



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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IS JESUS JEHOVAH?

Stephen Wiggins

One’s answer to this question must be based on exegesis of the biblical text. This study is vital because some maintain that the term Yahweh should be used only in reference to the Father, not to the Son or the Holy Spirit.

Jehovah is a name for God that appears multiple times in the 1901 American Standard translation of the Old Testament and occasionally in the 1611 King James Version. The term is composed of four Hebrew consonants: YHWH. In academic sources, YHWH is often called the Tetragrammaton, which in Greek means “having four letters.” The original Hebrew text of the Old Testament was unpointed, meaning words were written only with consonants, and no vowels. Over time, the correct pronunciation of YHWH was lost due to the Jewish practice of refraining from pronouncing the sacred name to avoid misuse. This practice continues in modern, Rabbinical Judaism. Later, the vowel sounds of “Lord” (Adonai) were applied to YHWH, resulting in the English word “Jehovah.” Thus, the name Jehovah attempts to approximate the original YHWH, giving us either Jehovah or Yahweh.

THE NAME YAHWEH

The name Yahweh appears over 6,800 times in the Old Testament. Occasionally, English translators use the term LORD in all capital letters to indicate where the name Yahweh is found in the original language and to distinguish it from *Elohim* and *Adonai*. Yahweh is the name the Lord

provided to differentiate Himself from the heathen gods of the pagan world (Ex. 3:13-15). It signifies a unique covenant relationship between God and Israel. The name Yahweh is generally believed to be associated with a verb that means “to be,” thus suggesting the idea of a self-existing being, one with existence without origins (Ex. 3:14). The name Yahweh may be used to characterize the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit since all three persons are divine and members of the Godhead (Wayne Jackson, *Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy*, 91).

THE GODHEAD

There is but one God or Godhead (Deut. 6:4). This one divine essence is composed of three separate and distinct persons, characterized in the New Testament as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). These three individuals are coequal and co-eternal one with another. Thus, biblically, the Father is called God (John 6:27). The Son is called God (Heb. 1:8). The Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-4). Whereas there is but one God or divine essence, this one divine nature is equally shared by these three persons. This is how God reveals himself on the pages of the Bible: one God in three persons. One source states, “The Bible often

refers to God by his proper name, which was probably pronounced Yahweh. The usual Hebrew word for God is Elohim, another plural of majesty with a singular meaning when used of Yahweh” (Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 548).

BIBLICAL EXPOSITION

Is Jesus Jehovah? One’s answer to this question must be based on exegesis of the biblical text. This study is vital because some maintain that the term Yahweh should be used only in reference to the Father, not to the Son or the Holy Spirit. Thus, the following questions are posed: How is the name Yahweh used in the Bible? Does its usage include references to the Godhead in general? Are there times when Jesus himself is in view? In answer to these questions, please consider the following observations.

1. In Exodus 3, the terms Yahweh and Elohim are repeatedly used interchangeably regarding the Lord God who appeared to Moses at the burning bush. Yahweh is the great “I AM” of Exodus 3:14. This is significant because Jesus applies this terminology to himself when he claims for himself

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Editorial...

THE PARALYZING EFFECT OF SIN

Garland M. Robinson

*The only way to escape the consequences
of our sins is to obey the Gospel;
and, continue living in obedience to
the Gospel as long as we live.*

The apostle John was inspired to write these words: “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). When the number of the righteous (saints) is compared to the number of the unrighteous (sinners), it is “as” there are none who will be saved. The phrase “the whole world” is a figure of speech called a *hyperbole* — an exaggerated statement that is not meant to be taken literally. For example...

John and the other eleven apostles were not included in the declaration that the whole world was living wickedly. We read of around 3,000 who repented and were baptized when the Gospel was preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). Notice many other verses in Acts. Acts 4:4, “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand.” Acts 5:14, “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Acts 6:1, “The number of the disciples was multiplied.” Acts 6:7, “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Acts 9:35, “And all that dwelt at Lydda...turned to the Lord.” Acts 11:21, “A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.” Acts 16:5, “And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.”

