'city on a hill' may sound as though it represents an entire civilization, but it is only figurative for the way we run our churches. We are to be good examples as the body of Christ. But this passage has no application at all in society. We are not a city, as Israel was: separate from other cities. We are mixed into the society as a whole."

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**My Reply:** The "nations" continue to exist separately right into the final days. Speaking of the heavenly city, which is the New Jerusalem, **"And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it"** (Revelation 21:24). As Christian cultures develop toward that day, aren't we serving as *lights to all nations* in every case where the gospel becomes a shaping influence in any one nation? Shouldn't we strive to create a society which will *shine ethically* before other nations, just as we try to do in our families, our churches, and our businesses?

Obviously, this passage applies to both individuals and groups of Christians. Yet many Bible teachers draw an arbitrary line at politics and say, "Thus far, and no farther, Jesus. Your word does not speak to this area of life. Yes, Israel was supposed to shine, and Israel had less light than we do, for you have come. But Christians have *less* responsibility!"

A godly society before pagans was an important aspect of evangelism in the Old Testament. Why not today?

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For further study: Ps. 86:9; 87; Isa. 2:2-4; 60:1-9; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 2:9-12.

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## Question 53

# Should We Limit the Areas to be Illuminated by Our "Light"?

**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16).**

Jesus' words here are also repeated in I Peter 2:12: **"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."**

The perspective of both Peter and Paul is that *the good works that regenerate men perform can make a difference culturally*. Men who see that God's word has positive effects in the ethical lives of others will be moved to glorify God, even if they are not converted. Unregenerate men, despite their position as covenant-breakers, nevertheless normally have enough knowledge of good and evil that they prefer to have good done unto them by their neighbors.

The gospel has beneficial effects outside the immediate community of believers. Why? *Because the gospel deals with ethical life in the real world*. Question: Should Christians argue that these good effects are limited exclusively to family and church? How about neighborhood? How about education? How about business dealings? But if the gospel has positive effects in these areas of personal responsibility, what about others? What about politics, law, and management? How can we legitimately exclude *any* area of light-shining?

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## Questionable Answer

"Christians are responsible before God for the conduct of their personal lives. They are not responsible for the institutions of this world, which are exclusively Satan's property. It is futile to attempt social reform by good example. Satan owns this world."

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**My Reply:** Why then should we let our lights shine? Merely as testimonies to bring rebellious people to saving faith? If this testimony is successful, and many former pagans accept the lordship of Christ in their lives, what then? Are we obliged to tell them to abdicate their present positions of authority? Are we supposed to tell them that they are no longer responsible for the proper exercise of such authority, now that they are no longer Satan's servants? Are they supposed to quit their jobs? Or are we to tell them to search the word of God for ethical and *institutional guidelines* for the godly exercise of authority?

Does the gospel's light not throw light on every area of life? Are we therefore not responsible as individuals before God to exercise dominion over our personal zones of responsible decision-making? But how shall we exercise such responsibility? Using what rules? *By what standard?*

God's revealed law gives us guidance in the areas of economics, civil government, history, and education. Why should we ignore His law when we find ourselves in responsible positions? Why not do our best to get His laws enforced?

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For further study: Deut. 10:14; Ps. 24:1; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9-10.

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## Question 54

# How Can Christians be Resurrected Before the Millennium?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn (Matthew 13:28-30).

Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares shows us what we can expect in history. Jesus explained that the devil sowed the tares in the field, which is the world. The harvest is the end of the world. The reapers are the angels (13:38-39). Thus, *there is no break in history—no gathering of believers to God—before the end of the world*. There will be no "secret rapture" which takes place at the beginning of the millennium, or seven years before the millennium. There is no *discontinuous event* between now and the second coming of Christ in final judgment. The tares, meaning evil people, are gathered out of the field (the world) first, not the Christians.

There is growth unto destruction (tares) and growth unto final victory (wheat). There is maturity in both ethical camps. Neither side is cut out ("cuts out") of history before the end of time. There is *continuity* between our works now and a millennial age.

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## Questionable Answer

"We are not to understand this parable as a complete description of history. It only points out that there is good and evil until the day of judgment."

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**My Reply:** What is noticeable in the parable is how forcefully the owner of the field resists the idea of removing the tares from the wheat. The idea is to get the tares out of the field, said his servants. No, the husbandman corrected them, we must protect the wheat. If you try to uproot the tares prematurely, you will uproot some wheat. *Let both tares and wheat develop to full maturity*, and then the reapers (angels) can harvest the tares first and burn them, leaving the wheat intact.

What is not even considered in the parable is the idea that the wheat should be removed from the field, leaving the *tares* to grow without competition! The servants were not so foolish as to suggest that the tares should receive the benefits of being cared for in the field, while the opportunity to mature is removed from the now-uprooted wheat. Yet it is this latter vision which has been preached by many Bible teachers. They teach that Christians will be removed miraculously from the "field" (the world), while the tares go on growing. In short, the salt will be removed—the city on a hill, the light that shines before men. The ethical testimony of the church will be gone. Jesus' parable absolutely denies such teachings!

Since Jesus taught this, why do Christians refuse to believe it?

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For further study: Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:31-32; John 5:27-29; 6:39-40, 44, 54; 11:24; Acts 24:15; Rev. 20:13.

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## Question 55

# Doesn't God's Kingdom Grow Slowly Until It Fills the Earth?

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof (Matthew 13:31-32).

What was Jesus' point? Simple: as we build the kingdom of God, in time and on earth, we shouldn't expect major miraculous leaps. We should expect a *process of maturation*. As we grow in faith and competence, we will see more and more of Christ's influence in the world. Jesus was telling the disciples that they shouldn't expect some major cataclysmic event to turn them into a massive army overnight. No, the kingdom is like a tiny mustard seed which grows to become an influence later on. Starting small, the church will experience success over time.

The process of biological growth is marked by *continuity*. It is slow. It is relatively steady. It is not uniform throughout all periods, of course. Some periods are marked by greater or lesser speed in development. But the disciples were warned against expecting overnight success.

At the same time, they were warned not to expect any permanent setback. The mustard seed eventually grows to such a size that it provides a resting place for the birds. It perseveres.

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## Questionable Answer

"The mustard seed is a hearty plant. It does grow from small beginnings. But it is no oak. It is not like grass. It neither covers the earth nor reaches to the sky. It is successful only in comparison to its small origin."

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**My Reply:** The whole thrust of this parable is that the *comparative growth* of the mustard plant is spectacular. It starts so incredibly small, and it grows proportionately to a huge size. Christ was not comparing a mustard tree to oaks; He was comparing it to its tiny seed. He was calling attention to the tremendous disparity between the seed and the mature adult tree.

This is what the kingdom of God is like. It started very small—a tiny sect in a tiny nation in the midst of a massive empire. Yet as time has gone on, the church and the church's influence have grown. (The kingdom is not equated by Christ to the church; the church is one aspect of the kingdom.) The influence of Christians in many fields has increased. This influence has not been uniform in every century. Some centuries have been eras of cultural retreat for Christians. (Our own era is just such a period.) Nevertheless, the mustard tree is not uprooted. God keeps it in the ground, growing in influence, and eventually providing a resting place for others. The kingdom of God will grow as a plant does, until final maturity.

There is no period of "uprooted mustard tree" in which only evil-doers remain on earth to mature in their sin. There is *continuity of development*, both for good and evil.

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For further study: Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 47:1-12; Mic. 4:1-4; Hab. 2:14; Hag. 2:7-9.

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## Question 56

# Doesn't "Leaven" Mean Victory?

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" (Matthew 13:33).

First of all, let's get one thing perfectly clear: "Leaven" *doesn't* mean "sin." Leavened bread was required by God for an important Old Testament sacrifice, the peace offering of thanksgiving (Leviticus 7:13). Unleavened bread was required at the Passover, as a symbol of the separation of Israel from the corrupt ethical leaven of Egypt. But once in the promised land, they were *required* to bring *leavened* bread before God. At the feast of Pentecost, they were required to bake leaven loaves as the firstfruits offering (Leviticus 23:17). This was the leaven of *ethical maturity*; the best bread of the land. If we were to equate "leaven" with "evil," we would call into question the decision of God in requiring a symbol of evil in a thanksgiving sacrifice to Him. *The leavened offering was characteristic of Pentecost, a day of rejoicing.*

What is leaven? It is yeast. A little is put into dough before it is baked. It causes the dough to rise. It produces a soft, full loaf. Leaven is a symbol of *growth*, of maturity or development. It can refer either to evil or righteousness. We are to put away the old leaven, the corrupt leaven (I Corinthians 5:6-8). But the kingdom is like leaven: *growth is basic.*

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## Questionable Answer

"Yes, the kingdom grows. It grows spiritually. Those who are part of the church do mature spiritually over time. But this says nothing about the influence of the kingdom in history. It does not replace Satan's corrupt leaven loaf."

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**My Reply:** Unquestionably, the premise of the growth of God's kingdom is *the ethical maturing of His people over time*. But this is not simply growth within one person's lifetime. It is *growth throughout history*. This parable is like the parables that preceded it. *Its setting is world history*.

What is growing is a specifically Christian civilization. The parables do not describe just one individual's spiritual development. The focus is on a collective entity, the kingdom. This kingdom is made up of all Christians. It isn't limited to the institutional church; it encompasses the church. It includes families, schools, nations, and all institutions—wherever Christ's gospel and biblical law apply, namely, *across the face of the earth*. All people need the saving power of Christ. Therefore, all their relationships and institutions need the saving power of Christ's gospel. As Christians work out the implications of their faith over time, the kingdom continues to develop. God's pre-resurrection kingdom never fully replaces Satan's earthly kingdom, but it will overcome most of it.

The whole loaf is going to be leavened; the final maturity comes at the day of judgment. What does "whole loaf" mean, if not the whole world?

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For further study: Ps. 89; 102:13-22; 138:4-5; Isa. 11:9; 42:1-10.

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# Didn't Christ's Kingdom Begin Before the Crucifixion?

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**If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you (Matthew 12:28).**

The parallel passage in Luke is even more interesting: **"But if I with the *finger* of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you"** (11:20). Jesus continued to cast out devils, thereby announcing the arrival of His kingdom. The apostles possessed the same ability, indicating the continuing power of God's kingdom over His enemy, Satan.

The kingdom began with a display of *spiritual power*. But this spiritual power had *implications for society*. It meant a reduction in the power and influence of Satan, as in the case of the converted Ephesian magicians who brought their books together and burned them, valued at 50,000 pieces of silver (Acts 19:19)—a huge sum in the first century, A.D. (Judas betrayed Christ for 30 pieces.) **"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed"** (Acts 19:20). The emphasis on *prevailing*, on *overcoming*, is basic to the Book of Acts.

The early apostles were invading Satan's kingdom. Satan now occupies land as a *squatter*. We have the responsibility of casting his fellow demons out of people, and *casting his influence out of society*. There may not seem to be many demon-possessed people, but *demon-possessed cultures are everywhere*. Where God's word is rejected as the proper way of life, for whatever reason, there we find a form of demonic influence.

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## Questionable Answer

"The kingdom began with Jesus' ministry. But this kingdom was interrupted with His crucifixion. The kingdom which operates today is a spiritual kingdom only, not the external, civil kingdom which was prophesied in the Old Testament."

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**My Reply:** If the kingdom *has come*, which is what Jesus said, then how could it have been cut off by His crucifixion? Throughout the New Testament, the kingdom is discussed in terms of the leaven principle: growth, maturity, expansion. There is never any discussion of possible sharp breaks, either as a result of Christ's crucifixion or because of some discontinuous break prior to the return of Christ to set up a millennial kingdom. What is always pictured by Jesus is a kingdom marked by *continuity*.

What are we to do as members of His kingdom? We are to preach the gospel and display the fruits of righteousness. We are to serve as salt in a savorless age, to serve as lights in a dark age, and to serve as ambassadors of a growing kingdom. If we do these things well, and if God decides that the time is ripe, why shouldn't our efforts produce visible, culturally significant transformations, culture by culture? We expect the acceptance of the gospel to transform primitive tribes in the jungle. Are we so corrupted by materialistic humanism that we cannot see what changes are possible in our civilization? Aren't modern humanist nations as much in need of biblical transformation as primitive societies are? Can't the gospel work in our societies, too?

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For further study: Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; 12:28; 16:28; Mark 1:15.

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## Question **58**

# Wasn't Satan Cast Out of Heaven During Jesus' Earthly Ministry?

**Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die (John 12:31-33).**

*Now: the time is clear. Satan suffered a tremendous defeat at the cross. He was cast out of heaven even before the crucifixion, but not before Christ's birth. He was still able to come before God and accuse Job in the Old Testament. No longer: "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:10).*

Jesus sent 70 disciples out to preach. "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:17-18). A major transition began when Jesus began to cast out demons, and his disciples followed His example. "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11). Not greater ethically, but greater in culture-transforming power. Christ's kingdom has come in great power.

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## Questionable Answer

"Satan was cast out of heaven in some way, as the Bible says, in the days of Jesus. Things were different after Jesus began to cast out demons. But this proves nothing about the continuous expansion of God's kingdom on earth before Christ returns physically and intervenes to establish an earthly kingdom."

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**My Reply:** Satan was free to roam across the face of the earth outside of Israel prior to the ministry of Jesus. He controlled the whole earth as a leaseholder. He had gained that lease from Adam when Adam placed himself covenantally under Satan. But now the second Adam had come to challenge Satan's title to the whole world. When He demonstrated the advent of His kingdom by casting out devils, Christ simultaneously proclaimed the defeat of Satan and the advent of His worldwide kingdom. From that point on, Satan was on the defensive. He still is.

Christ announced His "new world order." It was a new order based on *ethical conformity to the law of God*. First, Christ obeyed the law, and was crucified as a perfect human sacrifice for Adam's sin. Second, His disciples gained authority under God to preach the gospel and cast out demons. They also conquered in terms of their adherence to God's law—the commandments of Jesus. The kingdom of God is still advancing, wherever Christ's people preach salvation and obedience to God's law. This is what is meant by the phrase, "the whole counsel of God." Ignore God's law, and you have only partial counsel.

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For further study: Matt. 12:28-29; Luke 10:17-20; John 12:31-32; 16:11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8.

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## Question 59

# Isn't Faith Progressively Productive Until Christians Win?

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (Matthew 25:20-21).

The parable of the talents illustrates the essence of *positive feedback* in God's kingdom. God gives us internal and external blessings that Christ's work alone has merited. We are to multiply these gifts, in time and on earth. The very English word for our skills—"talents"—comes from this parable. The talent in Bible times was a unit of weight, generally relating to gold or silver.

The man who was given five talents by God earned 100% on the money. So did the man who had been given two talents (25:22). He, too, is praised by his lord. (This should warn us against the socialistic rhetoric of "equal starting points," or "equal opportunities." God gives unequal gifts in every area of life. What counts is how well we multiply them for His honor.) The third man was fearful and had buried his coin. His reward was judgment: the lord had his servants take the man's coin and give it to the man who now had ten. *God rewards those who perform.*

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## Questionable Answer

"The parable of the talents relates only to spiritual gifts. It has nothing to do with earthly capital. All Jesus meant was that a man is to multiply his spiritual capital, primarily by leading people to faith in Christ."

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**My Reply:** Most of Jesus' parables were spoken in agricultural or monetary terms. They were "pocket-book parables." He did not speak to the masses in the language of theological disputation. He spoke to them in the language they understood.

The parable of the talents teaches unmistakably that no matter what skill or gift you have received from God, you are supposed to put it to good use. It should earn a positive rate of return (25:27). You will be held responsible on judgment day. *The period of responsible action before the Lord returns* is to be redeemed (bought back). It is to be productive, in every sense of the word. Men are to gain skills of exercising good judgment. After all, who received the talent of the man who was judged? The person who had been given the greatest amount of responsibility from the first, and who had earned 100% on his "investment." From them to whom much is given, much is expected (Luke 12:47-48). As millions of Christians pursue various lines of service, the capital base of the church multiplies. This brings wealth and influence over time. But many Christians reject Christ's teaching about culture-transforming Christian labor because they have no confidence in their own talents or God's law.

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For further study: Lev. 26:3; Deut. 8:18; 15:6; 28:1-14; Ps. 67:6; Prov. 3:33; 10:22; Isa. 47:17-19; Mark 10:29-30; I Tim. 4:8.

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## How Can Satan Rule the World if Power Comes from Righteousness?

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**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth**  
(Matthew 5:5).

Who are the meek? Those people who are *meek before God*. They are not those who are meek before Satan. They are also not those who are ethically weak. They acknowledge their total dependence on God, and their need to obey His revealed word. But they recognize that it is this meekness and obedience that bring ultimate victory, in time and on earth.

Where is the arena of conflict? On earth. When does this drama take place? Before the end of time. What is the prize of the conflict? Control over the earth. Of course, it is more than this, for what does it profit a man if he gains the whole earth and loses his soul (Mark 8:36, 37)? But it is difficult to avoid the implications of this verse: *inheriting the earth* is what Christ offered as the *incentive*.

The religion of Satan is a *power religion*. Satan sees all conflict as a conflict involving a power struggle. God sees the struggle as *ethical*. Whose name do we honor, man's or God's? This is the chief ethical question. **"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God"** (Psalm 20:7). **"There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength. An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength"** (Psalm 33:16-17).

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## Questionable Answer

"The meek person does not seek power. He does not try to lord it over other people. He goes meekly about his affairs, not demanding anything from others. He inherits the whole earth immediately after the return of Jesus to establish His earthly rule."

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**My Reply:** Can Mr. Christian Milquetoast learn overnight how to run a business, command an army, run a Congressional staff, be the president of a university, be the chairman of a research laboratory, take responsibility for operating a \$300 million investment trust, be the editor of a newspaper, or any of a thousand other tasks that demand *forceful leadership*? Isn't the development of leadership a long-term process?

The question is: Before whom will a man be meek? If he is meek before God, God says he will inherit the earth. If he is confident in his rebellion against God, he will lose both the earth and his own soul. Satan wasn't meek before God; he will perish under the judgment of God. Meekness is what we call an inescapable concept. It's not a question of "meekness vs. confidence." It's a question of *meekness before whom or what*?

*Meekness is progressive.* We learn to humble ourselves before the Lord. We learn to conform our dreams and our actions before God. But because meekness is progressive, *inheriting the earth is also progressive.* Self-discipline brings authority. But this authority is not to be confined to the institutional church. It is *comprehensive authority*, for the gospel's effects are comprehensive.

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For further study: Ps. 37; 110; Isa. 45:8-25; 49:5-12.

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## Aren't Christians Supposed to Crush Satan?

**And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen (Romans 16:20).**

Paul wrote to the church at Rome that in a short period of time, they would see Satan bruised under their feet. Obviously, Paul was speaking figuratively. They did not as a group collectively step on the head of a physical serpent. What they did was to begin to participate in a *collective, church-wide battering of Satan's kingdom*. This was yet another stage of the fulfilment of that crucial prophecy to Satan: **"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"** (Genesis 3:15).

The warfare between Christ and Satan is ethical. As the two armies meet each other on the battlefield, the Christians have access to the critically important training manual for ethical war: the Bible. This gives Christ's forces an overwhelming potential advantage. *The problem arises when His troops refuse to honor the specific commands in God's ethical battle plan.* His people are driven from the field repeatedly, for they lose skirmishes. Why do they lose? Because they reject the explicit teachings of God concerning Himself, man, law, the church, the family, the civil government, and all other areas of responsibility that the Bible deals with. But the church at Rome could rest confidently. They knew that they would experience a victory.

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## Questionable Answer

"The bruising of Satan's head is a spiritual bruising. God's people do not actually conquer Satan's visible kingdom. They do conquer his temptations of them as individuals. But this has nothing to do with cultural phenomena."

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**My Reply:** If we can conquer Satan's individual temptations, then how do we do it? By adhering to God's law, and relying on His grace. But if we steadily bring ourselves under the discipline of God's law as individuals, and also as members of God's institutional church, why does this progressive victory over Satan have to stop at the doors of our homes and our churches? What restrains us from bringing more of the world under His dominion by means of an expansion of our responsibilities as individuals and as church members? Why are we unable to experience the same sort of success outside the home and the church? What about in education? What about in all the other areas of life? Why is God's law, coupled with God's grace, incapable of progressively sanctifying ("setting apart" through ethical conformity to God) the whole society? Is there anything in the Bible which tells us that what works for us as individuals and church members will invariably fail when attempted by godly men and women in other institutions? Are Christians competent in the home and church, but inevitably incompetent everywhere else? Why should Christians suffer from a cultural inferiority complex? Is our gospel impotent?

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For further study: Rom. 8:37; Eph. 6:10-13; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4; 5:4.

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## Question 62

# What Can Possibly Interrupt Christ's Dominion?

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14).

Who received this everlasting kingdom? Obviously, Jesus Christ. This probably took place upon His entry into heaven after His death on the cross (Luke 23:43), for He announced to His disciples *after* His resurrection but *before* His ascension: **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"** (Matthew 28:18).

What happened to this dominion? Is it still in force? Are the laws governing it consistent throughout Christ's reign, until His return on the day of final judgment? We have seen in earlier sections of this book that Christ said His commandments are binding forever. But if they are still binding, and men are to achieve success or failure in terms of them, can we legitimately believe that we can abandon our commitment to His commandments and expand the visible sovereignty of His jurisdiction? Can't we actually trace the decline of influence of the church in Western culture since 1870 with its abandonment of His law?

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## Questionable Answer

"Christ's everlasting dominion appears in three stages: 1) the kingdom of heaven, which Christ announced during His ministry, and which was begun definitively after the resurrection, and lasted until Pentecost (Acts 2), 50 days after His ascension (Acts 1); 2) the church age (kingdom of God), from Pentecost until the Rapture; and 3) a revival of the kingdom of heaven, during Christ's personal 1000-year reign. Old Testament law is binding only in stages one and three. It does not produce dominion in stage 2, the church age."

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**My Reply:** If the so-called "church age" were really a period in which biblical law is not applicable, and if it were really a "great parenthesis," unknown to the Old Testament prophets and set up by God only because Israel rejected Christ as Messiah, then *what happened to the first kingdom?* If the kingdom of heaven (Matthew) isn't the same as the kingdom of God spoken of elsewhere, did Christ receive *two separate kingdoms*, the second which began in Acts 8 (or 28), and the other which was given after His death, but postponed for over 1900 years when the Jews rejected Christ's rule and the church age began? *How does an "everlasting" kingdom get interrupted 50 days later (Pentecost: Acts 2)?*

Why do the parables of Matthew 13 describe a progressive continuity of development, if there are so many discontinuities? Why are the "laws of growth" for wheat in one era useless for wheat in another era? And could today's lack of growth be due to Christianity's abandonment of God's laws?

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For further study: Luke 9:27; 10:9-11; 11:20; 17:21; 21:31; 22:29.

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## Isn't Christ's Kingdom in this World?

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**Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence (John 18:36).**

Here is a frequently misinterpreted passage. Pilate had asked Jesus: **"Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?"** (18:35). Christ was responding to Pilate's implication that he was sovereign over Christ because he was the representative of Rome, which in turn was sovereign over Israel. By implication, Christ was simply another political or religious troublemaker who had come before the seat of Roman power.

Not so, answered Christ. He did not deny that He had a kingdom; on the contrary, He affirmed it. His response did not affirm Pilate's assertion of implicit authority over Christ. Christ's kingdom was not of this world. What did this mean? It meant that His kingdom *did not originate* in this world. The "of" denotes *place of origin and/or location of authority*. Christ did *not* say that His kingdom is not *in* this world; He said that it was not *of* this world. In short, Christ asserted, Pilate had no ultimate jurisdiction over Him just because Rome had temporary visible power over Israel.

Notice also the word "now": **"now is my kingdom not from hence."** But this says nothing about the day of judgment, or even the day of His resurrection.

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## Questionable Answer

"Christ's kingdom did not originate in this world. At the time of the crucifixion He had no earthly supporters who would fight for him. But in His millennial reign, when He appears physically to rule with a rod of iron, His kingdom will be of this world—a link between heaven and earth. But today, in the church age, His kingdom is not of this world, so we are not required to fight to defend Him and His reputation. We are not to attempt the construction of a Christian kingdom."

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**My Reply:** The question we need to have answered is this one: When did, does, or will the "now" be removed from Christ's sentence? When will He be able to announce that His kingdom is now of this world, because its place of origin—heaven—has come down to earth? Clearly, this will take place after the final judgment. But will it take place before? Or has it taken place already?

Jesus announced at the last supper: **"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel"** (Luke 22:29-30). He announced after His resurrection, **"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth"** (Matthew 28:18). Where? In heaven and in earth. Here was the fusion. *Now* His kingdom *is* of this world. Now His followers *do* fight for His honor, for they serve a risen Lord who has demonstrated His power over death. His kingdom is now visible in this world through His people.

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For further study: Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13; 4:11; I Thess. 2:12; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:5-6.

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## Question 64

# Doesn't the New Testament Teach that Christians are Powerful?

**The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power (Ephesians 1:18-19).**

Christ has delivered power to His church. He has also granted us a *vast inheritance*. Why don't we see this? Because we are blind to God's word. Christ has not given us the full inheritance, for the world is still in sin, and so are we, but we have been given a *down payment*, what Paul called an "earnest" a few sentences earlier (v. 14). We are to recognize the magnitude of both His power and our inheritance, in time and on earth, as we progressively work out our salvation with fear and trembling. How extensive is Christ's power? God gave power to Him **"when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all"** (vv. 20-23). If this isn't comprehensive power, what is? As church members, we are commanded by the Lord of all power, who was victorious at Calvary.

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## Questionable Answer

"Christ possesses all power as a result of His resurrection victory over Satan. The church, however, has no means of appropriating this power in time and on earth. Christ grants to the church power over the second death. He grants it the sacraments. But He reserves power for Himself, which the church will not be able to use until after the Second Coming."

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**My Reply:** Why did Paul spend so much space discussing such comprehensive power, and the inheritance, and Christ's down payment "to us-ward," if God has chosen never to grant Christ's people the visible, earthly power commensurate (though of course not identical) with the power that He granted to Christ, the head of the church? Ephesians 1 discusses God's predestination of every member of His church, the magnitude of God's power and wealth, the headship of Christ over the church, and Christ's comprehensive dominion over all creation in His perfect humanity (He enjoyed this authority in His divinity before the resurrection). Where is our dominion?

If the church is His body, **"the fulness of him that filleth all in all,"** why is it so pathetically unfilled? Is the kingdom forever doomed to be weak in comparison to Satan's troops? Why is that majestic power which was *in principle* transferred to the church from the beginning incapable of becoming visible, in time and on earth? Or have Christians simply ignored God's law? In short, why do so many Christians refuse to exercise the power the gospel has provided? Why are they so faithless?

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For further study: I Cor. 4:20; II Tim. 1:7; Rev. 1:6; 2:26-28; 5:10.

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## Aren't Christians Supposed to Execute Judgment?

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**Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life? (I Corinthians 6:2-3).**

Paul warned the Corinthian church not to enter into courtroom disputes with each other in front of pagan judges. He told them to set up church courts for that purpose. In other words, they needed training in settling legal disputes. Did this mean that Christians are always to limit their quest for judgment to church courts?

If it meant this, then why did Paul bring up the issue of judging the world and the angels? If Christians are supposed to limit themselves strictly to church court trials, how are they to obtain the wisdom to be able to judge the world? What does it mean, "judge the world"?

The whole world is under Jesus Christ's authority (Matthew 28:18). He is steadily bringing it under His visible sovereignty through the spread of the gospel. As more people profess faith in Him, and seek progressively to govern their actions in terms of biblical law, His kingdom expands. As we become proficient in judging our personal actions, and then in judging the actions of other Christians in church courts, we thereby gain the experience necessary for judging matters outside the institutional church.

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## Questionable Answer

"Christians have no power, right, or need to judge other people's actions. The Bible says plainly, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' It is not our task to establish a theocracy."

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**My Reply:** "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). But Paul said to that we *will* judge. How can we reconcile this apparent contradiction? By examining the next verse: **"For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again"** (7:2). Thus, if a person wishes to place himself under the jurisdiction of God's kingdom, he must be ready to *judge sin* and be *judged by* biblical law. If he wants that benefit, then he must judge in terms of biblical law, for with what standard he judges others, he will in turn be judged. Thus, *to refrain from judging in terms of biblical law is to place oneself under the administration of some other system of law*. We must use biblical law.

Christians have adopted a rival law structure in the modern world. They have refused to bring judgment on themselves, either personally or ecclesiastically, in terms of God's law. They have abandoned the courts to pagan judges. They have not become proficient in enacting civil legislation. The result? God-hating pagans have imposed their laws over Christians. Christians are today being judged by an alien law structure. This will continue until they recapture the institutions of power. Either we judge evil, or evil men will judge us.

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For further study: Ex. 23:1-8; Ps. 119:34, 53, 66, 73, 97-104, 130, 163; Prov. 17:15; Dan. 7:22; Zech. 8:16; John 7:24; Phil. 1:9-11.

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## Question 66

# Why Shouldn't Christians Become Civil Rulers and Enforce God's Law?

**For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Romans 13:3-4).**

God has ordained the institution of civil government as a monopolistic agency which imposes physical sanctions against evil-doers. The civil magistrate is His minister of vengeance. Civil government is an inescapable concept. It is never a question of civil government vs. no civil government. It is always a question of *which kind* of civil government. Pure anarchy is not a possibility. Someone or some agency will always bear the sword of physical judgment.

Civil government is not supposed to make men good. It is not an agency of regeneration. It is *ministerial*. Thus, its task is to *restrain certain kinds of public evil acts* by all people, regenerate or unregenerate. Its task is to be a terror to those who would commit evil acts.

How should a civil government define publicly punishable evil acts? *By what standard?* Clearly, by God's revealed law. Which citizens are best equipped to make this determination? Humanists? Or Christians?

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## Questionable Answer

"Paul says that Christians are not to seek vengeance (Romans 12:19). Thus, it is the responsibility of the Christian to obey the civil government, not to seek to take it over. Christians have no responsibility to bear the sword of vengeance."

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***My Reply:*** Paul wrote a few lines earlier: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19). The Bible was not originally divided into chapters. Thus, these words give us the proper foundation for interpreting the passage dealing with the civil magistrate.

Vengeance belongs to God. The civil magistrate is God's ordained agent of vengeance. Thus, he who serves as a civil magistrate performs the function which is prohibited to individuals who are acting on their own. Private citizens aren't allowed to "take the law into their own hands." But the passage says nothing about Christians not being allowed to *take the law into God's own hands*, as His lawful agents. There is not a word against Christians serving as civil magistrates. On the contrary, the whole passage implies that we should strive to improve the enforcement of civil law by striving to change all civil laws to conform to the specific details of biblical law. This would promote the progressive sanctification of the civil government. Wouldn't the enforcement of God's civil law be an improvement? Wouldn't it externalize God's kingdom?

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For further study: Lev. 19:15; Deut. 4:5-8; 17:18-20; Ps. 2:10-12; 101:5-8; Prov. 14:34; 16:12.

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## Doesn't the Bible Require an Appeals Court?

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Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled (II Corinthians 10:5-6).

There is a *progressive sanctifying of the creation*, from the heart to the society at large. First, there is regeneration, when we receive the mind of Christ (I Corinthians 2:16). We cast down evil and vain imaginations that are in opposition to the knowledge God provides of Himself. This establishes our presuppositions on the revelation found in the Bible. Next, we bring our thoughts captive to Christ. This is *intellectual self-discipline*, and the standard of success is the Bible.

Having achieved this in our personal lives, we then apply our wisdom to other areas: home, church, school, business, and civil government. The New American Standard Version translates verse 6 as: **"we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete."** When the elders of the church at Corinth have at last decided to enforce biblical law, then they can call in Paul and other elders to serve as outside judges in cases where disobedience still prevails among unruly members. Church sanctification is progressive; as men discipline themselves, they can call in godly judges for more serious problems.

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## Questionable Answer

"This has to do with church government, not civil or any other kind of government. Paul was speaking only of the rule of the Holy Spirit in the church."

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**My Reply:** Paul introduced this section with the words, **"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"** (v. 4). What he says is almost precisely the opposite of what modern Bible teachers say. It is the spiritual weapon which is mighty, not the carnal. Our modern teachers are too much bedazzled by the *power religion* of the pagans. What is weak is power religion.

First, regeneration. Next, intellectual discipline in terms of the Bible. Next, a willingness of church leaders to obey biblical law personally (Matthew 7:1-2), and enforce it inside the church. Then God provides an appeals court, with higher judges who are ready to support local elders in their enforcement of biblical law. This is how Christ's earthly kingdom is expanded in the church. But it is no different in any other governmental unit. This hierarchical appeals court system is what Moses imposed over Israel (Exodus 18).

Where Christians seek to understand God's law, and agree to conform themselves to it, they are ready to exercise dominion in every area of life. This process begins in the local church, but it was never intended by God to be confined there forever.

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For further study: Gen. 12:3; 49:10; Ps. 46:10; 65:2; 66:4; Zech. 8:20-23; 14:8-9, 16; Mal. 1:11.

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## Won't the Resurrection Take Place After the Millennium?

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**But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power (I Corinthians 15:23-24).**

The firstfruits were offered at Pentecost in the Old Testament. They are the first fruits offered of each man's productivity. Christ was not only the Passover but also the firstfruits. He was the first offering. We will be next. Our resurrection is assured.

The parable of the wheat and the tares informs us that *continuity* of development is basic to the kingdom of God. There is no separation of the wheat and the tares until the end of time. This passage informs us that there is only one resurrection after Christ's: our resurrection. **"Then cometh the end."**

Those who believe in a 1,000-year personal, physical reign of Christ on earth have to argue that the word "then" covers at least 1,000 years (and maybe 1,007). They say this in order to make their prophecy system work. But you would never postulate a 1,000-year "then" if you had read only this passage. We will be resurrected, and then comes the final judgment, the end of time. This comes *after* Christ has put down all the opposition. How will He do this? Through His people, who exercise dominion.

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## Questionable Answer

"The inability of the church to exercise authority without Jesus' physical presence on earth is obvious. There is no progress culturally. Things are getting worse. They have gotten worse in a straight line since the end of the first century, A.D. Christ will not put down His enemies through us."

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**My Reply:** "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). If Paul could do all things through Christ, then what prevents Christ's church from extending Christ's rule on earth, in response to God's dominion covenant (Genesis 1:27-28; 9:1-7)? Did Paul seek to mislead us about the spiritual power of God? Did he want us to lose faith in the power imparted by the Holy Spirit, coupled with God's law?

Clearly, the history of the church has had its ups and downs. But we are far better off today than in the first century. Anyone can afford his own printed Bible. We have the history of creeds to show us where misinterpretations arose, and how the church dealt with them. We have communications satellites. We have great per capita wealth, the product (initially) of the Protestant work ethic. We have more responsibilities, of course, but clearly we have more influence and power. And what we lack can be overcome, if and when we return to faith in the *comprehensive power of the gospel*. If we deny that God's kingdom principles can change the world, haven't we thereby said that these principles are culturally impotent?

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For further study: Isa. 56:3-8; 59:19-21; 62:1-12; 66:7-23; Zech. 14:20-21.

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## Won't Men Live Longer as God's Kingdom Progresses?

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**For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (I Corinthians 15:25-26).**

The parable of the wheat and the tares stresses continuity. So do the other parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. But can we believe in continuity—progressive sanctification—in the area of *biology*? Yes, death will be put down, once and for all, at the end of time. But this is a radically *discontinuous* event. If we expect progressive sanctification culturally, economically, and so forth, as God's blessing for the enforcement of His law, shouldn't we also expect to see a steady lengthening of human life spans, as a testimony ("earnest") of the coming conquest of death? Do biblical ethics and long life go together?

**"Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).** Paul cited this passage and remarked that this was the first of the commandments with a promise attached to it (Ephesians 6:2). This law and its promise still hold.

Will long life be universal, in response to the expansion of God's kingdom? This is what Isaiah prophesied: **"There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed" (65:20).** Biblical ethics and long life *do* go together.

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## Questionable Answer

"These long life spans are a product of Christ's miraculous intervention during the millennial reign. This reign is personal and physical, and requires us to believe in a discontinuous kingdom event: Christ's second coming and the resurrection of believers."

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**My Reply:** The reduction of life spans from Noah's era until Joshua's day, from over 900 years to three score and ten (average), took several centuries to complete. This was not a discontinuous process. It was gradual. Thus, when the Bible promises an increase of life spans this side of the final judgment (Isaiah spoke of sinners living and dying during this period), it is prophesying a gradual return to what men once experienced before the flood. Why shouldn't we believe in continuity?

If we are told by Isaiah to believe in a continuous increase in life in response to an increase in ethical self-discipline under God, and in response to the governing of human institutions by biblical law, then why is it so difficult to believe in something "minor," such as economic growth, or technological development, or more justice in civil government, or a reduction in the number of wars? If man's very body can and will experience a continuous increase in life expectancy, why not also a progressive healing of other aspects of man's life—things that are seemingly far less fixed than life expectancy? *Earthly victory is coming!*

Why do so many Christians preach a coming earthly defeat?

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For further study: Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Ps. 91:16; Prov. 3:2; Eph. 6:3.

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## Doesn't Christ's Kingdom Expand Over Time?

**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).**

We are to pray for God's kingdom to come. But Christ said that when the disciples saw Him casting out demons that they would know that the kingdom had already come (Luke 11:20). So why are we to pray, **"Thy kingdom come"**?

We must understand the biblical triad: *definitive*, *progressive*, and *final*. God gives us definitive sanctification when we are regenerated—Christ's righteousness imputed to us. We work out the implications of this definitive sanctification throughout our lives (Philippians 2:12b). Then on the day of judgment we receive our final, perfect sanctification which had been granted to us *in principle* at the moment of our conversion.

The kingdom came, and the final kingdom will come. In the meantime, we as Christians are to work out *historically* the implications of what God gave to us definitively with Christ's ministry—definitive, progressive (historical), and final.

How do we judge our success in our efforts to develop Christ's kingdom principles, *before* the final judgment? By comparing God's law to what we have built by using God's law. This is why Christ also required that we pray, **"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."** God's kingdom is not marked by Christ's physical presence on earth for 1,000 years; His kingdom is marked by *our progressive application of God's law on earth*.

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## Questionable Answer

"This prayer was a prayer of saints in the kingdom of heaven, meaning the Jewish kingdom. It is not to be prayed by church members, who belong to the kingdom of God, a completely different kingdom age."

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**My Reply:** "Thy kingdom come." How many kingdoms? One kingdom. So we are to pray for its full development historically—the complete manifestation of God's will, exercised on earth by His people. The prayer is *ethical*. It refers to *law*, which is *God's will* for those who live on earth.

Nevertheless, God's kingdom is manifested in power. We do not seek power as such; we pray for God's will to be applied on earth as it is in heaven. But Christ announced His total power in heaven and on earth. His power was based on His performance of the requirements of God's law. In short, He received total power because He conformed totally to God's ethical requirements for mankind. His *perfect humanity* entitled Him to *perfect power*.

As we conform ourselves progressively to His will, we also increase our power, for God increases our authority over human affairs. As His people seek God's will on earth, and as they discipline themselves and those under their lawful jurisdiction by the categories of biblical law, we should expect to see *progressive blessings* and *progressive responsibility*, both internal and external, personal and social (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

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For further study: Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45; 7:13-27; Amos 9:11-13; Rom. 11:11-32.

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## Question 71

# Doesn't God Want His "Heirs" to Inherit Everything?

**For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith (Romans 4:13).**

Abraham was given a promise: he would inherit the *world*, through his seed. He would see his name established throughout the world. **"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed"** (Genesis 12:3). But Paul said that this promise was secured by Abraham's faith.

Do Christians believe in this promise? They believe that they will experience the resurrection. In this way, they will become heirs. But Abraham saw the fulfilment of this promise differently. God told him that his seed would multiply astronomically, and that his heirs would inherit the whole land of Canaan (Genesis 15:5-7). By faith, he appropriated this promise (15:6). But it was to be a *visible* expansion. God made the promise in the language of *measurement*—indeed, beyond measurement (16:10), as the stars of heaven or the sand of the sea.

Abraham did not expect overnight fulfilment. It could not be accomplished. First, he needed an heir. Only then could he expect the fulfilment of the promise. He expected lineal and linear growth over time. Why do modern Christians so often expect victory only after death or the resurrection?

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## Questionable Answer

"Paul changed the focus of the promise. It is spiritual heirship that matters today. We are not to expect progressive population growth among Christians, or progressive economic growth among Christian nations. We should expect only increased spiritual insight and personal self-discipline among Christians."