In the book of Revelation we read of John saying, “...I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds,

and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9-10).

The wicked are lost because they have sinned: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). However, Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). Paul writes of Christ, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Living in sin will never get us to heaven. As a matter of fact, it prevents us from going there. It makes us numb and useless, where our conscience reaches a point that it can no longer be touched.

Sin is not a laughing matter! The eternal fires of Hell is the consequence of sin. There is, for sure, a reckoning day coming when “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom [this world] **all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth**” (Matt. 13:41-42).

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnash-

ing of teeth. Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord” (Matt. 13:47-51).

How should we think of sin in our lives?

Sin is **PARALYZING**. The longer you continue to embrace it, indulge in it, the deeper you sink into a cesspool of eternal damnation. God warns us that “*evil men and seducers shall wax [grow, become] worse and worse, deceiving [others], and being deceived [by others]*” (2 Tim. 3:13). Sin stuns you into numbness where you no longer are sensitive to uprightness, goodness, and moral decency. You become oblivious to it. Ultimately, you reach a point from which you cannot return because you don’t want to return. You no longer care or mourn over your sins because your conscience is seared to the point where there’s no more feeling of holy and right things (cf. 1 Tim. 4:2).

Sin paralyzes our **EYES** so we can’t see spiritual things, holy things. All you think about is living for the moment. There is a heaven and a hell, but you don’t see it. Christians who do not grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ are “...*blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins*” (2 Peter 1:9; 3:18). In 2 Peter 2:14 we read of those who have “...*eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children*” (2 Peter 2:14).

I’m going to make sure I’m not in that number! How about you?

Sin paralyzes our **MOUTH** to the point that it cannot speak of holy and eternal things. Jesus said, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). “Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness” (Psalm 52:2-3).

I’m going to make sure I’m not in that number who refuse to speak truth and soberness (Acts 26:25). How about you?

Sin paralyzes our **HANDS** from working righteousness. “Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for

the reward of his hands shall be given him” (Isa. 3:11). The “hands of the wicked” reaches the point where he cannot “return from his wicked way” (Ezek. 13:22). Remember, it was wicked hands that nailed Jesus to the cross (cf. Acts 2:23). The sinful are warned: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Eph. 4:28). “The wicked is snared in the work of his own hands” (Psalm 9:16). I’m going to make sure I’m not numbered with the wicked! How about you?

Those who are accepted of God are those who “hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psa. 24:4). “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me” (Psalm 18:20).

Sin paralyzes our **FEET** so they cannot go about doing that which is good and right (Gal. 6:10). God hates those who use their “feet...in running to mischief” (Prov. 6:18). The wise man wrote: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. ... Walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path: For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood” (Prov. 1:10, 15-16). I’m going to make sure I’m not in the number who run to do evil (Prov. 1:16)! How about you?

Sin paralyzes our **EARS** so they cannot hear words of truth and soberness. “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” (Matt. 13:15). Jesus said: “Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word” (John 8:43). Sinners so desperately need to hear the Gospel, but they are “dull of hearing” (Heb. 5:11).

I’m going to make sure I’m not in that number! How about you?

Sin paralyzes our **HEART** that it will not trust in the Lord. Our heart can be “hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb. 3:13). Pharaoh “hardened his heart, and harkened not unto them; as unto the

Lord. ... Neither would he let the people go” (Exodus 8:15,32). “Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief” (Prov. 28:14). Jesus “appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen” (Mark 16:14). Many are those who harden their heart and refuse to repent. There is coming a day “of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5).

We ought to be as the Psalmist: “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” (Psalm 101:2). I’m going to make sure my heart

keeps me on the right path! How about you?

The only way to escape the consequences of our sins is to obey the Gospel; and, continue living in obedience to the Gospel as long as we live.

If you want your sins forgiven:

- 1) Hear/Learn the Gospel (John 6:44-45),
- 2) Believe in Jesus, the only begotten Son of God (Mark 16:16),
- 3) Repent of your sins (Acts 17:30),
- 4) Confess faith in Christ the Son of God (Acts 8:37),
- 5) Baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
- 6) Live Faithful to the Lord all your life (Rev. 2:10).

WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE?

Jon Gary Williams

The scriptures give no information about Cain’s wife. However, some have ventured to say that she was from another group of people whom God had created. However, this cannot be, for the Bible is clear in stating that Eve was “the mother of all living” (Gen. 3:20).

The obvious answer to this question is that Cain married a relative — a sister of course. We are not told how many years passed between the births of Cain and Able to the time Cain murdered Able and went to Nod. There could have been many years during which Adam and Eve had other children. After all, Adam and Eve had been told, “Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth...” (Gen. 1:28). And, we read that Adam begat many other “sons and daughters” (Gen. 5:4). So, there could have been any number of women from whom Cain could select to be his wife.

But, some have argued that this could not be for it would involve an incestuous relationship. However, this overlooks that in the early stages of human reproduction, man no doubt, experienced a pure genetic state before harmful genetic traits existed. For example, we read that even at the time of Abraham, he married his half-sister Sarah (Gen. 20:12).

Actually, marriage between near relatives was not an issue until many years later when it was outlawed under the Law of Moses (Lev. 18). Through the years man’s genetic condition became contaminated with genetic disorders, and to protect the nation of Israel, God saw the need to condemn incestuous marriages.

Years ago, an older Gospel preacher expressed it this way. “To simply put it, Cain selected his wife from his father’s house. So, not only was Adam the father of Cain, he also became his father-in-law.”

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eternality and the divine nature he is the “I am” (John 8:58). Thus, Jesus applies to his own person “the very name that Yahweh used in the Old Testament concerning himself.” This same name and expression undergirds all of Jesus’ “I am” statements in the gospel of John (William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, 161). Another source notes that Jesus “is here claiming to be the one who spoke to Moses at the burning bush, the I AM, the eternally existing One, Yahweh” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 531; emphasis supplied). Commenting under the caption, “Jesus is Yahweh,” brother Hugo McCord states. “Jesus Christ is then of the same nature as his Father and is no less God, and is no less Yahweh, the self-existent one Jesus Christ, being the express image of his Father, is himself Yahweh, the self-existent one” (Getting Acquainted With God, 17-18).

2. In Isaiah 2:1-5, the prophet articulates a prophetic statement concerning the establishment of the Lord’s church and the proclamation of the gospel in the “last days” (cf. Micah 4:1-5). In this passage, the terms Yahweh and Elohim are used interchangeably. When the prophet states, “The law will go out from Zion, the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem,” he is anticipating the law or gospel of Christ being preached initially from Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. This is precisely what Jesus stated before his ascension (Luke 24:44-49; cf. Gal. 6:2, “the law of Christ”). The “word of Yahweh” going forth from Jerusalem is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the Yahweh of Isaiah 2 is the Christ of Acts 2.

3. Isaiah 6 records the call and commission of Isaiah. The prophet receives a vision and sees Yahweh sitting on his heavenly throne. In this passage, the terms Yahweh and Adonai are used interchangeably. Later, the apostle John quotes this passage, which prophetically anticipates the Savior’s rejection by unbelievers. The apostle remarks, “These things said Isaiah, because he saw his glory; and he spake of him” (John 12:39-41). Here, the reader is informed that when Isaiah saw Yahweh seated

on his throne, the prophet saw Jesus’ glory and thus spoke of Jesus. One should not miss the importance of John’s statement. Whereas Isaiah sees Yahweh on the heavenly throne, John the apostle, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, interprets the passage as the prophet seeing Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, on the throne. One source notes: The “apostle John cites this passage and observes that in the vision Isaiah actually saw the reincarnate Word, Christ (John 12:36-41). Thus, the “Jehovah of Isaiah 6:5 is the “Christ” of the first century. This is an important point in view of certain cultic claims that the title “Jehovah” applies only to God the Father (Wayne Jackson, *Isaiah*, 19; emphasis supplied).