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**My Reply:** Abraham expected all these things. He knew about self-discipline. He was the commander of a large household. He was a successful military strategist. His faith was counted for righteousness. He was no primitive dweller of the desert. He was an educated, wise man. But he expected *economic growth* and *population growth* to accompany the growth of spiritual insight on the part of his heirs. Why? Because God had expressed the promise in terms of external blessings. God said the same thing to Moses and the people of Israel (Deuteronomy 28:1-14).

Why *shouldn't* personal self-discipline, honest business dealings, insights into the true nature of man, thrift, future-orientation, gifts from God, access to the Bible, regular preaching, regular tithing, six days of labor instead of five each week, respect for the sabbath, covenantal marriages, and experience in bringing up large households result in economic growth, intellectual growth, and the progressive expansion of personal and covenantal responsibility and dominion? Get an answer. Soon.

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For further study: Lev. 26:3-13; Deut. 28:1-14; Josh. 1:7-8; Ps. 1:1-3; 119:1-2, 165.

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## Didn't the Prophets Forsee the Church Age?

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**Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days (Acts 3:24).**

Peter was quite specific: *all* the prophets from Samuel onward foretold the church age. This means that God gave revelation to Old Testament believers concerning the great era of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Peter, in the very inauguration of the church, referred back to these Old Testament prophecies.

We are told by dispensationalists that the church age was a "great parenthesis" for the Old Testament prophets, that they knew nothing about it. Yet here is Peter telling his Hebrew listeners precisely the opposite. In this passage, he was condemning them for their murder of the Lord. He was telling them that they were morally responsible for having failed to recognize in the ministry of Jesus the fulfilment of prophecy. Notice also that he referred to "**these days**" as the time in which the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled.

The doctrine of the "great parenthesis"—that our era, the church age, had not been planned from the beginning by God and even foretold by God through His prophets—is a false doctrine. Yet this is perhaps the most important of all doctrines in the dispensationalist system. How, then, can the traditional dispensationalist system be maintained? Let us have hope that the wonderful prophecies of future victory on earth will be fulfilled, as promised, in the church age!

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## Questionable Answer

"Peter was preaching in a transition era. He was still offering the kingdom to Israel. If Israel had repented as a nation, Christ would have immediately returned to set up the millennial kingdom."

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**My Reply:** Yes, this was a transitional period. Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed. That's why Peter and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews spoke of "**these last days**" (Hebrews 1:2). But they also relate "**these days**" to their era, meaning our era, meaning the church age, meaning the *kingdom age*.

Christ had promised that in that generation, they would see Jerusalem surrounded and taken by their enemies (Luke 21:20-24). This was not a prophecy concerning some future Jerusalem, for the parallel passage in Matthew 24 reports that Christ warned: "**Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled**" (Matthew 24:34). He had already told them that the kingdom would be taken away from them and given—not *might* be taken away, but would be: "**Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof**" (Matthew 21:43). It was a *prophecy*. Had Jesus made a mistake? No; there was no possibility that Israel might go on as before until the last judgment, without the advent of the church age. Peter was making the offer of salvation to the Jews in the church age.

Once Jerusalem was judged in 70 A.D., the "**last days**" spoken of by the Apostles ended. The transition ended. But the church age (kingdom age) had been in operation for 40 years by 70 A.D.

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For further study: Matt. 12:28; 16:28; Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13; I Thess. 2:12; Heb. 12:28; I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6..

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## Question 73

# Didn't David Foresee the Church Age?

**For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:34-36).**

Peter called David **"a prophet"** (Acts 2:30). **"Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing *this before spake of the resurrection of Christ*, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption"** (2:30, 31). Peter proclaimed Christ's Lordship to the Jews, calling them to repentance. He did this just after he had cited the tongues of Pentecost as the fulfilment of Joel's prophecy.

Could anything be clearer? Peter believed that the offer to the Jews to repent was still open (just as we do today), and that they would have to enter the church of Jesus Christ, which had begun that morning (just as we say today). The church age had unmistakably begun that morning. The birthday of the church was the morning of Pentecost! Yet here was Peter, proclaiming Christ as Savior and Lord to the Jews. Then he called them to repentance (2:38-40). *He called them to join the church of Jesus Christ!*

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## Questionable Answer

"Well, then, the church must have started after Acts 2. Maybe it started in Acts 9, when Paul was called. Or maybe it started in Acts 28, when Paul ceased to preach directly to the Jews. But the prophets of Israel never foresaw the church."

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**My Reply:** This has been the response of the "ultra-dispensationalists," some of whom date the church at Acts 9, and some at Acts 28. They have seen the untenable position that traditional dispensationalists are attempting to defend. They see that the prophecies cited by Peter in Acts 2 were fulfilled at Pentecost, and so they argue that Pentecost had nothing to do with the church age, the "great parenthesis" which no Old Testament prophet forecast. Pentecost took place in the Jewish dispensation.

The "**last days**" were taking place in the *Jewish* dispensation which overlapped "**these days**," the *church age*. The proper answer should be clear by now. The prophets of the Old Testament looked forward to the church, and they prophesied concerning it. Prophecy was still being fulfilled in our era, the church age, meaning "the kingdom age."

But if "the clock of prophecy stopped" at Christ's ascension, then not a single prophecy has been fulfilled since then, and therefore *every dispensational book claiming that any event after Christ's ascension is a fulfilment of prophecy is utterly inconsistent with this most crucial of all dispensational doctrines.*

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For further study: Acts 2:16; 13:32-48; 15:14-19; Rom. 9:23-33; Heb. 8:6-12.

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## Question 74

# Didn't Moses Foresee the Church Age?

**But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy (I Peter 2:9-10).**

Peter wrote this to Gentiles who were never part of God's chosen people. The prophecy of the kingdom of priests is from Exodus 19:5, 6: **"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel."**

Here is a remarkable fulfilment of prophecy. God promised the Israelites that they would eventually become a kingdom of priests, if they obeyed His law. Now Peter was telling the Gentiles that they are the heirs of this prophecy, the long-awaited fulfilment of this prophecy. The promise of God came to the Gentile church. The fulfilment of this Old Testament prophecy took place (and is still taking place) in the church age. The problem for the dispensationalist, once again, is to explain how the church age sees the fulfilment of a very specific Old Testament prophecy, if the church wasn't prophesied.

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## Questionable Answer

"There were two churches in the transition period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. One was a Jewish church, which Peter ministered unto, and the other was the church, the body of Christ, which Paul ministered unto. Peter wrote this epistle to the Jewish church, not to the Great Parenthesis Gentile church."

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**My Reply:** This is the answer of the ultradispensationalists who date the church, meaning the Gentile church which was never foreseen in the Old Testament, with the advent of Paul's ministry. They proclaim two churches, one Jewish and one Gentile, to match two different kingdoms, the Jewish kingdom of heaven and the Gentile kingdom of God.

And is Christ married to two brides? Both the church and Israel are called the bride of God in the Bible. Is Christ a bigamist?

The traditional dispensationalist would have to answer differently. He would probably point to that old familiar theme, the "transitional era." This was a fulfilled prophecy in the church age, but it was not yet the church age for the Jews. But who was Peter writing to? He refers to a people who had never been the people of God. Israel had been the people of God. This prophecy must refer to Gentiles. So the church age was known in the Old Testament! Therefore, the key argument of dispensationalism—the Church as a "great parenthesis"—isn't true. Have you been equally misled concerning other doctrines?

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For further study: Acts 7:38; Rom. 2:28-29; 10:19; 11:17-21; 1 Cor. 10:4; Gal. 3:8-9, 14, 29; Phil. 3:2-3; Heb. 12:22-23.

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## Aren't There Two Kinds of Salvation?

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**For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe (I Timothy 4:10).**

Christ is the Savior of all men. The words are inescapable. Does this mean universal salvation? Will no man go to hell? This is what the so-called "universalists" erroneously believe.

So what do the words mean? They mean that there are *two kinds of salvation*: common and special. There are therefore *two kinds of grace*: common and special. Common grace relates to earthly life itself and the benefits associated with earthly life. Special grace relates to a man's exercise of saving faith, which is possible only because of the sovereign grace of God.

The word "save" is related to "salvation," which in turn is related to "salve." A salve is a healing ointment. This is a very good description of Christ's work at Calvary. *Christ healed the whole universe by His death.* Because of this, God did not destroy the world on the day Adam rebelled. This salve heals some men's souls and all men's environment.

This is why Christ's salvation is *comprehensive*. It affects everything, for it was designed to heal everything progressively, and finally on the day of judgment. This is why obedience to God's law brings long-term growth and progress. We live in an orderly universe—ordered by the ethical character of God.

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## Questionable Answer

"Jesus died to save souls. He did not die to save civilizations, or to enable His people to build one. The kingdom of God is internal, not external. It's all a Christian can do to get his own life in order, let alone the world. So that's what we should do: *let alone the world.*"

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**My Reply:** When the Bible says that Christ is the savior of all men, *especially* of those that believe, it can mean one of two things. First, Christ saves all men from hell, but gives special blessings to those who accepted Christ during their lives. Second, it means that there are two kinds of salvation, one which heals all men's earthly environment (by God's refraining from destroying everything in His wrath), and another which heals some men's souls. If we take the first view, we cannot make sense of Christ's teachings concerning eternal judgment. This leaves us only the second view.

Why do we believe that there can be progress, in time and on earth, before the final judgment? Not because Christ is coming back physically to rapture His saints, and then to set up a millennial kingdom. There will be a rapture, but it will take place on the day of final judgment (I Corinthians 15:23-24). We believe in the *progressive healing of the world* because Christ died for this world. His death was not in vain.

If Christ died to save the souls of *all* men, yet many perish, then His death was partially in vain. But He *didn't* die to save the *souls* of all men.

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For further study: Num. 14:21; Ps. 22:27-31; 72:19; Isa. 11:9; 27:6; Zech. 14:9; Heb. 8:11.

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## Recommended Reading

(an asterisk marks outstanding works)

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- \* Campbell, Roderick. *Israel and the New Covenant*. Reprint edition; Tyler, TX: Geneva Divinity School Press, (1954) 1981. Probably the best one-volume exegetical treatment of postmillennialism.
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- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. *Christianity & Civilization*, No. 2: The Theology of Christian Resistance. (This journal is published by the Geneva Divinity School, 708 Hamvasy, Tyler, TX 75701.)
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\* Wilson, Dwight. *Armageddon Now!—The Premillennarian Response to Russia and Israel Since 1917*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977. A delight to read. Erroneous, crackpot predictions for 60 years from famous religious leaders who were absolutely confident in their predictions!



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## Conclusion

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Well, what is *your* conclusion? I will assume that you have read the entire book to this point. I can think of several possible conclusions you might have come to:

1. All 75 questions are invalid.
2. Some of the 75 questions are valid.
3. All of the 75 questions are valid.
4. I'm not sure of anything any more.
5. I don't want to think about any of this.

I suspect that anyone who has read all 75 questions and "questionable answers" will not select conclusion number five. The majority of people who began this book probably already did select number five, and put away this book long ago. But for those of you who remain, one of the first four conclusions is more likely.

For those of you who conclude that all 75 questions are invalid and misleading, I can only thank you for staying with me this far. I've done my best; I just didn't persuade you. Maybe the timing isn't right. Maybe next year you'll be ready to reconsider. Or maybe I'm just plain wrong. But you did give me a hearing, and for this I'm thankful. Not many people are willing to give a hearing to the controversial opinions in this book.

For those of you who think that some of the questions are valid, I suggest that you figure out why you believe in some of them but not all of them. If I have changed your mind concerning one entire section—Part One, Two, or Three—but not another, then you

have two responsibilities: keep on reading in the field you agree with, and continue studying the field you don't agree with. You have to come up with solid biblical reasons why I have completely missed the point in one area while hitting the target in another one. Unquestionably, you need to become an expert in the field you do agree with, because you're going to be "under the gun" from your friends and institutional superiors from now on.

If you agree with some questions within a section, but not others, you had better find out which of us is being inconsistent: you or I. It's difficult for me to believe that each of the three sections isn't internally self-consistent, but maybe I'm wrong. Keep studying.

For anyone who is just confused, you had better keep thinking about these questions until you get "unconfused," one way or another.

### **If You Agree With the 75 Questions**

Now, for those of you who are convinced that my case in all three areas is essentially correct, you are in trouble. You have now adopted theological positions which are decidedly out of favor—*hated* might be closer to it—by the vast majority of those who call themselves Christians. (As for the opinion of humanists, you are officially "off the wall.")

You now have a number of responsibilities. First, you must recognize that you have been given knowledge which few Christians in our day have ever heard about, let alone considered. Most of your peers will disagree with you, including those few who have seen or even read this book. Second, with greater knowledge comes added responsibility: **"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"**



(Luke 12:48).

What are some of these responsibilities? Before I discuss this question, let me briefly describe what these responsibilities are not: to be louder, pushier, less patient with the opinions of others, and unwilling to do a *lot* more reading before you publicly express your new opinions. In short, your responsibility is to avoid becoming a *red hot*. Nobody wants or appreciates unpopular opinions from a red hot. Cool off before you mouth off.

If you agree with the 75 questions, you may be lured into joining what is sometimes called the IBM syndrome: "*I've been misled!*" Yes, you have undoubtedly been misled. Furthermore, there are people who will do everything possible to mislead you some more. But your problem is now educational: to become so familiar with the Bible that you cannot easily be misled in the future. You must *master* the Bible, as you have never thought of mastering it in the past. You must devote yourself to a full understanding of the whole counsel of God. You must do a vastly better job in understanding Christianity than those who have misled you have understood it.

But that's only the beginning. You must begin to apply in your life what you've learned. **"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"** (James 1:22). It's not just a matter of knowing more than your peers, let alone your instructors. It's a matter of outperforming them. Not only must you think more clearly than they do, you must also act more consistently than they do. *By your fruits shall they know you.*

If you're enrolled at some school, you have to become a better student—a fully self-disciplined student. Your new faith must reflect itself in better academic

performance if you're in school, or better job performance if you're not in school. You have got to demonstrate by your performance in every area of life that not only is your theology different, but that *it makes a difference*. You've got to do better than the vast majority of your competitors.

Sure, you've been misled in the past. So don't mislead others. This means that you have to know what you're talking about. If you were to memorize every word in this little book, you would barely have scratched the surface. The difference between what you believe today compared with what you have been taught in the past is undoubtedly tremendous. But that difference has to become even greater. We haven't even begun to talk about such questions as epistemology (what do we know and how can we know it), apologetics (the intellectual defense of the faith), applied theology (Christian economics, Christian psychology, Christian education, Christian politics, etc.), church government, the sacraments, missions, and the growing problem of Christian resistance to tyranny. So *you've only just begun*, as the early 1970's song said.

On what grounds should you assume a position of arrogance? None. Compared with what's ahead, if you really get serious about your Christian faith, what you've accomplished so far is pretty minimal. You've read one little book, and an easy one at that. Compared with what the church as a whole is required by God to accomplish, you've barely taken your first steps.

This isn't to say that you're not ahead of those who previously misled you. You're way, way ahead. It's only that compared with what still needs to be accomplished—by you, by the church as a whole, and by

Christian civilization—the distance between you and those who misled you really isn't very meaningful.

That's why you have to have a good attitude. If you've got a better grip on the truth than they do—and you do—then prove it, not by your contentiousness, but by your performance in your calling (whatever it is that God has called you to). If your new world and life view doesn't manifest itself in vastly improved performance on your part, then you're just a tinkling cymbal, sounding brass (I Corinthians 13:1). Read all of I Corinthians 13 before you think too well of yourself. Then read II Peter 1:5-10.

On the other hand, don't become a shrinking violet. Your job isn't to become an intellectual doormat. There are too many of them around as it is. If someone asks you what you believe, tell him. If he challenges your biblical understanding, be prepared politely and graciously to bury him with Bible citations and arguments. Your task is not to be arrogant, but so well prepared that you utterly crush your opponents theologically. **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"** (I Peter 3:15). Understand that this meekness and fear is supposed to be meekness and fear of *God*, not of men.

Never forget, this technique of burying your questioner is supposed to be a *response*. The text says that you must be prepared to *answer* any person who asks you. The tactic requires that you patiently *wear out your opponent*. Be thoroughly prepared biblically to respond to him every time he says, "Yes, but. . . ." If he didn't ask, tread lightly. If he stops saying, "Yes, but. . . ." you should stop trying to bury him.

Don't keep badgering people, especially professors.

If they refuse to acknowledge the truth of what the Bible teaches, that's their problem, not yours. Ask one question, and limit yourself at most to one follow-up response, or else you will alienate other students and the professor. Furthermore, if your professor scoffs at the legitimacy of your questions, keep in mind Jesus' words concerning scoffers (and, by implication, concerning vindictive instructors who will try to get even by flunking you, publicly humiliating you, or by expelling you): **"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you"** (Matthew 7:6).

In short, your job isn't to become a sacrificial lamb for those who have systematically misled you and your peers. *Your job is to do everything you can to undo the damage they have done.* You will have to devote the rest of your life to this task. The place to begin is right where you are. The time to begin is tomorrow, if not sooner. You are now ready, as they say, "to get with the program." The program is outlined in the following appendices. And if it sounds like too great a task, go to the library (or send \$4 to the Notre Dame University Press in Notre Dame, Indiana) and get a copy of Douglas Hyde's book, *Dedication and Leadership*. Hyde was an ex-Communist who became a Christian. He shows the kinds of sacrifices that the Communists have been ready to make in order to achieve their goals. Christians should be no less dedicated. They should be even more dedicated. If anyone is going to take you seriously in the future, you had better be ready to begin to apply the self-discipline program outlined by Hyde. You had also better be ready to teach others. Read the following two appendices and get to work. You have been given much; much is now expected from you in return.

## Appendix **A**

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# How to Get Your Answers

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This section is aimed at college students who attend a Christian college. It could also apply to high school students. To a lesser degree, it can apply to people in a church Bible study, but as you will see, there are differences between a Bible study and a formal classroom situation, where the rules for discussion are more rigid.

On the assumption that you're a college student, you should consider the following observations. You're paying money to get good questions asked and hard questions answered. By remaining in school, you're forfeiting the income you might be earning if you dropped out (which I don't recommend). You're in one school and not another. This involves costs; the other school might be better (I doubt it, however). One of the benefits that college is supposed to provide is an atmosphere of learning, which unquestionably involves getting instructors to help you answer your questions.

Any attempt on the part of instructors to keep questions from being raised is highly suspicious. An outright ban on Bible questions in a Christian school is an admission of intellectual bankruptcy on the part of your college's administration. They are stealing your tuition money unless they admit openly that students are not entitled to ask fundamental theological and philosophical questions. But this admission must be public and in writing for all to see. Anything less is

subterfuge; *they are stealing your money*. They are also probably lying to you about other matters, too. (Some of you who attend more intellectually rigorous campuses may not believe that students can be expelled at some big-name Christian colleges for the mere possession of a book like this, but it's true.)

### Guidelines

Nevertheless, administrations and teachers can establish certain guidelines concerning how questions may be raised, and under what circumstances. They are not morally bound to answer each and every question which any student may want to ask on any given day. So students must exercise discretion.

To help you exercise discretion, I have devised a set of rules or general guidelines for asking questions in an open, academically acceptable, and morally proper manner. Students who strive to abide by these rules should experience success, *if their instructors are intellectually honest people*. These are not absolutely rigid rules, but they are highly suggested.

There are definite restrictions on what can be considered proper in a classroom, and to violate classroom decorum is to alienate both teachers and fellow students. It should not be your goal to alienate anyone as a result of your behavior. Your questions may well alienate people, but that is always the risk when people begin to inquire about questions of truth and falsehood, especially when openly religious issues are at stake.

You must recognize your status. Status must not be ignored. You're restricted by the following considerations:

1. Your age.
2. Your lack of experience.
3. Your lack of self-confidence.
4. Your subordinate position (student).
5. Your fellow students.
6. The rules of classroom discussion.
7. The rules of the school regarding theology.
8. Your position as a Christian.
9. Your ability to communicate effectively.

Let us consider these one by one.

### 1. *Your Age*

There are basic rules of behavior when younger people confront their elders. **"Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"** (1 Peter 5:5). The reference is to the church office of elder, but the general principle is applicable outside of the institutional church. Again, **"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD"** (Leviticus 19:32). There can be little doubt that God expects younger people to respect the status position of the older person. The older person is not to abuse this position of authority, but even if he does, younger people must exercise restraint. Not blind submission, but restraint.

Those who flagrantly disobey this commandment are unlikely to achieve success in any field for very long. If nothing else, as they grow old, younger people will treat them similarly. Men reap what they sow. No righteous cause is fur-

thered by disobeying God's ethical standards.

Others around you will lose respect for you if you tread heavily on the toes of older people. Treading lightly is permissible in some instances; God does not honor their stupidity or incompetence indefinitely. But open defiance leads to trouble in the classroom.

## **2. Your Lack of Experience**

It takes time in most academic disciplines to gain experience. Certain fields are apparently exempt from this rule: advanced mathematics, theoretical physics, and perhaps certain forms of symbolic philosophy. A person who has not made a major contribution in higher mathematics by age 30 is probably unlikely to make one later on. Yet only a handful of very bright people escape the general rule regarding experience, even in higher mathematics. In those disciplines in which these questions will prove relevant, experience counts for a great deal.

We must not ignore the cumulative effects of years of study, difficult personal experiences, and years of hearing sermons. The Bible is a complex and difficult book. It's so subtle that no wise man can say that he has mastered it, although fools may assert that they have. So you should take seriously the opposing viewpoint of someone who has studied the Bible over many years.

Nevertheless, experience has its limits. Perhaps the person has had experience, but has not interpreted this experience accurately in terms of biblical revelation. Cumulative error offers no advantages; cumulative accuracy does.

There should be growth in the faith, including applied Christianity, over a lifetime. This is the doctrine of *progressive sanctification*. It applies to academic



matters as much as it applies anywhere else. Younger people must give the benefit of the doubt to those whose age indicates that they may possess experience. (And for people who should have gained it, but haven't, there are techniques to offset their initial advantage, as I shall discuss later.)

### **3. *Your Lack of Self-Confidence***

This may not apply to you. Perhaps you're supremely confident. If you are, please reread the previous two sections. But for those of you who have doubts about yourself, understand how your doubts can affect your ability to ask questions and pursue answers.

You may not really understand your question. You may not understand its full implications. You may be "in over your head," or think you are. A question asked aggressively, when you're not really confident about your grasp of the issue, could lead to your capitulation and retreat in the face of a determined answer. Your teacher may recognize your hesitation. He may make you appear foolish, or overly aggressive, or ill-prepared. It never pays to appear to have lost an exchange of ideas. Better to structure your questions so that you cannot visibly lose.

In a hard-fought exchange, an experienced teacher will smell blood early. He will go for your weak points. Your fellow students will seldom come to your defense, unless you're known to be very shy or not too bright. Better to ask your questions in such a manner that your initial defeat will produce sympathy for you, and not hostility.

#### **4. Your Subordinate Position**

You're not simply younger and less experienced than your instructor. You're also *functionally subordinate*. He assigns grades; you receive grades. He has lawful authority to a very great degree over the activities of his classroom. The college has granted him this authority. Indirectly, your parents have, too, unless you're totally independent financially. You have agreed, implicitly or explicitly, to follow certain rules of behavior when you entered college and entered the classroom. This is a covenant which must be honored. Therefore, the sense of authority which is to put fear in men's hearts is operative. You're at a psychological disadvantage whenever you confront this authority directly. You must do so very subtly.

#### **5. Your Fellow Students**

Students recognize their subordinate position. Any student who begins to take an aggressive stance risks being labeled "uppity" by other students, who see him as someone who is attempting to exercise authority which others know they don't legitimately possess. "Who does he think he is, anyway?" is a question which can undermine a student's real goal, which is to get his questions answered, or to persuade other students of the truth of his position.

Furthermore, other students pay their tuitions, too. They come to class to learn, and this usually means learning from the instructor. He knows this, and he can subtly manipulate student opinion against those who tie up the class.

On the other hand, if you develop the ability to ask relevant questions concerning issues that are bothering other students, you can act as their surrogate.

You take the consequences if there are any. You may wind up looking stupid, not them, and they still get their question answered. So if you serve as a kind of intermediary between the instructor and your equally confused fellow students, no one is likely to get angry.

You must learn to assess their response. Part of your responsibility is to keep from alienating them. You want to uphold a cause, even if that cause is the legitimacy of asking probing, controversial questions. You must not abuse the privilege you have of being able to ask an instructor questions. Use it to your advantage, and the advantage of other students. But retreat from any direct confrontation unless other students want to join in the fray on your side.

They did not pay to hear your ideas. They paid to hear the instructor's ideas. Only if you help them understand the implications of what he is saying are you likely to impress them with your position.

## ***6. The Rules of Classroom Discussion***

Different professors prefer different teaching methods. Some like to lecture without any interruptions. Others prefer a "Socratic method" of questions. Some permit a mixture. Be careful not to violate the familiar procedure of the classroom. But be warned: an instructor who refuses to take questions is usually extremely insecure intellectually. He is afraid. He may react in a very hostile manner if you in any way disturb his normal presentation. It may sound amazing to you now, but there are many teachers in classrooms who are barely able to get by academically. Tread carefully; the least competent instructor intellectually can be the most dangerous.

If there is no way to get questions answered in class,

why not ask him publicly if he would be willing to set aside an extra hour to answer some of the questions that you want answered? Maybe other students would like to attend. (It will pay you to scout around ahead of time and get several others to encourage him to set aside a special session for this purpose.) If he refuses, you *know* that you're facing a man who knows that he doesn't have the answers.

### **7. *The Rules of the School Regarding Theology***

Some schools have a strict statement of faith which students must sign. If you've signed it, you've done your duty. Now you're only thinking about certain problems that have come up. Just keep thinking. Who says you have to review that statement of faith each time you think of some new idea?

If the administration threatens you with expulsion if you don't re-sign ("re-sign or resign"), then you should refuse to sign, assuming you really have changed your mind. Make them put their threat in writing, and make them state it in front of a witness. If they refuse, and still expel you, you then have a major reason to appeal to the regional accrediting association (see **Appendix C**).

Rule: *never, ever resign voluntarily*. Always force them to expel you. The evil act must be theirs. Don't capitulate in the face of evil. Besides, you can't prove much against them unless they actually expel you, in writing. And the day you've got that, you've got them.

### **8. *Your Position as a Christian***

Your actions testify to the God you serve. Generally, it's unwise for a student to pursue a matter with an instructor to the point of conflict. It's a bad testimony. When you simply cannot get straight answers from

your instructors, after repeated attempts, your best strategy is to begin a private Bible study. (See the next chapter for details.) You must be courteous. There are other ways to get answers. Never become dependent on an instructor to give you all of your answers. Sometimes your conduct must override your desire to get "spoon-fed" answers from people who just don't have any. Politely go your own way and seek out other places to get answers.

### **9. *Your Ability to Communicate Effectively***

Very few people ever learn the skills of verbal argumentation. The person who does tends to seek employment in a position that allows him an advantage in this area. This may be your instructor. (Maybe not; there are some amazingly inept communicators who are in college classrooms—far more than first-semester freshmen realize.) The point is, you had better know your limitations before you attempt to get into a confrontation with an instructor. Better to avoid direct confrontations. There are many ways to skin a cat.

### **Student Resentment**

Be forewarned: some students will resent your bringing up these questions. They have read them, and these questions have begun to create havoc in their spiritual lives. They resent these questions, for they present very different views of God, time, and ethics than are common in thousands of Christian churches. These questions are painful to them. Thus, they prefer to forget about them. They don't want to be reminded of the kind of God the Bible reveals. You will gain enemies if you pursue publicly the issues raised in this book. You must pursue them anyway, if you're morally honest. You must get answers. And if

your instructors are unable to provide them, you must be satisfied in your mind that you have done your best to get answers.

Here are some of the reasons why some of your classmates and most of your faculty are disturbed by these questions:

A new view of *God* is presented.

A new view of *God's authority* is presented.

A new view of *God's judgment* is presented.

A new view of *personal responsibility* is presented.

A new view of *human depravity* is presented.

A new view of *the future* is presented.

This being the case, there are other very disturbing questions that come to mind:

Why wasn't I told about this before?

Was someone deliberately concealing these issues?

Is this really what the Bible teaches?

How can I determine what the Bible teaches?

Are there answers to these questions?

Where can I find valid answers?

Am I intellectually honest?

Will I believe the truth or a lie?

What will God do to me if I believe a lie?

How reliable are my present instructors?

What will new beliefs do to my plans?

What will they cost me to adopt?

Am I going to "sell out" the truth?

Can I believe the Bible?

Can I believe my instructors?

These are disturbing questions for students—perhaps as disturbing as the 75 original questions are to the faculty. A student who is not disturbed by any of this book's 75 questions is either incredibly mature and well-informed, or over-confident in his ability to

answer them, or so ignorant of their implications that he should probably drop out of school and get a job, or perhaps he is simply not a Christian.

### **The Safest Approach**

Perhaps very few of your fellow students have seen this book. Perhaps hundreds of them have. It makes a difference. If everyone is talking about them, it may be perfectly safe to ask a question in class. You're just another face in the crowd. But if hardly anyone is discussing them, your question will identify you as someone who reads "subversive literature."

A frontal attack on power seldom produces victories. It's far wiser to join the crowd of the "disturbed." Other students will be bothered by many of the 75 initial questions and their corollaries. Some of them will want answers, too. They just don't know what to think. So you can ask for them.

There are lots of questions to ask. You may have several years to get answers. Don't be in a hurry. Just take your time. See which instructors have some insights, and which ones start to dance. It's always a sight to see instructors dance the *free-will two-step*, dancing away from the hard questions, seeking to evade the obvious implications. (Usually those campuses that prohibit social dancing are staffed by instructors who are experienced theological dancers.)

Are other students asking different questions? So much the better. Are they asking them in some classes, but not in others? Then you can probably identify yourself as one of the "mentally disturbed." If there are enough "disturbed" students on campus, no one gets in trouble. But if no one is asking questions, you must proceed cautiously. You could be identified

as a troublemaker. There are few troublemakers more dangerous in the eyes of a college administration than students who ask pointed, relevant questions that ill-equipped instructors find it difficult to answer adequately. It makes the administration look bad, since the administration *hired* these instructors.

Every effort must be made by you to *avoid causing trouble by your tone of voice, your attitude, or your general conduct*. Your task is to get your questions answered—you're paying for this service—but not to get tossed out of school for being a smart alec.

Maybe you have come to grips with the implications of the 75 questions. You're satisfied that the questions are proper, and that the "Questionable Answers" will not withstand biblical evidence. My suggestion to you, with respect to the proper way to ask your questions, is this: **“. . . be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”** (Matthew 10:16b). You may already have made up your mind: you no longer believe in the theological position taught on your campus. You want to get answers if there are any, but you also are perfectly willing to expose your instructors before other students as men without valid answers. Your approach in the classroom should not be noticeably different from the person who just doesn't know what to make of all these questions, but who desperately wants valid answers for his or her peace of mind.

The safe approach is simple, and much simpler if many students are reading this book: “Sir, I was given a copy of a book called *75 Bible Questions*, and I really don't know how to deal with one of them. Have you thought about it?”

I guarantee you: this book has forced him to think about it. He may not have appealing answers, but he has thought about it. Or if he hasn't this week, he will



have thought about it by next week. The more people who read this book, the more he will think about all 75 questions.

Another approach: "Sir, someone I was talking with raised a question I can't answer. Can you answer it?"

What if they want to know who asked you? Don't say. Protect that person. Is there persecution coming? The important issue is the question, not the person who brought up the question. An inquisition by the administration would be stupid on their part, but administrations are not always noted for their wisdom when dealing with certain kinds of student activities.

Even better is a question which relates directly—or can be made to seem to relate directly—to the lecture topic of the day. The question just pops into your head. Who can complain? (Your instructor, but he may not want to, since it will appear that he is intellectually incapable of dealing with the hard questions.)

It's almost always safer for women to ask hard questions than for men to ask. It's assumed by most male instructors that female students are not normally ready to get involved in a controversial issue that will create turbulence in the classroom. Some brighter women may have gained a reputation for challenging instructors, and for them there is no safety in gender. But normally quiet women can ask the hardest questions imaginable, since it will not be perceived by the instructor as a potentially aggressive or hostile act. This is a good reason for inquiring male students to get some woman to raise some of these questions in class. Any male student who can find a sweet, attractive woman—masculine instructors always appreciate attractive women—with a B average or better, and who sees the implications of these questions, should do his best to get her to: 1) ask some really tough

questions in class over the semester; and 2) marry him when he can afford it—or maybe even sooner. (Getting married teaches people how to afford things, or at least do without things happily.)

### **“Stonewalling”**

This word became popular after it was learned that President Nixon had told his associates to “stonewall” all questions. You may see a lot of stonewalling in your college career.

You ask your question. You get evasion. What then? Pursue? “Go for the throat”? Quit? Ask the same question next week? What?

The safest bet is to ask one—repeat, *one*—follow-up corollary to the original question. You just need “a little clarification.” This is always the best tactic if the question arises naturally in the course of a lecture. Anyone can use more clarification. After all, a related question might appear on an exam sometime. Anyone in class can appreciate the fact that you’re having trouble understanding.

If you get another equally evasive or clearly incorrect answer, drop it. You can quit. Or you can say, “Well, I just don’t see how that relates to the problem, but I don’t want to take up any more class time.” You’re being considerate to the other students. You also have made it appear that Dr. Stonewall is unable to handle tough questions. You have made your point.

If you try to pursue it, you will unquestionably alienate other students. If no one else wants to chime in, drop it. There is always another class and 74 other questions.

Be careful not to have a two-man team asking too many questions. The more students who get involved, the better. It’s always harder to stonewall half

a dozen people who are asking questions than only one or two. *Never give the impression that you're ganging up on an instructor.* This always backfires.

Remember: *the smarter students on campus will generally see the importance of these questions.* They may take a different view from yours, but they will understand why these questions should not produce professorial stonewalling. If there are no other students in class who are willing to ask these questions, then either they are afraid, or not very bright, or bored, or convinced that this particular instructor gets stuck for an answer when someone says "hello" to him. So drop it. For now.

### "I Want You To Read . . ."

If your instructor begins to feel the heat, he may call you aside and ask you to read this or that rebuttal. If so, do what he says. If he is trying to answer your question, then you owe it to him to follow up. Read his recommended book.

I can say this with very little fear. *I have seen most of these answers.* You need to see what passes for biblical scholarship in some of these books. You will be astounded at the amount of evasion—*printed evasion*—of the issues. These are the "dancing instructors" for *your* instructors. It will do you a world of intellectual good to sit down and see just how weak the answers of their "best and brightest" really are. Be sure to compare the book or book section recommended by your instructor with the materials I recommend at the end of each section. See which makes more sense. See which conforms to the biblical text more closely.

Once you have read the recommended book, you

have a perfect right to come back to him in private with a written list of a dozen more questions that were raised in your mind by the recommended book. What about this? What about that? If the author believes this, then he has to believe thus and so. But thus and so isn't taught in the Bible. In fact, its opposite is explicitly taught. Is there anything else you can read? Does he have any answers of his own? If you have written up good questions, with Bible citations, you're reasonably well covered. And now stonewalling becomes almost impossible. As Nixon's senior staff man Haldeman so aptly put it, "When the toothpaste is out of the tube, it's almost impossible to get it back in." Your instructor has already hit you with his big guns. He is now totally on the defensive.

### **Conclusion**

It's easier to get these questions answered in Bible classes than in electrical engineering. The social sciences and history lend themselves better to a discussion of basic theological issues than the hard sciences do. A class in philosophy should get these questions answered; if it doesn't, then there is something wrong with the class.

To repeat: the best way to get a question answered is when a related issue comes up in class during a lecture. This is why you should master the questions and think about their implications and applications. They are worth mastering, after all. And they do have enormous implications and applications.

## Appendix **B**

# The Bible Study

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It's not enough to ask questions in a classroom. To develop your perspective and your knowledge of Bible texts, you need continuing study.

The trouble is, very few people ever develop systematic Bible study programs on their own, and then stick with them. People say they will, but they don't. So we all need outside support. Where self-discipline is lacking, we need to find other ways to discipline ourselves. This is especially true of mental and spiritual affairs.

You also need to consider the very real possibility that the questions raised in this book cannot be answered successfully by your instructors. In fact, the operating premise of this book is that they can't answer them. Their theology is not in line with what the Bible says. You may think I'm exaggerating. I don't know your school and your instructors. Fine; *test my hypothesis*. Start seeking answers to these questions in class. If you get stonewalled, or if the answers are evasive, or if the answers just don't come to grips with the text, then you know: *you need another source of help*. The obvious place to begin looking for assistance is among your fellow students. All of you are there (supposedly) because you're interested in learning. Anyway, the brighter students are there to learn. So why not search out other students to meet with on a regular basis? Select a problem area and study it.

This is what students in the better law schools do.

They set up study groups, and each student specializes in a particular field. One person becomes responsible for teaching the others in a particular area of study. The others learn, and the others also instruct. The result is more information per student. Why couldn't a Bible study be conducted this way?

What I recommend is a very specific sort of Bible study. There are certain features of a successful campus Bible study that are ignored by students unless they have been shown what to do. I am now going to show you exactly what you need to do, and how you can change your life and your campus as a direct result.

Understand from the beginning that there are no free lunches in life, except the grace of God. You will have to work. You could also get into a difficult situation with the administration. Some administrations treat students as intellectual adults. Some don't. A good test is roll-taking in class. If you're docked points for cutting classes, you're probably dealing with an administration that thinks students are children. They think that the pressure of examinations and papers is insufficient. They also suspect that the school's own faculty is filled with boring lecturers who need help to get students into their classes. I know of no major American university which requires classroom attendance, although individual professors may (generally the least competent ones). This is especially true of European universities. Attendance is strictly voluntary. But third-rate colleges do require daily attendance.

I regard it as amusing (though pathetic) that there are theological seminaries in the United States that require faculty members to take roll each day and drop students' grades for missing a class three times—even seniors who in less than a year will be pastor-

ing churches and making decisions that will affect the lives of many congregation members. This is training for mature leadership? Do they expect "children" to mature over one summer?

If the administration regards students as children rather than as responsible adults, then you may encounter resistance when you set up any unapproved Bible study, on campus or off. Your right to study the Bible is a God-given right. No one can bind your conscience in this matter. That's what the Protestant Reformation was all about. That's what Brother Andrew's Bible smuggling ministry is all about. The administration can tell you anything it likes in this regard, but you have the right of studying your Bible.

The question is: Do you have a right to study the Bible with others? Can the administration legitimately control your activities if you're meeting in a specifically public building? The answer is yes. You're on their property. They may have rules governing Bible studies. If they don't now, they may have by next semester. You must ask yourself: "*Are they trying to bind my conscience?*" Are they trying to stamp out legitimate inquiry? And if they are, how can you achieve your religious goal and still maintain your status as a student?

That's what this chapter is designed to show you. Here are some factors that you need to consider:

1. Size of the group.
2. Where to meet.
3. How long to meet.
4. How to avoid infiltration.
5. What to study.
6. How to recruit.
7. How to stay out of trouble.
8. How to maintain discipline.

9. Where to obtain study materials.
10. What to do if you're called in for discipline.
11. The decision to transfer out.
12. What to do if you get expelled.

### 1. *Size of the Group*

What is your goal? Presumably, to gain a better understanding of the Bible. Do I have guidelines that would help you to achieve this goal? Jesus said, **"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them"** (Matthew 18:20). This is my suggested size: two or three people, preferably three, and never more than four.

Where two people gather to discuss controversial topics, there can be too much heated, unpleasant, and ultimately unenlightening yelling. I think three students together tends to reduce the likelihood of contention. One student can serve as a kind of referee. As to who serves as a referee, this can change, according to the topic under discussion. But with one person there to monitor the level of intensity, it will help to maintain the integrity of the group. The idea is to meet to study, not to create a regularly scheduled shouting match.

You must understand that the only winners in a debate are those who come away with a better understanding of the issues. Anyone who comes away trying to figure out a way to "get even" with the other person probably has not learned much. Only if this resentment is channeled into personal study and growth (the product of intellectual competition, just like your classroom exercises) will anything positive come out of disputation. So I recommend three people to a group.

In the early phases of a group, there may be only



two people. One of the goals of a two-person group must be the recruiting of a third. When four people show up, it's already getting too large. I don't recommend battles in which there are "two to two ties" each time. If two people agree, and one doesn't, the third will tend to stop coming or set up his own group (preferably the latter). But when four are split, the fight can go on.

Never have five people. Have one member set up a second group. Then you have two groups of three each, with the leader of the new group meeting twice a week, once with the original group, and once with the second group.

This, in fact, is what your goal should be: *the establishment of study groups of three people each, with two meetings per person, per agreed-upon time period, probably weekly.*

You want these groups to multiply. You want to create new sources of better information, for yourself and for other students. This means you must do your part to ***honeycomb the whole campus with Bible studies***. If one group discovers something interesting, word can spread from group to group quite rapidly. The group can type up its discovery, put in its Bible citations or logic, and pass it "upward" and "downward."