4. In Isaiah 40:1-5, the prophet states a prophecy concerning the work of John the Baptist. Within this passage, the terms Yahweh and Elohim are used synonymously. It is stated that the voice of one crying in the wilderness would “prepare the way for Yahweh” (Isa. 40:3; cf. Luke 1:17). This prophecy is quoted in the New Testament and applied to John’s role in preparing the way for Jesus’ mission and ministry (Matt. 3:3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:4-6). In another place, John personally applies this Old Testament passage to himself (John 1:23). One source notes: “In Isaiah 40:3, the way of Yahweh is being “made straight” (a metaphor using road building to refer to repentance); in Matthew 3:3 it is the way of Jesus. This sort of identification of Jesus with Yahweh is common in the NT (Ex 13:21 and 1 Co 10:1; Ex 17:6 and 1 Co 10:4; Is 6:1 and John 12:41; Ps 68:18 and Eph 4:8; Ps 102:25-27 and Heb 1:10-12) and confirms the kingdom as being equally the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Jesus” (D.A. Carson, *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, 9:130; emphasis supplied). Jesus is here clearly identified as Yahweh. Again, “Nothing in the immediate context of Isa. 40 suggests that Isaiah is referring to anyone other than Yahweh himself... Thus, the “Lord” in this quotation [at Matt. 3:3] is not simply Yahweh, but Jesus as God’s self-revelation” (G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 12-13; 120; emphasis supplied).

5. In Joel 2:27-32, the prophet

anticipates a time in which the Holy Spirit would be poured out upon people and the revelation of the gospel of Christ would commence. Peter quotes this prophecy and applies it to the “last days” of the Christian era (Acts 2:16-21). Joel uses the terms Yahweh and Elohim interchangeably in this passage. He uses Yahweh four times, whereas Elohim is used once. It would be Yahweh who would give the Spirit. The significance of this is that Peter attributes to Jesus as the one who gave the Spirit “This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we are all witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this which you see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33). Here the text informs the reader that Jesus, having received from the Father the promise of the Spirit, he [Jesus] “poured forth” (cf. Acts 2:17-18) this miraculous phenomenon which was seen and heard on Pentecost. The significance of this observation is that the Yahweh of Joel 2 is the Jesus of Acts 2. One source captures the thought: “Having received the Holy Spirit, according to God’s promise, Jesus Himself has “poured forth” this power; He has orchestrated this amazing display” (Wayne Jackson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 25; emphasis supplied). Another source states: “As a result, Jesus has poured out what the audience sees and hears, that is, the gift of the Spirit. The aorist verb form [“poured out”] recalls the verb in Acts 2:17 (in the Joel 3 citation) and links the two passages Jesus has now done what Joel promised. Thus, the Spirit’s outpouring fulfills the promise pointing to the last days and to the Messiah’s mediation of salvation from God’s side” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts: Baker Exegetical Commentary*, 131; note that the author just quoted cites Joel 3; that is because Joel 2:28 begins chapter 3:1 in the Hebrew Bible, sw).

6. In Psalm 68:18, the Psalmist anticipates when Yahweh would receive gifts from wartime captives. In this context, the terms Yahweh, Elohim, and Adonai are all used interchangeably. The apostle Paul quotes this passage in Ephesians and, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, adapts and applies it to the distribution and reception of miraculous gifts in the first century church “But unto

each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, “When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:7-8). In this passage, it is Jesus who ascends into heaven and gives gifts to men (cf. John 16:7). Whereas in Psalm 68:18, it is Yahweh connected with the gifts; in Ephesians 4:7-8, it is Jesus who is the giver and distributor of those spiritual gifts (cf. Acts 2:33; Ernest Best, Ephesians, 378). Is Jesus Yahweh? The apostle Paul answers in the affirmative.