Here is how this works. There is an original study group. Three members meet, say, once a week for an hour to discuss the Bible. Preferably, they agree in advance to study a particular question or Bible verse(s). Then they bring in their findings.

Each member should strive to recruit two new members for his own group. He becomes the organizer. He develops his leadership as a builder. The goal is to *build up others*, not to tear them down. The goal

is *service*. But with service comes responsibility, the Bible teaches, and with responsibility always comes authority. Each member's goal should be to set up his own group. Like a family, you're a member of the parents' household, but you should aim at setting up a household of your own. There is an analogy (though hardly an identity) between these Bible studies and families. You could also compare the Bible studies with missionary societies.

Each member meets one hour a week with the original group. Then he meets one hour with his own group. He can pass on information from the older group to the newer, and also from the newer to the older. You can see how this structure establishes *two-way communication* and therefore *two-way education*. The division of labor principle (I Corinthians 12: many members but one body) begins to work for everyone associated with the Bible study program.

Understand that these meetings are informal, unofficial, and *only* for Bible study and prayer. They are not action meetings, or protest meetings, or "anything else" meetings. I recommend against setting up secret societies with rituals, initiations, or anything other than Bible study and prayer. You're not to take orders from any Bible study leader, other than the order to leave his living quarters. You're not to issue orders to anyone, except for asking someone to leave *your* living quarters.

If such meetings are declared illegal by campus officials, then have them anyway. They are not allowed by God to bind your conscience, and they are not allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court to interfere with your right to free speech in your own living quarters. They could be sued successfully in any court in the land for such a prohibition, *and they know it*. Any at-

tempt to prohibit peaceful meetings on campus is a bluff. Any attempt to prohibit Bible studies in a student's room is not even a bluff; it's an admission of subnormal intelligence. Bob Jones University lost its tax exemption because it violated what the Supreme Court decided was public policy, and free speech is unquestionably a matter of public policy. A student who wanted to make trouble on this issue could create absolute havoc with the financing of the university, even without the aid of a lawyer, and the American Civil Liberties Union would provide a free lawyer with glee. Administrators know this.

## 2. *Where to Meet*

There is only one reasonable place: *in the dorm room or residence of the person who begins the group.*

There are good reasons for this. First, there is some degree of authority associated with a household. A dorm room or residence is the closest thing to a household that the leader has. It's his idea to begin. His efforts led to the recruiting. He should meet in his room. (It will also force him to "get his house in order," another biblical principle: I Timothy 3).

Second, there must be discipline in any group. There will inevitably be conflicts. If one person is creating a weekly disturbance, or if he is suspected of being an agent of the administration to spy on the group, then the person who has organized the meeting simply withdraws his invitation to the troublesome member. You cannot do this in a public room on campus.

Third, a dorm room is rented space. A student is paying for it. There is more freedom in a dorm room than in any other location on campus. The school must recognize it as "almost a household." The ad-

ministration is self-restrained in its policing of dorm rooms or other campus housing. If there are no public disturbances, it's very difficult for the administration to do anything about Bible study groups in a student's own room. Students have more freedom of discussion here than anywhere else on campus. The whole idea is freedom of discussion.

There are problems. The biggest one is the roommate who doesn't approve. The organizer must work around this limitation. The roommate has also paid for his space. Don't get him complaining legitimately to the authorities. Don't open yourself up to pressure from outside.

You keep the study groups small so that they will fit in a dorm room. Again, never go over four members.

Dormitories presumably are not co-educational. (If they are, consider transferring to a different school or getting off-campus housing.) This is why the study groups should not mix the sexes. The last thing you need is for rumors floating around campus or off campus about "the *real* purpose of these so-called Bible studies!" The core unit of this Bible study program is the small, single-gender group discussion.

Under no circumstances should there be meetings in public rooms on campus. The administration can then legitimately send down orders and send in informants. Also, large groups are, in almost all cases, *organized* by someone. This means the creation of agendas—someone's agenda. It also means power struggles. By *decentralizing* the whole program, such conflicts are reduced. Anyone who wants power can start his own group. Anyone who resents someone else's power can start his own group. The idea is to *start your own group*. But to exercise lots of authority, you must take lots of responsibility. It costs you. That

is what power should always do: *cost you*. That way, it gets spread around. Centralized power is cheaper to capture in large groups than in small ones. So any time someone invites you to a meeting of more than four people, or a meeting to be held in any public, on-campus building, he is *not* part of my recommended program.

Larger fellowship meetings are legitimate, but they must be held *off campus*. They must also never be advertised publicly on campus, except by word of mouth, person to person. Again, you don't want any kind of interference from the administration, so you must avoid any meeting or action that would give the administration a legitimate excuse to tell you what you can and cannot do.

Another reason for establishing communications, group to group, is to speed up the transfer of information. But there are costs. *It's probably unwise to set up lists of members*. For one thing, people without "a legitimate need to know"—legitimate from the point of view of the group—can get access to lists. In some campuses, this is tantamount to expulsion. For another, there is an old rule of bureaucracy which your administration implicitly honors: *no list-no group*. It's difficult for people to be expelled for belonging to a subversive group if the group: 1) has no name; 2) has no membership list; 3) has no dues; 4) has no officers; 5) has no official, on-campus headquarters; and 6) has no official campus recognition as an organization. My recommended structure avoids all six features.

Information spreads slower in my recommended Bible study program than in other kinds of organizations. It spreads from group to group, by way of the individual "transmission belts," namely, the organizers of each group.

If you don't seek public power, there is almost no way for an outside bureaucracy to police your group. So avoid seeking public power. Just go to your Bible studies. Learn. Don't make organizational waves. *But make all the theological waves you can get away with.*

What can the administration do, cancel all Bible studies on campus? When word of this gets out to the donors, it will look foolish. If it gets to the secular press, it will look preposterous. (But I don't recommend that you go to the press to tell the story first.)

But if they try to cancel three-person Bible studies only, that would appear to be an infringement on your Constitutional liberties. They are singling out a certain kind of Bible study, but allowing other students to meet to study their Bibles. That administration has just delivered the school into the hands of students who can choose to pursue the matter in public.

### 3. *How Long to Meet*

If you're bored with Bible studies, the answer is easy: no hours per week. But if you get really interested, then you could short-circuit your academic career by using attendance at a Bible study as an excuse for neglecting your formal academic studies.

You have begun an academic career. You must honor Jesus' warning concerning those who begin projects: **"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply [it happen], after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish"** (Luke 14:28-30). If you did not count the cost beforehand, you had better count it now.

You can afford an hour a week, plus a half hour of preparation for each meeting. Look at all the hours you waste. Get up ten minutes earlier, six days a week, and you have gained your "lost" hour. Get up 20 minutes earlier and gain two. That's all it takes. Two hours a week. Then take an extra hour from some other activity to get your two half-hour pre-meeting preparations.

The first hour is spent with the group which recruited you. The second hour is spent with the group you recruited. That's it. If this flunks you out, you don't belong in college.

Always adjourn a meeting after one hour. It doesn't matter how interesting the discussion is. If you must continue, schedule an extra meeting the next evening, or whenever. But people must learn to *plan their study schedules*. This is Bible *study*, not a gab-fest. This program is part of a systematic restructuring of your study habits. You need discipline. The time allotted to the weekly meeting should reflect this discipline. Besides, after an hour's discussion, you simply will not remember much of what you have discussed.

When people covenant with each other to show up, to be prepared to discuss intelligently, or lead a discussion, then everyone should stick to the agreed-upon schedule. *The best way to kill off a full-year Bible study is to allow meetings to drag on into the night.* People may enjoy the talk during the time that it's going on, but next week they think to themselves: "I really can't risk losing two or three hours. I think I'll skip tonight's meeting." At that point, they have broken their agreement. The idea is to get a *continuing* Bible study over the whole school term, not one or two three-hour sessions.

One person should be responsible for monitoring time. When there are ten minutes to go, he should announce it. Then everyone can make a few more comments. But in that last ten minutes, everyone should be preparing mentally to wrap it up. The only exception would be if an unbeliever finally recognizes that he has been an unbeliever, and he wants to repent in the group and then discuss what he has just done with his life. This may happen, and you can make an exception for what is clearly a kind of emergency. But nothing any less important than a major breakthrough in the life of one of the participants should break through the one-hour time limit. Redeem the time well.

Now, to prevent parents or administration members from trying to shut down these Bible studies "for the sake of the students," I lay down this one rule: *set up and attend only one extra weekly Bible study*. I don't want the administration going to the Board of Trustees with the complaint that "students are spending so many hours in these secret Bible studies that they are going to flunk out, so we have to abolish them." *Never give your self-declared opponent ammunition if you can help it.*

This brings up another point. You should study much more diligently for your academic courses if you have become a member of a Bible study recruiting program. *First*, your instructors may take vengeance on you and start grading your papers especially hard. You want to give this kind of morally corrupt, vindictive instructor no valid cause to do this. *Second*, you want to be able to show parents and other critics that your grades have improved because of your new-found diligence—something you have been taught in your Bible studies. Learn from the early church's confronta-



tion with Rome: the more valuable you are to others, the less likely they will deliberately and systematically persecute you. Certainly, they will have no legitimate reason for persecuting you.

I recommend weekly meetings. This is what the church has always done. I think the principle holds good in church-related ministries. There is a pattern in the universe that is tied to the seven-day week. Honor it.

#### **4. How to Avoid Infiltration**

Why would anyone want to infiltrate your groups? To report back to the administration. So here's the plan: *let them report back!* Amazing secret, isn't it? Let them give your college's administration a weekly lesson in Bible theology. Let them read the same verses you're reading. Let them struggle with the same intellectual problems that you're struggling with.

What if someone takes notes? Let him! Take notes yourself. This helps everyone to remember exactly what was said. And if the administration's informant reports that someone said one thing, you can compare notes. Even write down what you say. If you want, tape record the session. You bring the recorder as the organizer of the group. You keep the copy. If necessary, keep it off campus. Date it. Then, if someone says that you made a particular statement which you really didn't make, you can produce the tape to defend yourself.

*Don't say anything about anyone that you wouldn't want made public.* These are Bible studies, not character assassination groups. Just stick to the text. What does Scripture say? What is each person's responsibility before God? If you get thrown out of

school for studying God's word, then the college has condemned itself before God. Shake the dust off your feet, and get on with life. (However, I will provide you with legitimate ways to retaliate if they do toss you out.)

## 5. *What to Study*

Obviously, the first thing to study is the Bible. But the Bible is a very big, very complex book. You have limited quantities of time. Where will you get your best return per hour invested in study?

I recommend that you begin with a study of the 75 questions. Then go on to the verses recommended at the end of each question. But you still need exposition.

I have written a detailed introduction to Christian thought called, ***Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory***. It's broken down into three sections and 9 subsections:

### FOUNDATIONS

God

Man

Law

### INSTITUTIONS

Family

Church

State

Economy

### EXPECTATIONS

The Kingdom of God

A Strategy for Dominion

This book is filled with Bible verses, explanations, and very clear, simple writing. It would be easy to

spend three weeks or a month on each chapter. That would just about fill an academic year. Order for \$9.95 each (or three for \$25) from

Geneva Divinity School Press  
P.O. Box 8376  
Tyler, Texas 75711

I list other materials at the end of *75 Bible Questions*. Consult this list. There is also an extensive book list at the end of ***Unconditional Surrender***.

Here is my recommended program for each Bible study. First, get a commitment from each participant to spend a half hour in preparation before each Bible study. Agree in advance what questions or topics will be covered the next week. This requires discipline. What doesn't?

Second, open each meeting with prayer. Always use the *Lord's prayer*: Matthew 6:9-13 or Luke 11:2-4. No exceptions. If you don't open with this prayer, please don't use this book or ***Unconditional Surrender*** in your Bible study. I think all group members should repeat it verbally. Read from both of the selected texts of the Lord's prayer, if necessary (the two versions differ slightly). I also recommend reading from at least one psalm.

Third, if you selected a leader of the discussion during the previous meeting, have him ask questions. Questions are good ways to begin study. Read a Bible verse, and then ask questions. You can cover no more than five questions, in all likelihood, during a one-hour session. With prayer and opening remarks, that's only about ten minutes per question.

Fourth, bring different translations of the Bible, and Greek and Hebrew texts if one member or more can translate. Don't make the mistake of drawing some

major theological conclusion based on a mistranslated text.

## 6. *How to Recruit*

Start with *the people you know*. Ask them if they have seen this little book. If they haven't, loan them a copy *for one day*, and ask them to make a few brief comments the next day. All you want is their general opinions. You've read it, and it has raised some really tough questions. Could this person help you out and say what he or she thinks? This forces the person either to refuse, or to read some of it. Set up a time to discuss the book the next day. The specific time forces the person to act. If he says no, then ask him if he would help you out sometime next week. If he says yes, pin down a time to deliver the book and then to get it back. *Be specific*. Accept no general "I'd love to help you sometime."

Your *roommate* might be a good place to begin. Problem: if the response is negative, he may resent your setting up Bible studies in the room. Also, if the response is initially favorable, but then one of you changes his mind about it, and becomes hostile to the whole project, it could create conflict in other areas later on. Be prepared to switch to somebody else's dorm room.

A very good time to recruit is during *freshman orientation week*. One way or another, you can get books to the frosh. They are likely to respond favorably to older students. Age still carries weight with freshmen. A freshman will be far more likely to join a Bible study taught by an upper classman. You can also help to show him the academic ropes. In fact, this could be a very good offer. Join the Bible study for an hour a week, and you will agree to help him "run the gauntlet" for his first semester. Tell him what classes to avoid, if possible,

or which teachers have what quirks, and so forth.

There is always the shotgun approach, but it's expensive. Set up a *table in the dorm for one day* and hand out books. We will give substantial discounts to anyone who will take this risk. You can buy a hundred copies for \$100 (offer subject to revision after December, 1985). Just hand them out. Put a little card inside with your name and box number. They can call you if they decide to join a Bible study. Get the book circulating on campus. Warning: on some campuses, this is suicidal. They will expel you. Know your campus.

How about the "*book under the door at 4 a.m.*" approach? For mass distributions like this, contact me. I may be able to raise money to finance such a project. Once the whole campus is talking about the book, it becomes simple to set up discussion groups. Many people will set them up. *The more, the merrier!*

Another very good way to recruit students is to *join various campus organizations or clubs*. If you're willing to serve quietly for a year, doing the dirty work without complaint, performing all tasks well, you will begin to impress other students. If you're a model member, people will eventually start coming to you for advice. But you must be a model member. They know you by your fruits. You should produce good fruit. The best time to join is at the beginning of the academic year. Once you're in, plan a strategy. Single out younger members especially. If you're a respected member, they will look up to you.

One of the reasons for having an off-campus meeting occasionally is to develop a strategy regarding which campus organizations don't yet have members involved in Bible studies. Find out if any members of a Bible study would like to get involved in a particular campus organization. Perhaps someone

will volunteer. If a lot of students in a particular organization begin to show interest in attending a Bible study, the "inside" person can request other Bible study participants to join the organization and start setting up Bible studies. Those already involved as participants who have not yet set up their own three-person group should jump at this opportunity.

How about getting a few friends together to *target a local church* where you know students from campus attend. You might find out when the youth meeting is Sunday evening. Visit the meetings and get to know people. See if you can recruit students that way. Or just buy a pile of this book and hand them out at the door as students leave the youth meeting. This book can be used by Bible students everywhere, not just college students. Maybe members of that church will be stimulated by some of these 75 questions. Perhaps they will want to ask questions of their Sunday school teachers. Don't limit your horizons. This book can be effective in many settings.

If someone asks you to leave the church's premises, go quietly. Honor his immediate request, namely, that you leave. You have already passed out a lot of books. Don't create a scene. Next week other students can do it again, or next month. You were asked to leave; other recruiters weren't. Obviously, you're not required morally or legally to give your name, address, or information regarding your student status. There might be complaints to your college from the local pastor. The college may threaten to expel anyone who passes out free books at local churches. Ignore the threat: it's not only unconstitutional, it's also unenforceable.

If you can legally get a list of all students in your dorm, or in the whole school, plus their present ad-

resses, I will discuss with you the possibility of making a *mass mailing of this book to everyone*. I will try to raise the money. Just supply me with the names and addresses. (*It's a felony to interfere with the delivery of the U.S. mails*, so college administrators are very hesitant about interfering with mass mailings. If any books are not delivered, and this appears to be a pattern on campus, I will inform the postal authorities. I am deadly serious about this. We possess certain Constitutional protections that I intend to defend.) If you can't get the addresses, I can still do a direct mailing to names, but it's more difficult to insure delivery. Contact me if you have suggestions. Most of all, *send me names and addresses*.

Other rules about recruiting:

1. No advertisements in the student newspaper
2. No cards on bulletin boards (public property)
3. No painted signs taped on school buildings
4. No announcements on the student radio station

Again, I want to stress the fact that *you have Constitutional rights of free speech on campus*. The Supreme Court has ruled repeatedly that you don't give up Constitutional freedoms when you step foot on the property of an institution open to the public. The administration knows this, and you could easily create real havoc on campus if you stood up for your rights. Nevertheless, *you don't want to get into an adversary position with the authorities except on fundamental principles*, such as your right to talk with another student, or give him a book, or mail him a book. Furthermore, *you don't want other students to regard you as a troublemaker*. So avoid public announcements of your meetings.

You want only a legitimate opportunity to learn, and to share what you have learned with other students, privately and quietly, and have them share with you what they have learned. If your college's administrators are so suicidal that they won't even allow this, then they are *morally bankrupt* and also very *vulnerable from a legal standpoint*.

## **7. How to Stay Out of Trouble**

The most effective way to stay out of trouble is not to cause any. Unfortunately, this is not always possible when you're dealing with controversial ideas. When people are in fundamental disagreement over what the Bible teaches, there will eventually be some sort of confrontation.

Any confrontation between a student and the administration or a faculty member should be the result of the official's academic or intellectual inferiority complex, not because of a student's lack of courtesy. Students should plan in advance for disputes over Bible interpretation. Any sign of arrogance on the part of a student only opens the door to criticism and even disciplinary action from the authorities. Students must be as blameless as lambs. They should also be as wise as serpents. If you're sure that some sort of confrontation is inevitable, *make certain that the instructor or faculty member fires the first shot*. Your position is to defend principle, not to defend your pride.

I am going into print on this for several reasons. First, I don't want to be blamed for the hotheaded student who cannot discipline himself. Second, I want school officials to restrain themselves. If they know that students are taking care to conduct themselves as self-disciplined Christian adults, they will have to



tread lightly, if they don't want to appear foolish in front of students, parents, trustees, and donors. If they lop off the heads of righteous students, they will suffer financial (and possibly legal) consequences. Again, I aim these remarks only at the *insecure intellectual lightweights* in positions of authority; Christian educators who know what they believe, why they believe, and how to defend their position intellectually, don't have to resort to threats against students.

Another good way to stay out of trouble is to take some of your activities off campus. Larger fellowship meetings, perhaps some larger Bible discussions, showing videotapes of programs produced by the Institute for Christian Economics, American Vision, or the Geneva Divinity School, and even special training sessions with faculty members, should be conducted off campus. I can try to locate someone in your community who will co-operate with you in setting up special meetings (though this is probably better done by you, since you're there and I'm not).

Banks and savings & loan associations sometimes rent a meeting room to qualified local people. Other service clubs may be willing to rent space. Maybe a local businessman whose business students frequent would co-operate. Never hesitate to pay. Don't always look for a free lunch in life. You don't expect General Motors to give you a free car; don't expect free meeting rooms.

If off-campus meetings are prohibited, have an off-campus *gathering*. If off-campus gatherings are also prohibited, have an off-campus *session*. And so on. You only need one additional noun. What's in a name? Let them prohibit anything they wish. It's il-

legal of course, and if the American Civil Liberties Union ever got wind of it, the administration would find itself in a very expensive law suit that its lawyers would lose, court by court, right up to the U.S. Supreme Court. But don't worry about the immoral, unconstitutional decisions of insecure men. Just study your Bible, praise God, have fellowship, and keep on asking questions.

### **8. *How to Maintain Discipline***

Wherever two or three are gathered together, there will be conflicts. If the conflicts escalate, how can you handle them?

The easiest way is to stop meeting together. You're not starting up a formal group with by-laws, dues, and requirements for membership. You're not using public campus buildings. You're just getting together to pray, have fellowship, and study the Bible. If someone cannot control himself, don't invite him to the meetings any more. If one man has begun the Bible study, and he has it in his room, then he can exclude anyone he wants for whatever reason. No one is paying him a tuition fee. No one is renting space from him. He hasn't made any formal commitments to anyone. He can simply say, "Goodbye; go in peace. Come back when you're ready to conduct yourself as a responsible Christian adult."

What if some student issues a manifesto? So what? In whose name? I don't have a name for these Bible studies. You should make no public statements. Students involved in Bible studies speak for themselves. There is no organization to speak in the name of. Anyone who says anything publicly is speaking for himself. It's his privilege. If you disagree, forget about it. You have better things to do with your time, such as

preparing five more questions for your instructors, and encouraging your friends to do the same. Your job is to study to show thyself approved. And ask questions.

## 9. *Where to Obtain Study Materials*

Use the bibliography at the end of each section to assist you in your search. Also contact the various organizations listed in the "Tear-Out Sheets." There are many study materials available.

A more difficult problem on some campuses is this one: *Where to have the study materials sent?* If you're being threatened with expulsion for reading certain kinds of materials, or if you aren't ready to identify yourself as a reader of such materials, then you may not want them sent to you on campus. What then?

I strongly recommend that students rent Post Office boxes. They are sometimes in limited supply. Maybe you will not be able to get one. There may be a private, profit-seeking letter box company in town. Rent the box. *The idea is to reduce your exposure.* You can receive newsletters, books, and all sorts of materials from controversial organizations. You can also have crates of this book mailed to you, for mass-distribution purposes. Obviously, on some campuses you don't want to identify your activities by revealing your reading habits. *But I recommend against using someone else's P.O. Box.* Informants do exist. The administration could locate "troublemakers" this way.

Will students pay for privacy? Who knows? If I were involved in a controversial program like this Bible study program, and I thought the administration was watching out for people who receive "incriminating" newsletters, I would buy some privacy. What is the administration going to do, threaten to expel any student who has a local Post Office box? Can you imagine the headlines in the local newspaper, or the Associated Press? "Bible College Expels 250 Stu-

dents; Claims They All Used Post Office Boxes for Immoral Purposes.” Were they receiving *Playboy* magazine? Communist Party tracts? No; Bible study materials. I can see “60 Minutes” doing a real hatchet job on *that* administration! Fund-raising might become just a tad more difficult.

I do not recommend going to the news media to expose nonsense inside the administration. It is best not to have the secular humanists laughing at the absurdities that Christians do in the name of Jesus, even if they are absurd. Eventually, the story may get into the local press, but you shouldn’t be responsible for it. Pressure them “inside the camp.” You don’t really want the government to get involved, either.

### **10. What to Do When You’re Called In**

What if some dean calls you in to ask you if you’re involved in “immoral meetings”? Tell him no, you’re not. Meetings of any sort? “Well, what do you have in mind?” Bible studies! You can say nothing, or else you can tell him yes, occasionally you do study your Bible. Sometimes you ask questions of other students. They help out.

“Ah, ha! You ask other students, do you? Well, why don’t you ask your instructors?”

There, friends, is exactly the opening you’ve been waiting for. “Gee, Dean Grump, that’s exactly what I’d like to do. Can you send out a letter to all faculty members requiring them to set aside 10 or 15 minutes at least once a week to take questions from all students? Gee, that would be simply *swell*!” Dean Grump has just shot a big, fat hole in his foot. He has opened the door to student questions. Lots and lots of student questions. Won’t the faculty appreciate this!

But what if he wants you to stop asking questions to

everyone. "Gee, Dean Grump, I'd have to think about it. Are you saying that it's the *official* policy of this college that students not be allowed to ask questions? Would you please put that in writing on official letterhead stationery?" Fat chance (or, if you prefer, fat providence). Put *that* in writing? And have you send photocopies to the Trustees, the regional accreditation association, and the American Association of University Professors? Dean Grump would soon be working elsewhere.

What am I advising? Simple: *always get demands in writing from any administration official; insist that it be on official stationery*. If the bully isn't willing to put it down on paper, forget about it. *He's bluffing*. He thinks you're going to turn to jelly. *If it isn't in writing, it isn't a serious threat*. Be polite. Thank him for his concern. *Send this character a verbal form letter*. Then go back and study your Bible.

Remember, this is all in private. You're not creating a public scene. If you really want to create problems for this guy, type up a letter summarizing your recollections of his request. Ask him to let you know *in writing* if his request that you stop studying your Bible in private is still in force. See what he does.

The day that any administration official calls any student in to try to get the student to stop studying his Bible in the privacy of his own room, he has handed a hand grenade to the student. All the student has to do is to "pull the pin," and toss it right back into that official's lap. The student is in a position to end that official's career. All the student has to do is to put a summary of the conversation in writing and request that the official reply. If he writes in response that the student has misunderstood, that Bible studies are fine, the student has just received a *license for every*

student on campus to have Bible studies. If he affirms his verbal statement that no Bible studies are allowed on this campus, he has probably ended his academic career in Christian education, or higher education generally. He will look very foolish.

If he doesn't respond in writing, the student can escalate the war, if he decides that it's worth the trouble. He can write the President for clarification. He can write the Board of Trustees. He can write to the regional accreditation association. "Gentlemen: Is this standard policy in schools accredited by your association?" Oh, my. The fallout will be remarkable.

Students seldom understand just how much *campus administrators fear the possibility of having the school's accreditation revoked*. To have had accreditation revoked is far worse for a college's reputation than never to have requested accreditation. Some donors would cut off the funds overnight if the school were disciplined by the accreditation association. They would demand an investigation by the Board of Trustees. The very thought of an investigation by the regional accreditation committee sends chills down the spines of deans.

If your college is accredited, the administration has bragged about it in the college catalogue. You can find out which association accredited the school by looking it up in your school's latest college catalogue. If the school is violating standards of academic integrity, you're in a position to make administrators rue the day that they ever sought accreditation. To find the address of the accreditation association which is listed in your college catalogue, ask the librarian at the local *public* library to look it up for you (just in case the administration has put out the word to college librarians to be on the lookout for students who ask

such questions). Such information appears in the *Encyclopedia of Associations*, published by Gale Research (Detroit, Michigan). Also, see **Appendix C**.

If you can demonstrate that you and other students are being mistreated because of your religious convictions, or because you have set up quiet, private Bible study groups, the accreditation committee will probably listen. When pressure begins to be applied, *start gathering evidence* that will demonstrate a consistent pattern of repression on the part of the administration or individual faculty members.

If students who participate in Bible studies or who ask penetrating questions start getting abnormally bad grades, then it's time to start considering a written protest to the accreditation committee. Instructors who retaliate against students' questions by lowering their grades are literally putting their college's accreditation on the line. The longer this pattern continues, the easier it is to prove. The college which permits its instructors to play this kind of dirty pool deserves a visit from the regional accreditation review committee. Be sure you know what association accredits your school (if any) and where it's located. If you're treated unfairly, write to them and request information on presenting a formal protest. *When the administration realizes that you are willing to go this far in order to defend your intellectual integrity, they will put pressure on instructors who cheat.* That's what it is, after all: cheating. They deliberately lower a student's grades as a personal vendetta. Any instructor who does this repeatedly should become the target of a systematic, co-ordinated campaign to get him dismissed. Make the administration know just how expensive it will be to the college to keep this petty tyrant on the payroll. Again, see **Appendix C**.

Be sure you have solid evidence of wrongdoing. Innocent people must not be accused. But if you have indications that some instructor is deliberately lowering the grades of students who ask difficult questions, he should be removed from the classroom if possible. He needs a new occupation in life.

*Never, ever threaten any campus official about your willingness to contact the accreditation association.* This decision should be a matter of the utmost secrecy. Students who gather evidence should do so very quietly. The announcement of any protest should come from the accreditation committee, not from the protesters. The administration may try to cover up the evidence, or immediately expel the protesters. *There should be no warning whatsoever from students.* As Teddy Roosevelt so aptly put it, "Walk softly and carry a big stick." Your present understanding of the power of the accrediting association is a very big stick indeed.

From this point on, the administration knows that some students probably know how the accreditation review system works. The administration should know that at any time, students may be willing and able to contact the accreditation association and have the college put under review. Let the administration "clean up its act" *before* it destroys some student's career, not after. Let every administration know that, starting at least today, it's vulnerable to student defensive action, and that it risks a great deal by remaining tyrannical or pigheaded, or by allowing individual instructors to remain tyrannical or pigheaded.

Why am I telling you this? Only to let you know: *if you conduct yourself honorably, you are in control.* As long as you conduct yourself as a Christian adult in public, you can pressure an immoral administration in



private. You should not do this except under extreme duress. But if some intellectually insecure bureaucrat or faculty member starts trying to twist your arm, you may be able to end his career if you plan your strategy carefully.

When bureaucrats understand that you know how to fight, they probably will retreat. At this point, you know more about how to fight than any previous generation of students attending Christian colleges. Don't let this knowledge go to waste. If you're challenged to a fight, then fight, and *fight to win*. At the very least, *fight to inflict sufficient pain on your tormenters so that those who follow you won't have to fight at all*. Repay evil with good, and bringing down a tyrant is very, very good. (If you doubt this, read the Book of Judges or the story of Elijah.) College administrators are smart enough not to stick their hands into a hornets' nest twice.

But if the school leaves you alone, then keep a very low profile. Do no damage unto others if they do no damage unto you or other innocent people.

## 11. *The Decision to Transfer Out*

Some students grow so cynical in the face of poor treatment by faculty members or the administration that they are tempted to quit. They see that they aren't getting anywhere academically, and that they are being pressured to give up their beliefs. Wouldn't it be a lot easier to study somewhere else?

Generally, the answer is *no*. It's probably just as bad in other Christian colleges. There may even be students contemplating a switch to your college in order to escape theirs. You may trade one set of problems for a new set—a set you have less experience in dealing with.

If you have a burning interest to study in some field, and some other school offers superior training in that field, then consider transferring. Sadly, this usually means a move to a secular college or university where the quality of the instruction in academic subjects is superior. So is the library. But it's probably unwise to "cut and run" to another Christian college campus.

For one thing, you know the ropes better where you are. You know the weak links in the chain, the chinks in the opposition's armor. You can do more good, help more freshman students, influence more of your peers, right where you are.

If you have a poor reputation with other students, then get that taken care of. Don't run. Your reputation won't precede you, but your personality defects will accompany you.

If you have a reputation as a troublemaker with the administration, but not with your fellow students, you're in an ideal position to recruit many followers. One of your chief goals is this one: *recruit younger students so that they can take over the Bible study after you graduate or are kicked out*. You want to raise up a continuing squad of dedicated Bible students who will pass out this book, ask more questions, and generally make life miserable for instructors who don't have any answers. After all, life should be miserable for instructors who evade questions, or who threaten students with lower grades if they don't shut up, or who refuse even to face the implications of the ideas they are teaching.

Stay put. Recruit more students. Devise new ways to get Bible studies started. Figure out some new distribution system for this book. Don't let them chase you out if you can avoid it gracefully. Look at it this

way: you're a bigger problem for them than they are for you. Stick around. Give them something to think about.

Then, too, you don't want to get into the habit of re-treating under fire. Life is full of people who don't play fair. You might as well start learning how to beat them without compromising your sense of justice or the official rules of the institutional game. You're getting good practice right where you are. Perhaps in retrospect the most important part of your education will turn out to be the experience you get in defending your right to ask questions and set up Bible studies, and the theological insights you receive by studying on your own or with other students.

## **12. What to Do If You Get Expelled**

If you get expelled as a result of this book, contact my office. I'll put you in contact with someone who has been through this experience himself, and he can show you several ways to get back in, or to make the administration wish they had never expelled you. He is *very creative* in this area. He knows exactly what can be done to create incentives for the administration to reconsider.

Once the administration officially expels you, the school becomes highly vulnerable in terms of its accreditation, its continuing status as a tax-exempt institution of higher education, and its reputation. Just send me a transcript of your college grades and a copy of the letter from the administration informing you that you have been expelled. Rest assured, *I'll help you to straighten this out to your satisfaction*. It will be the most costly expulsion in your school's history. They will wish they had never done it. And just to top it off, I can probably show you how to get a free

copy of this book to every incoming freshman next year.

(Warning: we can't do much to help you if you happen to attend an unaccredited college which isn't tax exempt. If it also has a disastrous academic reputation when it comes to the question of free and open discussion, the school is probably not very vulnerable. Students in such a school have very little "leverage" because the school has so little to lose. This is the administration's "happy by-product" of being third-rate. If you attend such a school, I suggest that you get your transcripts sent to another school, *immediately*, for self-protection.)

In short, any attempt by an administration to harass students who are prayerfully using our materials will be met with *countervailing power*. You're not at the mercy of college deans, so long as you conduct yourself graciously. If they take so much as a single hostile step against you, *they are then at your mercy*.

(To students attending a respectable campus, this language may sound overly aggressive. But you aren't facing expulsion for your beliefs. Some students are. They need to know how to defend themselves. It's my responsibility to show them how, since this book could get them into a predicament.)

Christian teachers and administrators have experienced no systematic and effective challenges from students for several generations. The students haven't known how to defend themselves. With the publication of this little book, they now have a much better idea of just how vulnerable petty tyrants are. It will do tyrants on the campus a lot of good. They may learn what happens to people who are unwilling to show good faith or fair play. Shed no tears for them.

## Conclusion

If you're interested in following through in a disciplined study of the 75 questions asked in this book, and perhaps many more questions that will be raised by further study, you now have the tools to begin.

If you experience initial failures in organizing Bible studies, you should begin a program of self-improvement. Don't sit around blaming your fellow students. Start praying, reading, and thinking. Then try again. Maybe you just didn't contact the right people initially.

Most important of all: *keep a low profile, if you possibly can*. Don't call attention to your success if you do begin a Bible study that begins to multiply. As much as possible, see to it that *there is no public visibility for these groups*. You're not there to create a confrontation with the authorities, except insofar as *asking intelligent questions creates confrontations with the authorities on your campus*. If they are ready to enter into an intellectual "give and take" with students, then rejoice. You chose to attend a campus where you can get a real education. You will be able to learn something, and so will they. But even in this case, keep a low profile. It's a good example to set from the beginning. *The lower the profile of these groups, in my view, the more successful you have been*. A really successful Bible study network will leave very few public trails for the administration to follow.

I think you can multiply your efforts rapidly if you follow my guidelines. Most important of all, you must strive to *create a permanent Bible study network on your campus*. It should still be there when you return to visit 20 years from now. If anything, it should be stronger. The level of discussion should be elevated.

Plant the seeds now; tall oaks should be there a generation from now. *Conduct yourself accordingly.*

If you have been poorly and unfairly treated, fret not. Work harder to multiply the campus Bible studies. Carry on your work. Bitterness gets you nowhere. Much better to recruit another dozen students, or to hand out another hundred books.

Contact me today. Send a dollar for a three-month subscription to my newsletter for Bible students, **Providential**. It will contain lots of information on how to study the Bible, how to ask sharp questions in class, how to raise your grades, and best of all, a section called "Whoppers." I will reprint for all the world to see the most preposterous, ridiculous answers to the questions you ask. Just tell us the name of the professor, his department, the day he said it, and his answer. Sign it, and have another student sign it to confirm its accuracy, and send it in. I'll run the choicest ones.

If you subscribe now, you will also receive three months of **Preface**, a specialized Christian book review newsletter that provides in-depth reviews of the most important scholarly books that can help college students in their course work. It specializes in history, theology, social science, and education. Write:

Providential  
Geneva Ministries  
P.O. Box 8376  
Tyler, TX 75711

Also, if you know the names and addresses of students at other Christian colleges who would like to receive a free copy of this book, send the list to us. If you could send \$2 per name, it would really help, but if

you just can't afford it, tell me this in your letter.

If you intend to attend any *summer institute* or other educational-spiritual program aimed at Christian college students, let me know. I will try to make available free bulk copies of this book for you to hand out. All I require is written proof of your paid reservation at the conference, and the estimated number of students (if possible, an official estimation by the sponsoring organization). Two weeks before the meeting, I will ship the books to you, or one of our regional associates will deliver them to you personally.

I will make arrangements with a sponsoring church or other non-profit educational institution to provide free copies if you are to be an instructor at any college-age meeting, or a meeting involving seniors in high school or entering college freshmen, and you're willing to risk distributing the books, even on the last day of the program. Students are very receptive to recommended reading lists from instructors, even if the instructors are only a year or two older than they are. Become an instructor. Just send me a photocopy of your contract and let me know your mailing address.

### **Note to Seminarians**

So you think you're too sophisticated to be caught using a simple little handbook like this one in a Bible study. "Pride goeth before a fall." This little handbook can get your career sidetracked very easily. Your fellow students may think that these arguments are unsophisticated, but if you start pressing them to provide biblical answers, you'll find out just how unprepared they are to handle this "unsophisticated" book. It's not a question of footnotes; it's a question of the potency of the word of God.

The word of God is not on your opponents' side in those areas addressed by this book, and if you start calling this to their attention, most of them will not appreciate it. More to the point, you may find yourself ostracized, informed on, and called into the Dean's office for "troublemaking." You may be asked to sign again some sort of a doctrinal statement in order to remain enrolled (or supported financially by your home church), and that statement may be in flagrant opposition to everything in this book, especially Part III. In short, they may hit you with the old "re-sign or resign" coercion that has protected desperate and theologically defenseless seminary administrations for many decades.

These questions will drive some of your seminary's faculty members crazy. (Others will patiently ignore all questions, hoping that all this will blow over soon, but it won't—not so long as our sponsoring organizations have money in the till to keep sending it out. For as long as seminaries make available the names of their students, this book will be around to plague seminary professors. And if the schools stop making the names available, they will be admitting just how badly this "unsophisticated" book is hurting them. At that point, they will also have to cancel publication of the seminary year book. In short, there are many ways to skin a cat and assemble mailing lists, and I know most of them.) Outraged faculty members are liable to lash out at you for having begun a campus Bible study using this book. They have seldom been challenged by anyone in the classroom, let alone by a whole group of students with as much theological ammunition as this book contains (even disregarding the bibliography, which will really fluster them). They have had a free ride for too long.

This book may look simple, but it's a hand grenade.



It's going to blow holes in the side of numerous fundamentalist academic institutions of supposedly higher learning. You may think this book is light reading. It is. But if it begins to create havoc on campus, what does this tell you about those who can't handle the questions?

If your faculty members have trouble answering this little book, wait until they read Martin Luther's *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), Loraine Boettner's *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (1932), R. J. Rushdoony's *The Institutes of Biblical Law* (1973) and *The Foundations of Social Order* (1968), Greg Bahnsen's *Theonomy in Christian Ethics* (1977), O. T. Allis' *Prophecy and the Church* (1945), and anything—I mean anything—by Cornelius Van Til (*The Defense of the Faith, A Christian Theory of Knowledge, Christianity and Barthianism*, etc., etc.). For that matter, wait until you read them. And while you're at it, read James Jordan's *The Law of the Covenant: An Exposition of Exodus 21-23* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1984). This book will really send your theologically defenseless professors into verbal paralysis. When you finally discover just how much material there is available that undercuts your professors' theological position—and all from an explicitly biblical standpoint—you'll be grateful that I kept this little book so simple.

You say you haven't heard of these books before? You say these titles don't appear on any of your assigned reading lists? You mean to tell me that your professors haven't replied to any of them, chapter by chapter, given the devastating arguments they present concerning such subjects as Arminianism, premillennial dispensationalism, antinomianism, and neo-evangelicalism? I wonder why not. Could it be that students might go out and read them?

Maybe they're in your campus library. If they're not, then you know what has been going on academically at your school—for a long, long time. Your tuition money may not be very well spent, let alone your time. Think about it. And if you don't have time to think about it right now, think about it during summer vacation. Do a little reading. Jot down a few questions. There's always next year.

What I'd really like to see is the establishment of an optional, preferably for-credit course dedicated to refuting this little book. I'd like to see it taught by the brightest professor on campus. Better yet, I'd like to see it taught by a whole team of faculty members. Nothing much to it, right? I mean, this book is so *simple*! Why not ask your faculty advisor if he'd be willing to teach it? (I know the response: "Respectable faculty members don't have any responsibility to respond to cheap paperback books when there are so many other important topics to deal with"—such as several of those topics that have been boring you out of your skull this semester, and that will cost you your job if you ever try to preach about them in front of a congregation. But don't worry about that possibility; you'll have forgotten 90% of that material by next term anyway—and not be any worse off because of it.)