Conclusion

Alexander Campbell (1788-1866) was an influential restorer of biblical principles. Within the churches of Christ today, many exegetes continue to build on the scriptural expositions that he left for our benefit. One is not a “Campbellite” merely because he agrees with something Campbell taught. Instead, a Campbellite teaches a religious principle just because Campbell taught it. Thus, the following quote is not intended to appeal to a source of authority in Campbell. But rather to illustrate that one should consider Yahweh as a name for the divine nature. And that this position is not like a new-fangled and unscriptural idea being fostered upon the brotherhood of God’s people. The use of the term Yahweh to reference each person of the Godhead has always been among our people, going back to the Restoration Movement, yea, back to the New Testament scriptures. In 1858, Campbell published his commentary of notes on the Greek text of the Acts of the Apostles in which he states: “There is Jehovah God, the Father, and Jehovah God, the Son, and Jehovah God, the Holy Spirit, in the Christian revelations and manifestations of Jehovah Elohim” (p. 16; emphasis supplied). Based on what Campbell understood the Bible to teach, he had no reservations about referring to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as Yahweh. One God in three persons. One Yahweh in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, the question is asked: Is Jesus Jehovah? We answer unhesitatingly, Absolutely! This is what we believe. And so we teach.

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ALL OR NOTHING

Jonnie Hutchison

To love God with one’s whole heart, whole soul and whole mind is to love Him with every fiber of one’s being. It is to love Him completely.

A Pharisee asked Jesus, “What is the greatest commandment of all?” Jesus answered: “...thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matt. 22:37-38). Luke adds “with all thy strength” (Luke 10:27).

Note the use of the word “all.” The Greek word is *holos* which means the “whole” as to extent or amount. To what extent should one love God? With one’s whole heart, whole soul and whole mind. This leaves no room for a divided love. The inspired John wrote in 1 John 2:15-16, “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” It is obvious from this statement that one cannot love God and the world at the same time. One who tries to love God and love the world simultaneously will fail spiritually. One may “love God” or “love the world,” but one cannot love both at the same time and expect to go to heaven. When it comes to loving God, It Is All Or Nothing!

In a similar statement, Jesus said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). “Mammon” represents the material; and, in particular, money or wealth. Such may become our “master” and we become slaves to it if we allow it to control our lives by giving the material things of life priority over serving God. Jesus teaches that when it comes to loving God, It Is All Or Nothing!

The Bible teaches that love for God is shown by keeping what He has commanded us. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). John wrote, “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” [burdensome] (1 John 5:3). How many of God’s commands must one keep to express the proper love for God? May one pick those he likes and reject the rest? The book of James tells us, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). The law of Christ is not a smorgasbord where one chooses what one likes and leaves the rest. When it comes to loving God, and thus obeying Him, It Is All Or Nothing!

To love God with one’s whole heart, whole soul and whole mind is to love Him with every fiber of one’s being. It is to love Him completely. One who loves God to this extent will put Him and His Will first in his/her life. Serving God will always take priority over any other consideration (Matt. 6:33).

Preparing to exist eternally with God will be the primary goal of one’s life. Every decision and choice will be governed by the knowledge that when it comes to loving God, It Is All Or Nothing!

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WHAT TYPE OF JUDGING DOES JESUS CONDEMN?

MATTHEW 7

Roger D. Campbell

The Bible speaks about different types of judging. We have to look at the context to see what “judging” is being discussed. Some judging is condemned by our Lord. Other judging is endorsed by Him.

Jesus said, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete [use], it shall be measured to you again*” (Matt. 7:1-2). Many folks who know little about the Bible can quote Matthew 7:1! We do not deny what these verses say because Jesus said it, we know it is true. We totally accept it.

Did you notice that the Master said that disciples will judge and be judged (7:2)? In whatever manner disciples judge others, they can expect to receive similar judgment/treatment from them (7:2; Luke 6:37-38).

What kind of judging does Jesus not want us to do? It’s judging that is inconsistent and unfair. Jesus said, “*And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye*” (Matt. 7:3-4)? It is not wrong to recognize and acknowledge that a brother has something in his eye (7:3). It is not right, however, to see and speak about my brother’s eye issue, but at the same time refuse to deal with/take care of what is in my own eye.

The judgment Jesus was condemning was *hypocritical* judging. “*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye*” (7:5). Hypocrites are pretenders.