I will put it bluntly (no one has ever accused me of being a shrinking violet): *you have been conned*. Your instructors have taken your tuition money, your time, and your good intentions, and they have deliberately kept you from considering the most important theological option available to humanism in the twentieth century. They have not successfully challenged the humanists because they share too many presuppositions with the humanists. Furthermore, *they cannot answer us*, and they have not attempted to answer us,

so they have substituted the silence treatment. They have assumed that most of their students would never hear of this option, and that if some student did, they could shrug it off as the work of theological lightweights. Until we get detailed, *published* answers to our position, the charge of being lightweight theologically will not bother us too much. We've got the footnotes, the arguments, and the publications. Your professors have only bricks and mortar . . . and the ability to avoid answering tough questions because their students refuse to ask the tough questions.

In short, *get tough*.

And if you don't have the stomach for this kind of intellectual confrontation, please have the Christian courtesy not to whisper behind the backs of your fellow students who are determined to get some straight answers. Just because you don't think you need cogent answers to the questions raised in this book, don't assume that nobody else wants answers. Just because you think you can assume these questions away, the way your professors have, don't get upset when your more theologically oriented classmates pursue these questions. If these questions were significant enough to capture the attention of St. Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, the Westminster Assembly, the Puritans, George Whitfield, Jonathan Edwards, Charles H. Spurgeon, A. A. Hodge, Charles Hodge, Robert Dabney, Benjamin B. Warfield, and J. Gresham Machen, perhaps even your faculty should discuss them once in a while.



## Help from the Accreditation Association

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I hope you never have to use the material in this appendix. This appendix is to be used only in the late stages of a dispute centering around *75 Bible Questions*.

If you have conducted yourself graciously, and if other students on your campus who have read the book have also conducted themselves graciously, then the only reason for acting on the information in this section is legitimate self-defense. You are being discriminated against, and your academic career is being threatened directly by an unwarranted retaliation by your school's administration or faculty.

Is it ethical to appeal "over the heads" of your school's authorities to an accreditation association? Yes, *if* you have the evidence of wrongdoing. Your school's administrators have voluntarily placed themselves and the school under authority. This authority structure brings some perceived benefits to the school. (The costs, though, are way too high for the benefits received, as your administrators may learn soon enough.) Parents ask, "Is your school accredited?" Administrators wanted to be able to answer that it is. Also, they may want to seek grant money, but grant money is generally limited to accredited schools. But with benefits come costs. With power comes responsibility. The administration cannot expect to be the beneficiary of accreditation without honoring the covenant with the accrediting organ-

ization. Covenants have rules. If anyone breaks the rules, he has broken the covenant. Therefore, all you are doing when you appeal to an accreditation association is to act as an agent for the reaffirmation of the covenant which your school's authorities have unilaterally and illegitimately broken.

This is a very serious business. It is not a last-resort measure—contacting me is your last-resort measure—but it should not be attempted early in any confrontation with the school's authorities.

Remember, you have already gone to the offending party with your complaint, according to Matthew 18:15. If an instructor has violated his trust as an objective, impartial teacher, then confront him with your complaint. If he refuses to budge, contact the chairman of his department. If he also refuses to intervene, contact an appropriate dean of the faculty. If that fails, contact the president of the college. If that fails, send a copy of your complaint to each member of the Board of Trustees.

By this time, the administration will know that you are serious, and that you know how to conduct an appropriate defense. They will also suspect that you are preparing for an even more intensive defensive campaign. But once the Board of Trustees does nothing to rectify an injustice, they have delivered the school into the hands of the accreditation association.

A college president may decide to contact the accreditation association in advance of your complaint, in an attempt to warn them not to pay any attention to future student complaints. This is just what you want, since the accreditation association's director will begin to smell a rat. He understands bureaucracies. If there were really no problem, why would this man be coming to warn him about a problem?

Furthermore, if the college has been foolish enough to seek accreditation from a humanistic accrediting agency, the administration may not find a sympathetic ear. In fact, it is possible that people on the accreditation association already suspect that your school has in the past violated certain basic standards associated with higher education in America.

Be sure not to mention to anyone except those students actually under persecution that you intend to appeal to the accreditation association. If you are asked by a faculty member or an administrator if you intend to appeal, say that you haven't actually decided—and you haven't until the letter is sent. If you are pressed for an answer, be vague. You don't have to answer. It's your business. If you are threatened verbally for refusing to tell the questioner about your intentions to appeal, use my favorite strategy. Ask him to put his request in writing, on college letterhead stationery. In short, say as little as possible. Make no threats whatsoever. As far as any administrator needs to know, you're only thinking about making use of your right to appeal to a higher level in the chain of command.

Remember: *they're under authority*. People under authority always resent it when anyone under their authority appeals up the chain of command, but the fact that they resent it is irrelevant. Make the appeal. Just don't tell any school official what your plans are unless he puts it in writing. Then photocopy this request and keep it in your files, just in case you decide to include it in the packet of materials you send to the accreditation association. Your response could be: "I haven't made up my mind." When you make up your mind, send off the letter to the accreditation association. *Never warn the administration that you have*

taken this step. Let them hear from an official at the association. It will be a lot more difficult for them to take action against you after the accreditation association has been warned and begins an investigation. In fact, it might be suicidal institutionally to place you under discipline at that stage. So you must do everything possible to avoid getting thrown out of school until after you make your appeal.

If you aren't successful, and they throw you out, make your appeal anyway. What have you got to lose? Nothing. What have they got to lose? Their accreditation.

### **Making a Formal Protest**

There are four steps in the appeals procedure. You should do your best to adhere to these procedures before making any charges against anyone.

1. Determine which association to contact.
2. Get a copy of the association's regulations.
3. Compile evidence of violations.
4. Contact the association by registered mail.

#### **1. Determine Which Association to Contact**

Go to your library. Take a look at your college's catalogue. Look up "accreditation." Then look up the name of the regional accreditation association or organization. You can get a list of the names and latest addresses of these organizations by writing for a free copy of *Nationally Recognized Accrediting Agencies and Associations*. Order from:

Department of Education  
Office of Postsecondary Education  
Eligibility and Agency Evaluation Staff  
Washington, D.C. 20202



There are several associations. They are regionally based. One of them probably is listed in your school's catalogue. As of July, 1983, these were the associations:

### *South*

Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges & Schools  
795 Peachtree St., N.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30365

The states covered are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

### *West*

Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges  
and Universities  
Western Association of Schools & Colleges  
c/o Mills College, Box 9990  
Oakland, CA 94613

The states covered are California and Hawaii.

### *Northwest*

Commission on Colleges  
Northwest Association of Schools & Colleges  
3700-B University Way, N.E.  
Seattle, WA 98105

The states covered are Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

### *North Central*

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
North Central Association of Schools & Colleges  
159 North Dearborn St.  
Chicago, IL 60601

The states covered are Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

### *East*

Commission on Higher Education  
Middle States Association of Colleges & Schools  
3624 Market St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

The states covered are Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

### *New England*

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education  
New England Association of Schools & Colleges  
Sanborn House  
15 High St.  
Winchester, MA 01890

The states covered are Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

### *Bible Colleges*

Commission on Accrediting  
American Association of Bible Colleges  
Box 1523  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

### *Theology*

Commission on Accrediting  
Association of Theological Schools in the  
United States and Canada  
Box 130  
Vandalia, OH 45377

## **2. *Get a Copy of the Association's Regulations***

The rules and regulations are established primarily to protect classroom teachers from "outside interference," so don't be surprised to discover that your case may not be covered. But read the regulations very carefully to determine whether your complaint is handled by the association. If not, then you have to write back and inquire if certain types of violations are against the general standards. Let them figure out if your case is covered or not.

## **3. *Compile Evidence of Violations***

Well in advance, you need to begin to compile evidence that infractions have occurred. You need to set up a card file or other "data base" to maintain such records. If necessary, hide this file, or keep it off campus. I suggest making a photocopy, too, just for safety's sake. You need a summary of the event, a date, and the initial or signature of at least one witness, preferably not the same one every time. (You don't want to be accused of starting some sort of conspiracy.) If you are being badgered continually, more and more students will be willing to sign. After an incident, return to your room and immediately fill out a card, so that you won't forget.

The witness is just that, a witness. A person's signature doesn't mean that he or she is on your side. All it means is that two people agree with each other on the details of an historical event, so as not to bear false witness.

If a teacher is systematically lowering someone's grades, compile proof of the person's previous academic record. Keep copies of earlier examinations or papers that received higher grades before the asking

of any of the 75 questions. Keep the papers that received the lower grade.

It might be wise to return to a teacher in private and ask about specific details concerning the low grade. Important: *have the instructor make his negative comments on the term paper or exam.* Don't accept a verbal explanation of why the paper is substandard. If the instructor balks, ask if he will repeat his observations in front of a student witness. Be prepared to allow him to bring in a faculty member as his witness. But make it clear that you think there is an injustice involved, and that you are seeking some sort of re-evaluation of the low grades.

If the person refuses to put his objections in writing or in front of witnesses, *you have a legitimate reason to begin compiling a detailed file on everything he teaches, says, or writes.* Anything may be submitted as evidence in a hearing by an accreditation association. Just be sure you have witnesses—and make them sign the documents well in advance, so that they can't be pressured later on to retract their testimony.

If you can't get witnesses, it will be far more difficult to present your case. Thus, I recommend against asking too many questions until you have recruited several people into your Bible study. These people are more likely to be witnesses. People who regard you as a troublemaker will try to avoid getting involved. They may even be pleased with the treatment you or some other "troublemaker" is receiving. Envy is a universal phenomenon, even in Christian organizations.

#### **4. Contact the Association by Registered Mail**

First, telephone the association and ask for the name of the Director of the association. After the tele-

phone receptionist gives you this name, ask for the name of the person who handles student inquiries concerning a school's violation of the association's standards. Don't let the secretary off the hook. Get her to name someone, or transfer you to someone who can name someone. Basically, you will be satisfied with any name. You need a real, live person to address your complaint to. At the very least, you already have the name of the Director of the association, no matter who they refer you to. You want to know who is in charge.

Second, you must draw up your case. Send your letter to a specific person at the association: either the Director or to the subordinate whose name you were given by the telephone receptionist. Your letter must be a one-page or at most two-page *typewritten*, single-spaced letter summarizing your concern with the college's policies of student persecution. Don't go into the details of your charges in the letter. You want someone to read it. Just summarize what has been happening, with two or three examples. Be sure to tell them that you have exhausted all channels in the college's appeals system, up to the Board of Trustees. This is very important; it makes it much harder for the person to delay making a decision.

I am presuming that you have already assembled evidence for your earlier appeals. Don't mail in your summary case to the association until you have in reserve photostats and other evidence, plus a double-spaced, typewritten detailed history of everything you have witnessed. *Don't mail this evidence in with your letter.* In your letter you must state very clearly that you have substantiating evidence for every accusation, plus witnesses. Ask for a reply.

This puts the recipient on the defensive. He isn't

sure just what kind of evidence you have. He can't make a decision until he sees the evidence. He can then decide whether to follow through on your complaint. But if you have gone through all the steps—instructor, dean, president, Board of Trustees—he can't very well reply that you haven't exhausted all avenues of appeal. This makes it difficult for him to push the matter back down to your college's administration, thereby delaying the investigation process.

Wait for his response. *What you are after is a request to see the substantiating evidence.* He may even want a private conference. But he has to do something. You have sent him a registered letter. Students don't do this very often. If he fails to reply, send him another registered letter. Ask again for a reply.

When you finally get his request to see the evidence, send him photocopies. Never send the originals. It's best to keep the originals off campus. Maybe you can rent a safety deposit box at a local bank (you will have to open an account).

The next step is his. Always send the material by registered mail. This gives you a record of its having been delivered. It also shows that you are very serious.

If you get nowhere, then your best tactic is to have another student begin with his or her protest, starting with an initial inquiry to the association. This time, however, the complaining student should send a photocopy of the letter to the Director of the association. What you want is the perception on the part of the recipient that this problem isn't going to go away.

## Conclusion

What you want is a continual stream of students who are protesting injustice and appealing through the local college's court of appeal. The Trustees are going to get tired of hearing about it. Eventually, the accreditation association will start an investigation. They also get tired of letters. Remember the words of Jesus:

**And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man. And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge said (Luke 18:1-6).**

There are unjust judges in this world. There are also people with a righteous cause. It is the responsibility of the righteous people to keep hammering away at the system until even unjust judges render righteous judgment. So if your judges claim to be righteous men, they ought to render righteous judgment early. If they don't, it's your responsibility to fight the good fight.





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## Bibliography

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There's an old rule of politics: "You can't fight something with nothing." If you're really serious about getting answers to your questions, then you're going to have to do some reading. No; you're going to have to do a *lot* of reading. More reading than you ever thought you could invest in an "extra-curricular" project. You may have to work on this project for years, depending on how fast you read, how much you remember, and how detailed you want your answers.

If you aren't willing to read, *and read extensively*, then you're not serious about Jesus Christ. You're not serious about your responsibilities before God. You're a milk-drinking Christian (I Corinthians 3:2).

The following books represent a mere beginning. They will introduce you to a whole series of questions and topics that you've probably never considered before now. But there is no easy way to get around personal responsibility. You have been given knowledge. That makes you responsible. Now the question is: "What do you intend to do with the knowledge you already have?"

I have divided the bibliography into two sections, "Dedication" and "Leadership." I have used the title of Douglas Hyde's excellent book as my guide. For basic theology, you need the first set of books. For applied theology, you need the second set of books. If you aren't ready to think about the issues confronting modern society, then you had better not think about becoming a Christian leader. We already are sufficiently burdened with self-proclaimed Christian lead-

ers who haven't done their homework. Every worn-out liberal slogan seems to get picked up by some Christian group or another. They dust off these dead slogans and try to sell them to their followers as if they were "the latest thing."

What we need is the reconstruction of every area of life. We don't need a "venture inward" into the mystical depths of our unconscious. We need a *venture outward* in victory. But to begin such a venture, we need information. We need to know what the Bible teaches about God, man, and law. We need to know what it says about human institutions. Then we'll be ready to take upon ourselves the "kingdom tasks" that have been assigned to us by God (Genesis 1:26-28).

I suggest that the easiest introduction is my book, *Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory* ("Leadership"). I wrote it rapidly—in two weeks—for the average reader. It's simple, it's to the point, and it won't waste your time. If you've read the 75 questions in the book, you're ready for *Unconditional Surrender*. And at \$9.95, it won't bankrupt you.

You can order these books individually from Puritan Reformed Books, or you can order them as sets: "Dedication" and "Leadership" from Geneva Ministries, P.O. Box 8376, Tyler, Texas 75711. Or you can pay retail and buy them one at a time from your local Christian bookstore. Your Christian bookstore deserves support. But if you want the sets, get the available discount from Geneva Ministries (see the first tear-out sheet).



## **DEDICATION**

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**The Forgotten Spurgeon** by Iain Murray. 254 pp., indexed, pb., \$4.95. Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA.

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The great Baptist preacher Charles Spurgeon has for generations been held up as the standard for gospel preaching at its best. Hundreds of his sermons have been reprinted in evangelical periodicals. Unfortunately, these reprints (to be distinguished from those published in the 62-volume *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*) are usually printed in abridged form. *There has been an active attempt on the part of fundamentalist and evangelical leaders to suppress the truth about Spurgeon's theology.*

Charles Spurgeon was, unashamedly and forthrightly, a sincere Calvinist. He saw Arminianism to be a departure from the purity of New Testament evangelism—in many cases “simply ignorance of gospel doctrine,” but nevertheless a false, degenerate, harmful, and anti-Scriptural belief.

Spurgeon's convictions regarding the “five points” were absolutely basic to his entire ministry. He wrote: “There is no such thing as preaching Christ and Him crucified, unless we preach what is nowadays called Calvinism. It is a nickname to call it Calvinism; Calvinism is the gospel, and nothing else.”

This volume traces the main lines of Spurgeon's thought in connection with the great spiritual controversies of his age—from his stand against the diluted gospel fashionable in the London to which the young preacher came in the 1850s, to the lacerating Down-Grade controversy of 1887-1892 when Spurgeon sought to awaken Christians to the danger of the Church “being buried beneath the boiling mud-showers of modern heresy.”

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**The Sovereignty of God** by Arthur W. Pink. 164 pp., pb., \$3.45. Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA.

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This book is one of the most outstanding presentations of the sovereignty of God ever written. Pink shows how the biblical doctrine of God's absolute and utter predestination of all things is related to creation, salvation, human will, and prayer.

As Pink makes clear from the outset, those who deny God's sovereignty are ultimately left with an impotent "God" and an all-powerful Devil. The God of the Bible is thus all too often misrepresented as sitting on a make-believe throne, helplessly watching a world spinning out of control, unable to save sinners because He cannot violate the free will of His creatures. With a "faith" like that, no wonder Christians retreat from the enemy!

In opposition to such unbiblical teaching, the author states: "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. His government is exercised over inanimate matter, over the brute beasts, over the children of men, over angels good and evil, and over Satan himself. No revolving of a world, no shining of a star, no storm, no movement of a creature, no actions of men, no errands of angels, no deeds of the Devil—*nothing in all the vast universe can come to pass otherwise than God has eternally purposed.* Here is a foundation for faith. Here is a resting place for the intellect. Here is an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast. It is not blind fate, unbridled evil, man or Devil, but the Lord Almighty who is ruling the world, ruling it according to His own good pleasure and for His own eternal glory."

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**Today's Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?** by Walter Chantry. 93 pp., bibliography, pb., \$2.45. Banner of Truth, Carlisle, PA.

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In this rousing work Walter Chantry extracts from Christ's dealing with the rich young ruler the essential elements in Gospel preaching. A close examination of the Scriptural evidence leads to this conclusion:

"Differences between much of today's preaching and that of Jesus are not petty; they are enormous. The chief errors are not in emphasis or approach but in the heart of the Gospel message. Were there a deficiency in one of the areas mentioned in these pages, it would be serious. But to ignore all—the attributes of God, the holy law of God, repentance, a call to bow to the enthroned Christ—and to pervert the doctrine of assurance, is the most vital mistake.

"Incredulity may grip you. Can so many evangelicals be so wrong? . . . All are not in error, but great hosts are. All have not perverted the Gospel to the same degree, but many are terribly far from the truth. All those who 'make decisions' are not deceived, but great numbers are. Above all, few care to recover the Gospel message. Most assume that evangelical tradition embodies it. Great multitudes never carefully weigh their habits in the light of Scripture."

This arresting, powerfully written book will force you to rethink your own message and presentation of the Gospel in terms of our Lord's clear teaching and plain example. Its often shocking, jolting truth may make some angry. But it will drive others to their knees in a new commitment to the apostolic faith.

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**Productive Christians in an Age of Guilt-Manipulators** by David Chilton. 310 pp., indexed, bibliography, pb., \$4.95. Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, TX.

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One of the most insidious attacks upon orthodox Christianity has come from the so-called "Christian Left." This book answers the "bible" of that movement, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*, by Ronald Sider.

David Chilton demonstrates that the "Christian Socialism" advocated by Sider is nothing more than baptized humanism—the goal of which is not charity, but raw, police-state power.

The debate between Sider and Chilton centers on one central issue: *Does the Bible have clear guidelines for every area of life?* Sider claims that the Bible does not contain "blueprints" for a social and economic order. The catch, of course, is that Sider then provides *his own* "blueprints" for society, calling for a taxation system which is completely condemned by God's infallible word. Chilton answers that the socialist "cure" is worse than the disease, for socialism actually *increases* poverty. Even when motivated by good intentions, unbiblical "charity" programs will damage the very people they seek to help.

Combining incisive satire with hard-hitting argumentation and extensive biblical references, Chilton shows that the Bible *does* have clear, forthright, and workable answers to the problem of poverty. *Productive Christians* is most importantly a major introduction to the system of Christian Economics, with chapters on biblical law, welfare, poverty, the third world, overpopulation, foreign aid, advertising, profits, and economic growth.

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**God and Government** by Gary DeMar. Two vols., 435 pp., bibliography, large paperbacks, \$21.90 for the set. American Vision Press, Atlanta, GA.

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These two volumes together comprise the most comprehensive treatment available on the biblical principles of government. Beginning with the proper foundations in self-government and the structure of the family, Gary DeMar develops a well-rounded view of the purpose and function of civil government in Scripture.

The first volume, subtitled *A Biblical and Historical Study*, contains a concise but excellent introduction to the U.S. Constitution and the problems connected with the relationship between Church and State. "While there is a *functional* separation between Church and State found in the Bible, there is certainly no absolute separation. Both institutions have a common authority; they are both under God and accountable to His revealed word."