Outwardly, they look like one kind of person, but in their heart, that is not who they really are. The word “hypocrite” meant an actor who wore a mask. They were one person in real life and another person in the theater — on stage. Jesus wants us to be “the real deal” — genuine at all times. Before we try to “straighten

out” other people, we need to make sure we are living properly ourselves (7:1-2).

If we step outside of Matthew 7, we find other biblical instruction about inappropriate judging. Judgment that is harsh and without mercy is wrong (James 2:13). So is judging according to outward appearance (John 7:24). Judgment that is prejudicial also is out of place.

Having “prejudice” is prejudging someone. It is a judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known, a preconceived idea, a bias not based on facts. The Bible clearly condemns judging that is partial, that is, showing favoritism or feeling animosity toward another person simply because they are of a particular race or from a different region in our own country, or because of their outward looks, social standing, etc. Treating others with “respect of persons” is wrong (James 2:1-9).

There is another side of the judging coin. There are some judgments which the Lord expects us to make. If one keeps reading in Matthew 7, he will come to statements Jesus made about how to deal with dogs (7:6), hogs (7:6), wolves (7:15), and evil fruit (7:17). The Christ expects us to be able to identify such and act accordingly. Yes, we must make a judgment call about who and what are dogs, hogs, wolves, and evil fruit. We might say that Jesus wants us to do “fang and fruit inspection” (7:15-18).

When people hear the word “judge” they can get very emotional. We need to remain calm and investigate all the Bible says about judgment before we make our final conclusions. Jesus told people to judge “righteous” judgment (John 7:24). If Jesus said to do it, it cannot be wrong. This kind of judgment takes a look at what God’s word says and investigates all the facts in a matter, then we must make a decision that is based on the Bible’s teaching and the facts of the situation at hand.

First things first: we must examine ourselves to make sure we are living in the right manner (2 Cor. 13:5). There are times when we observe fellow disciples who have fallen into sin. When that happens, what are we to do? With a spirit of meekness, we are to approach them and try to restore them (Gal. 6:1). Doing so does not violate what Jesus said about judging. In fact, it shows a genuine concern for a person who is struggling.

As we try to get a grip on the types of judging that are acceptable and which kinds are wrong, and as we strive to deal with our fellow man, let us all be practicers of “The Golden Rule” of Jesus of treating others as we would like to be treated (Matt. 7:12). Yes, let us do our best to treat and judge others in the way we would like them to deal with us.

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“WHEREFORE DIDST THOU DOUBT?”

Marvin L. Weir

This is a most significant “wherefore” in the teaching of Christ. Peter doubted while in the Lord’s immediate presence. Many people today follow in the footsteps of Peter and doubt in the very light of God’s precious Word. In either case, it is unreasonable to doubt be-

cause of the assurances that have been given (John 20:30-31).

The disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, and thinking they had seen a ghost, were frightened and troubled. The Scriptures then declare: “*But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I;*

be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, **wherefore didst thou doubt**? (Matt. 14:27-31)?

Peter has no reason to doubt. He has witnessed the mighty power of Christ. He now sees Him walking on the sea. Peter hears the Master bid him to come, and yet he doubts. Why? Will Christ fail him? No! Is Christ deceiving or tricking Peter? No! Will Peter not be able to do what Christ bids him to do? No! Why, then, is Peter filled with doubt? He becomes more concerned with the **wind** than the **Master!** It is at this moment that Peter is filled with doubt and begins to sink.

Satan has always attempted to entice men to lose faith and doubt. Eve understood God's instructions regarding the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. "God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:3). The devil's reply: "Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-5). Eve allows herself to doubt the commandment of Jehovah and sins in partaking of the forbidden fruit.

Lack of faith that leads to doubt is a spiritual killer! This is clearly seen in the Scripture that says, "...for he that doubteth is like is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6-8).

Let's study some areas where doubt leads to spiritual destruction.

It is lack of faith and doubt that leads to the establishment of man-made churches. Jesus forthrightly declares, "I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Christ built his church, purchasing it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). What man has the right to build his own church and claim it is the one

purchased by Christ? It is lack of faith or doubt that contributes to men thinking the church of Christ is not sufficient to accomplish God's purpose. It is lack of faith and doubt that keeps people from obeying the Gospel. The Bible does **not** say, "He that accepts Christ into his heart as his personal Savior and has a religious experience shall be saved." The Bible **does** say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Why do most people today believe what the Bible does not say about salvation and reject what the Bible does say? It is simply a lack of faith in the inspired Word of God!

It is lack of faith and doubt that has people worshipping in error. The Bible says one who worships God "must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). This means one cannot attend the church of his choice and worship the way he desires. Such an attitude demonstrates lack of faith and doubt in what God has commanded.

It is lack of faith and doubt that has people thinking they are going to Heaven while living ungodly lives. An ever-growing number of people believe they can lie, cheat, steal, drink intoxicating beverages, live in fornication or adultery, be possessed with envy, jealousy, hatred, wrath, or a divisive spirit and still be saved (Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 13:9; James 5:1-11). Men may believe such because of lack of faith and a lustful desire to do otherwise, but the Bible says "they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:21).

It is lack of faith and doubt anytime one chooses not to abide by a commandment God has given. God's Word is not optional, and a failure to obey is frightening. John reminds us, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:).

Peter is more concerned with the wind than the Master and begins to doubt. Many today lose faith and begin doubting because they are more concerned with man-made creeds or satisfying self than obeying God and saving their souls!

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KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM, AND SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

Bill Boyd

Paul began his letter to the Colossians telling them he had prayed, *“that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”* (Col. 1:9). They had been taught enough to know they needed to be buried with Christ in baptism (Col. 2:12). The gospel in their hearts had shown itself in their faith and love for all the saints (Col. 1:4), but now they were being pressured to conform to human philosophies (Col. 2:8) — Judaizing teachers (Col. 2:14-17), and pagan practices (Col. 2:18-23). There was more they needed to learn. Paul prayed, but Paul did not expect the Holy Spirit to fill their minds with the things of God in a mystical magical way. Paul followed his prayer with his letter. Knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding would come to them as they gave heed to the things Paul *“wrote.”*

We can think of *knowledge* as an awareness of facts and truths, *wisdom* as the ability to apply those facts and truth to our lives, and *understanding* as an appreciation of the significance and importance of these things. Pagans may have been satisfied with blind compliance to ritual, *“because the gods want this;”* but the Gospel transforms the mind and obedience is from the heart.

Under the new covenant, understanding is always fundamental to obedience. Beginning with baptism, Paul wrote that we should *“obey from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you”* (Rom. 6:17). Obedience from the heart is not limited to sincerity; it includes understanding; Jesus said we are to understand with the heart (Matt. 13:15). Hence Jeremiah had prophesied, *“They shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them”* (Jer. 13:34). They would know because they would have already been taught. In Romans 12:2 Paul wrote, *“Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* The mind is spiritual, and power of the Gospel is spiritual; it renews the mind. Their understanding would be *“spiritual understanding”* because they would understand the things of God (cf. John 3:12).

They would not need a rule book of specific laws to cover every situation of life. As they grew in understanding they would have the wisdom to *“walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing”* (Col. 1:10). It would make them *“fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God”* (Col. 1:10). They would be *“strengthened with all might according to his glorious power”* (Col. 1:11), as David had prayed, *“strengthen thou me according unto thy word”* (Psa. 119:128).

Spiritual strength comes by way of spiritual understanding; and with spiritual strength they would face

the trials of life with *“patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”* (Col. 1:11). And they would do so, *“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light...”* (Col. 1:12). Note how comprehensive Paul is: *“all wisdom,” “all pleasing,” “every good work,” “all might,” “all patience.”*

We still need to fill our lives with knowledge, wisdom, and spiritual understanding. We should still strive to walk worthy of our Lord, to please him in all things, to be fruitful in every good work, and to increase in the knowledge of God. We still need strength, patience, and longsuffering. We should still live with joy and thanksgiving. Paul’s epistles teach us how to do it. If I may borrow language from the first Psalm: *“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”*

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