The second volume, subtitled *Issues in Biblical Perspective*, begins with an exposition of the biblical world view, and shows its practical outworking in questions of sovereignty, dominion, and ownership. DeMar then turns to a more in-depth look at the biblical view of economics and the issues of poverty and care for the poor.

*God and Government* is a valuable work on several levels. First, it is an important work in its own right, as a much-needed, enlightening, and superbly written contribution to an increasingly significant area of discussion. Second, it constitutes a marvelous summary of other Reconstructionist works, studded with helpful references. Finally, its workbook format makes it absolutely ideal for in-depth study by individuals and groups alike.

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**Dedication and Leadership: Learning from the Communists** by Douglas Hyde. Pb., \$3.95. University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN.

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“What distinguishes the Communist movement from most others and makes it possible for so small a minority to make so great an impact upon our time is the dedication of the average individual member and the immense and dynamic force this represents when all those individuals collectively make their contribution to the cause.”

Douglas Hyde was a Communist for 20 years and served as news editor of the London *Daily Worker* until he became a Christian. In this challenging work, he describes the Communist methods of psychological motivation and techniques of instilling dedication. His thesis is simple and direct: *Communist training changes lives*. The task of this book is to discover the reasons *why*, and to isolate and investigate those methods which can and should be used by Christians to create commitment among followers, and to transform followers into inspiring leaders.

A major reason for Communist success is that “their aim is quite clear. They have never concealed it and it is something that is enormously meaningful to every Communist. It is a *Communist world*. . . . never in man's history has a small group of people set out to win a world and achieved it in less time.”

Christians must be driven by the same vision of victory, of all-embracing world conquest—especially because the Christian hope is founded upon the unshakeable promises of God. For too long the principles cited here, which rightfully belong to us, have been used by the enemy. It is time to take them back.

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**The Five Points of Calvinism: Defined, Defended, Documented** by David N. Steele and Curtis C. Thomas. 95 pp., indexed, bibliography, pb., \$2.50. Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ.

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The authors have designed this work to serve as an introductory survey of the theological system known as "the five points of Calvinism":

1. Man is born totally depraved, bound in sin, and unable of himself to trust and obey God;
2. God has infallibly chosen all who will be saved, wholly on the basis of His own sovereign will;
3. Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only, and did actually secure their salvation;
4. God's Spirit works effectually in the hearts of the elect, irresistibly drawing them to salvation;
5. All who are chosen, redeemed, and drawn into salvation will persevere in the faith to the end.

As the authors clearly demonstrate, the "five points" are really inseparable, being simply different facets of the *one point* of the Gospel—that *God saves sinners*.

The book begins with an overview of the historical origins of the "five points," contrasting them with the "five points of Arminianism." In Part Two, each of the points is explained and defended in more detail, and numerous Scripture passages are quoted in full for easy reference. The book concludes with a comprehensive, annotated bibliography of works dealing with these issues. For an understanding of the biblical doctrines of salvation and the sovereignty of God, this volume is crucial.

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**Bad News for Modern Man** by Franky Schaeffer.  
183 pp., pb., \$7.95. Crossway Books, Westchester, IL.

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This is an extension of Schaeffer's earlier book, *A Time for Anger: The Myth of Neutrality*. This time he comes out swinging against the compromisers, neo-evangelicals, closet socialists, and "I can't make up my mind about abortion" abortionists. He names names. He lays it out in Chapter 5: "How to Become a Jellyfish." On his "hit list" are InterVarsity Press, Ron Sider, *Christianity Today*, Evangelicals for Social Action, *the other side*, Wheaton College, and U.S. Senate Chaplain Richard Halverson. He didn't take a shot at Billy Graham, but Graham's *Approaching Hoofbeats* wasn't yet in print when Schaeffer wrote the book. Next time. . . .

He is involved in a war of ideas. He attacks pornography, but also calls for Christian alternatives in art and entertainment. He attacks the evils of pluralism in the delivery room—equal time for abortionist and pediatrician—and thus by implication calls into question the long-term workability of "neutral law" or "neutral politics." He calls for a meaningful gospel that can and will win the world: ". . . a world controlled by a clear, consistent, unfashionable gospel message applied to every area of life, a message on which orthodox Christians are willing to stand and fight, is a world that can be converted" (p. 131). Furthermore, "There is no need for us to hide, cower, and pretend that we are 'broad-minded and pluralistic' in a shabby attempt to camouflage ourselves and avoid drawing embarrassing criticism."



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**Every Thought Captive: A Study Manual for the Defense of Christian Truth** by Richard L. Pratt, Jr. 142 pp., pb., \$4.50. Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ.

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Christians are commanded to "be ready to give an answer" to all men regarding the faith. In practice, however, the standard "defense" of the faith has too often compromised the claims of Christ and failed to challenge the unbeliever. The Bible is presented as if its authority is validated by the opinions of "experts." Jesus is subjected to the examination of autonomous reason, in order to justify His claim to absolute lordship. To put it bluntly: What often parades as a *defense* of the faith is actually a *betrayal* of it!

In this important volume, Richard Pratt explains how to present a truly biblical, God-honoring witness for Christ. He shows that a faithful method of apologetics must be grounded upon the absolute, unquestioned authority of the Bible. As Christians we may deal with every issue confronting people today, with the complete confidence that the Bible is fully authoritative on everything it speaks of—and *it speaks of everything*.

Mr. Pratt also shows how the non-Christian point of view and the Christian point of view are in conflict, and that this must be fully taken into account in every discussion between them. As he demonstrates, the unbeliever ultimately has no defense for his position. Unbelief is *foolishness*.

*Every Thought Captive* is a clearly written, forthright exposition of the biblical principles of apologetics. More than this, it is a down-to-earth training manual, useful for both individual and group study.

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**Backward, Christian Soldiers? An Action Manual for Christian Reconstruction** by Gary North. 320 pp., indexed, bibliography, pb., \$4.95. Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, TX.

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Jesus said to "Occupy till I come." But if Christians don't control the territory, they can't occupy it. They get tossed out into cultural "outer darkness," which is exactly what the secular humanists have done to Christians in the 20th century: in education, in the arts, in entertainment, in politics, and certainly in the mainline churches and seminaries. Today, the humanists are "occupying." But they won't be for long. This book shows why.

For the first time in over a century, Christians are beginning to proclaim a seemingly new doctrine, yet the original doctrine was given to man by God: *dominion* (Gen. 1:28). But this doctrine implies another: *victory*. That's what this book is all about: *a strategy for victory*.

Satan may be alive on planet earth, but he's not well. He's in the biggest trouble he's been in since Calvary. If Christians adopt a *vision of victory* and a *program of Christian reconstruction*, we will see the beginning of a new era on earth: the kingdom of God manifested in every area of life. When Christ returns, Christians will be occupying, not hiding in the shadows, not sitting in the back of humanism's bus.

This book shows where to begin. It is a unique, challenging action manual, combining theological depth with practical advice on strategies for dominion, plus material on computers, newsletters and mailing lists.

## **LEADERSHIP**

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### **Unconditional Surrender: God's Program for Victory**

by Gary North. 264 pp., indexed, bibliography, pb., \$9.95. Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler, TX.

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There is a war on. The war is between God and Satan. In our day, we see it most clearly in the conflicts between Christian institutions and the institutions of secular humanism. It is a war that is not going to go away. There will be a winner.

*Unconditional Surrender* is an introduction to this conflict. It covers the fundamental issues of the war: 1) What is the nature of *God*? 2) What is the nature of *man*? 3) What is the nature of *law*? If we can begin to answer these questions, then we will be able to recognize the nature of the battle.

Does Christianity make a difference in life? Does Christianity offer real-life solutions to the basic issues of life? Unquestionably, the answer is yes. But if we answer in the affirmative, then we have to start getting specific. Exactly how does Christianity make a difference? What kind of society would Christianity bring forth? In what ways would such a society be different from the society we live in today, the society of humanism? Is there a specifically-biblical system of social ethics? What *practical* difference should Christianity make in the life of a ruler, businessman, judge, teacher, or scientist?

This book introduces people to the fundamentals of Christianity, including *applied* Christianity. It is thoroughly biblical. It provides evidence taken directly from the Scriptures. It offers suggestions for further reading, as well as the names and addresses of independent Christian organizations that are equipping Christians for the battles they face today.

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**The Dominion Covenant: Genesis** by Gary North. 496 pp., indexed, bibliography, hb., \$14.95. Institute for Christian Economics, Tyler, TX.

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This is the first volume of a multi-volume commentary on the Bible. It is specifically an *economic* commentary—the first one ever published. What does the Bible require of men in the area of economics and business? What does the Bible have to say about economic theory? Does it teach the free market, or socialism, or a mixture of the two, or something completely different? Is there really an exclusively Christian approach to economics?

*The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* answers these questions, and many others, by setting forth the biblical foundations of economics. It offers the basis of a total reconstruction of economic theory and practice. It specifically abandons the universal presupposition of all modern schools of economics: Darwinian evolution. *Economics must begin with the doctrine of creation.*

*The Dominion Covenant: Genesis* represents a self-conscious effort to rethink the oldest and most rigorous social science in terms of the doctrine of creation. Every social science requires such a reconstruction. The “baptized humanism” of the modern Christian college classroom must be abandoned by all those who take seriously God’s command that Christians go forth and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28).

The message of this groundbreaking work is that God has given us clear, infallible standards of righteousness—practical guidelines by which Christians are to reconstruct civilization.

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**Foundations of Christian Scholarship: Essays in the Van Til Perspective** edited by Gary North. 355 pp., indexed, hb., \$7.50. Ross House, Vallecito, CA.

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The contents of this book represent an attempt to examine various academic disciplines in terms of the interpretive principle of biblical *a priorism*: the Bible judges both the framework and the content of each academic discipline. This position has been argued most forcefully in this generation by the eminent Christian theologian and philosopher Dr. Cornelius Van Til.

The final standard of all human thought must be either the Bible or else the logic of the self-appointed autonomous mind of man. The mind of man is not autonomous, Van Til has argued; it is derivative, created, and ethically fallen. It now labors under the curse of God. It is not the standard of truth in any region of the universe. Hence, Van Til asserts, men must bring their speculations back into subjection to the revelation of God.

All of the contributors believe with Van Til that the revelation of God to men in the Bible is the authoritative starting point and the final court of intellectual appeal on earth. Each contribution is offered on the assumption that all forms of secular knowledge have been constructed on foundations of epistemological sand. They represent an attempt to avoid the "baptized secularism" of the modern Christian colleges.

It covers economics, education, philosophy, history, sociology, psychology, and theology. It also has a chapter on how to defend the faith (apologetics).

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**The Theology of Christian Resistance and The Tactics of Christian Resistance** (volumes 2 and 3 of *Christianity and Civilization*) edited by Gary North. 908 pp., \$20 for the set. Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler, TX.

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Must Christians obey every command of "Caesar"? If not, at what point should Christians resist? Is there a difference between lawful resistance and lawless anarchy? These large volumes are devoted to answering such questions—questions which have become increasingly important in the last decade. With dozens of articles by such leaders as Gary North, R. J. Rushdoony, Francis Schaeffer, and John Whitehead, the symposium covers these issues and more: tyranny, law, conflicting worldviews, pacifism, the American Revolution, and the reconstruction of our civilization in terms of biblical law.

But these volumes are not only important for developing a *theology* of resistance to tyranny. They deal with *tactics* of resistance as well, providing many workable plans for churches and Christian groups to foil unlawful government intrusions. In addition, they offer a concrete strategy for building a Christian culture; for the "bottom line" of all Christian activity must be a positive thrust for God's kingdom.

There is a wealth of material here on taxation, Christian school issues, and other legal matters which are becoming more and more significant in our day. A major theme developed in these pages is the thesis that Christian churches are not *exempt* from taxation—i.e., by the grace of the guardian state—but that churches are *immune* from taxation.

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**The Institutes of Biblical Law** by Rousas John Rushdoony. 890 pp., indexed, hb., \$18.50. Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ.

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In this magnificent work, Dr. Rushdoony has laid the foundation for what may well become the flowering of a Christian civilization. The *institutes*—meaning *first principles*—of the Bible's divinely-ordained social order are clearly set forth, categorized under the general headings of each of the Ten Commandments. Here are practical, workable expositions of what God's word says about work, marriage and the family, criminal law, the arts and sciences, civil government, the church, and much more.

Rushdoony emphasizes that it is impossible to understand either the Bible or the development of Western civilization apart from a solid grasp of biblical law. In fact, he points out, *all law is religious in origin*, in every culture; and "in any culture *the source of law is the god of that society*." But there is only one true God, and this means that the Bible is the only source of true law; the nations are required to be Christian. The Bible is our final standard in *everything*.

If we believe the Bible, we cannot escape the fact that God requires universal obedience. His law governs us in every area of life, and He commands that He be glorified in all creation. The Christian can do no less than to become educated and adept in the worldwide application of biblical principles. All things, large and small, are to be placed under the dominion of Christ.

*The Institutes of Biblical Law* is helping Christians around the world fulfill this mandate. It has become *the standard reference work* for scholars and activists in every field.

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**The Biblical Philosophy of History** by Rousas John Rushdoony. 148 pp., indexed, pb., \$3.50. Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ.

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The effect of Christianity upon the pagan world was shattering, primarily because the Christian faith brought with it a view of history utterly antithetical to the static, cyclical, dead-end philosophies of paganism. For this reason, it is vitally important for any Christian activist to grasp the biblical perspective, which sees history moving inexorably in terms of God and toward His universal glory: "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever" (Rom. 11:36).

As R. J. Rushdoony observes in this pointed and seminal work: "The idea of predestination is an inescapable concept. It is a premise of all human thinking, a logical concomitant to thinking. The universe moves in terms of God's eternal decree, and man, created in God's image, thinks inevitably in terms of the purpose, pattern, and decree which predestination gives to all creation and to the functions of human thought.

"When man therefore denies the divine predestination, he denies God's decree only to replace it with another decree." The rise of both totalitarianism and anarchy are thus twin aspects of this central fact of the modern age: men have replaced God and his predestination with a divinized Man.

Christianity alone provides both the stable framework *and* the true dynamic of history. Meaning and purpose are inextricably woven into every aspect of history, precisely *because* the infallible plan of God has determined the complete course of all events. This is a profoundly biblical treatise, crucial for our time.



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**Intellectual Schizophrenia: Culture, Crisis, and Education**  
by Rousas John Rushdoony. 141 pp., indexed, pb.,  
\$5.50. Presbyterian and Reformed, Phillipsburg, NJ.

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R. J. Rushdoony is one of the great Christian scholars of this century. He is, perhaps, best known for his pioneering work in the field of Christian education, and *Intellectual Schizophrenia*, one of his earliest books, did much to establish his reputation. This slim volume is a devastating, uncompromising attack on secular humanism in education, in both public and private education. More than this, it is a perceptive and prophetic assault on the antichristian delusions of pluralism.

Rushdoony argues that all education, to be *true* education, must inescapably be Christian. Christian education is founded on the revelation of the Bible and the doctrine of the Trinity; it sees man as neither a blank slate nor a child of the state, but as "God's vicegerent, created in His image and called upon to establish dominion over all creation—and over himself."

This is an important and necessary work, not only for schoolteachers but for leaders and instructors in every area. Rushdoony provides the foundations for an educational philosophy which will prove invaluable to anyone involved in training others—and, indeed, for self-discipline as well. In the process, he brings many of our most cherished assumptions and faulty presuppositions under the strong searchlight of Holy Scripture. Virtually no one escapes unscathed from Rushdoony's gentle and careful but penetrating analysis. *Intellectual Schizophrenia* remains one of the most powerful and relevant works of Christian scholarship in print.

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**Idols for Destruction: Christian Faith and Its Confrontation with American Society** by Herbert Schlossberg. 344 pp., indexed, hb., \$14.95; pb., \$8.95. Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN.

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All men are religious. If men will not worship and serve the Creator, said the Apostle Paul, they will worship and serve the creature, a god of their own imagination. In *Idols for Destruction*, Herbert Schlossberg calls our attention to many of the fashionable *isms* of our age, pointing out that, as substitutes for the true God, they constitute idolatry.

"Western society, in turning away from the Christian faith, has turned to other things. This process is commonly called *secularization*, but that conveys only its negative aspect. The word connotes the turning away from the worship of God while ignoring the fact that something is being turned *to* in its place." Your highest value, Schlossberg says, is your god.

Thus, Eve was the first humanist: she attempted to gain wisdom apart from God and His law. The crisis of civilization is rooted in our answer to this most basic question, the question originally faced by Adam and Eve. Who is the Lawgiver: God or man? What shall be the basis of our personal, social, and cultural existence: God's word or man's?

A recurring theme in Schlossberg's work is *judgment*. Civilizations do not just "rise and fall." The biblical explanation for the end of societies is that they become *judged* through rebellion against the law of God. The answer for the evils afflicting our culture is a return to the worship of the true God and obedience to His commandments in every area of life.

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**Israel and the New Covenant** by Roderick Campbell. 350 pp., indexed, hb., \$12.95. Geneva Divinity School Press, Tyler, TX.

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Dissenting with much that passes today for "prophetic" teaching, Roderick Campbell turns back to the Bible for a refreshing and enlightening exposition of the kingdom of God and the coming of Christ. As Campbell demonstrates, there is no justification in Scripture for the pessimism and defeatism which have plagued much of the church's attitude in recent history.

Campbell begins with a study of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, showing how the Old Covenant led to its fulfillment in the New Covenant order brought by Jesus Christ. He then goes on to discuss how Christ founded the kingdom of God through His finished work in history, ascending to rule over all creation from His heavenly throne.

It is this central fact which provides the foundation of all Christian witness and activity. Because Jesus Christ is reigning now as King of kings and Lord of lords, His people have the absolute assurance of victory in their appointed mission. Because He has received "all power in heaven and earth," and has promised to be with us until the end, we can have complete confidence that our task of discipling the nations will be successful. As Jesus promised, the meek will inherit the earth.

*Israel and the New Covenant* is one of the most valuable resources a Christian can have for the systematic study of Scripture. Packed with information on many issues of practical importance, it shows how the Bible itself provides the keys to its own interpretation. This is a vitally important work.

## **ORDER BLANKS**

I am including a number of order blanks that you can use to get on mailing lists, find out about important programs, and buy materials. These organizations are hard working, geared to Christian reconstruction, and aimed at intelligent laymen. They all deserve your consideration. I strongly recommend that you cut out or tear out these pages and mail them to the various organizations.

If you prefer not to tear out these sheets, photocopy them and mail them in, or just mail in a card.

Warning: if you fail to use the aids this book provides, you haven't understood this book. Knowledge should lead to action. Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only (James 1:22).

Gary North

If I had read *75 Bible Questions Your Instructors Pray You Won't Ask* back in 1967, I would have saved myself a lot of confusion and time in my eight years of higher education. Some people may not believe that an inexpensive paperback book like *75 Bible Questions* could make that big a difference, but it can. There's nothing else like it. Serious Bible students today now have a tremendous advantage that my generation didn't have. But not-so-serious Bible students will be driven crazy by this book. These 75 questions are going to create a sensation. I'm all for it. But it might be wise for students at certain schools to avoid displaying the book openly; it threatens some campus administrators too much.

Rev. Ray Sutton, Th.M.  
Dallas Theological Seminary (1976)

Without a book like *75 Bible Questions*, Christian students in your average Christian college or seminary are almost defenseless theologically. They are too easily misled. Bright students don't find out until years later that they missed the opportunity of a lifetime to get controversial questions answered during their years of formal higher education. They seldom know which questions to ask. These 75 questions are the best I've ever seen to get the Bible education process rolling. If you're not in school, then get these questions answered at your church. But get them answered.

Rev. Lewis Bulkeley, Th.M.  
Dallas Theological Seminary (1975)

# WARNING!

While this may sound a little hokey, I strongly recommend that you keep this book out of sight on campus or at church until you have determined the attitude toward **extreme theological controversy** which is held by your campus administrators or pastor. There are several colleges in the United States that have a policy of expelling students who even consider theological questions as controversial as the 75 questions that are in this book. I don't want to get anyone kicked out of school or church.

This is probably the most controversial Christian book ever circulated on your campus or in your church. It may outrage administrators, professors, and pastors who are unsure of themselves theologically. Don't make extra trouble for yourself. Study the 75 questions before you start parading around with this book in your hand. Also, find out whether you could be expelled for owning a copy.

Gary North