

## Me and the Bible

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### Introduction

When the last word of John's Revelation was penned, the Bible was finished. Sixty-six books/letters ... and that was it. Almost two thousand years have since passed. Billions of people later and no one has added a single word to this document - at least no universally agreed word. Even in the First Century, of the millions of inhabitants gracing the globe, only a handful were involved in writing the New Testament (eight, possibly nine). To state the obvious, no person alive today is responsible for any of the Bible's material. That includes ... me.

### It Says What It Says

I recently watched an interview of a rather prominent Christian. Though the interviewer was not a Christian, the tone of the exchange was very amiable. The primary subject was homosexual marriage. The questions eventually turned toward homosexuality in general. The Christian was being questioned as a Bible advocate. No other reason. When asked if homosexuality was sin, the dance began. With no clear response, the interviewer came back to this question from a couple of different angles. Once it was clear no coherent response was forthcoming, the interviewer moved to other matters. If I was a non-Christian, at the interview's conclusion, I would have had no idea if the Bible said homosexuality was sin or not.

Had this Christian been asked if fornication, bestiality, or adultery was sin, I am certain the response would have been an immediate, "Yes." This man knows exactly what the Bible says about homosexuality - that it is one of the sexual sins. He either does not believe the Bible's declared position on this or is embarrassed by it. And herein lies his fundamental error - which many Christians regularly repeat: When acting as a Bible representative, the Christian's job is to simply state what the Bible says. You can then state what you believe about that one way or the other. The Bible says what it says.

### But, ... "*Everybody has an interpretation*"

This statement, or one like it, is used in at least a couple of different ways. Sometimes, the point is this: "*The Bible is so complex that even the most learned come away with different understandings.*" Other times, the point is this: "*Everybody's opinion is equally valid.*" But all statements in this vein forward the same underlying conclusion: "*Nobody really knows what the Bible means, so ... don't fret over it too much. If anyone comes across as definitive on some subject, just know that no one really knows anything for sure.*" As you suspect, I dismiss all such assertions. God knows exactly what He means by everything He said. There is one proper interpretation on any given declaration - and He knows it. Our job is to learn that. "*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*" (2Tim 2:15). We do have obstacles to this being a successful endeavor. That "we" in the previous sentence ... includes me.

### One Obstacle: A Hostile Mind

"*The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God*" (Ro 8:7). Before becoming a Christian I was - you were - "*alienated and hostile in mind*" (Col 1:21). It would be nice if, at conversion, this natural mind was erased and replaced by a mind totally receptive toward God with no reservation. But, unfortunately, that is not the case. Our minds must be *transformed* ... and that is part of a lifelong sanctification process. "*Lay aside the old self ... that you may be renewed in the spirit (attitude) of your mind*" (Eph 4:22,23). Christians can foolishly choose otherwise - and do. Much of Paul's material

was challenging *the thinking* of Christians. And as far back as Isaiah, God states, “***'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,' declares the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts'***” (Isa 55:8,9). He is not the one ... who's thinking must change. **We** must be re-wired.

### **Thinking Precedes “Ways”**

Thoughts are the foundation of action. We think ... and then do. That is why I spend so much time seeking to influence thought. “*As a man thinks within himself, so he is*” (Pr 23:7). If the thinking is right, so also the action. If errant, so also the action. For example, ...

### **These Matters Require Thought**

“*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Heb 11:1). Thinking is required to gain an “*assurance*” or “*conviction*” about anything. Therefore, biblical faith is based upon thought - a lot of thought. What about repentance? Does it occur in a vacuum? Actually, repentance is a *re-thinking* of something followed by an abandonment of it. It is *new thinking* on top of *old thinking* followed by a new conclusion. Thoughts on top of thoughts. Similarly, the doctrines or practices forwarded by any Christian - or group of Christians - is the fruit of *thought*. Thinking is the foundation of all activity. Even a rash, impulsive action is grounded in some kind of previous mental process. If any final conclusion is to be accurate, the knowledge one works with must be accurate and the thinker must handle it correctly. We ... need ... God. I am part of that “*we.*”

Error, whether willful or from simple ignorance, is one place ... God isn't. He has never dwelt there ... and never will. Fields of death and the God of life are like oil and water - always separate. But in an irony peculiar to this age, an oxymoron in thought, these dead fields ... grow .... and bear evermore sophisticated dead fruit. That is one area evolution is true. Error mutates as it “*grows*” and intensifies in destruction. Error, even one that appears as seemingly benign, regularly progresses to astounding brutality. “*The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty*” (Ps 74:20). For example ...

When God is left out of a family, unspeakable violations often evolve. That family did not start out ... the way it ended. When God is left out of the medical field, dismemberment of the preborn becomes a specialization of “*medical*” practice. The healing arts did not start there. Concerning government, when God is excised from civil governance, those who should be protected by law can become the target of it. Conversely, those who should suffer penalty for their abuses escape (Ro 13:3-6). Most new government systems did not start with that as the goal. Also, ...

Science that dismisses God, soon decides that humans are simply ... animals. Upon what grounds can a moral value system then be based? There is none. Animals are just animals, and do whatever they do. On the other end of that spectrum is theology - that we have a Creator who has made us *more than* an animal. But absent the God of the Bible, theologies produces oppressive self righteousness, vain fables, or suicide bombers. Error, in any arena, mutates, and evolves into “*habitations of cruelty.*” Therefore, with God's intervention and assistance, I seek to dismantle all error - inside and outside of me. “*We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God*” (2Cor 10:5).

### **The New Start**

In the midst of whatever fields of error we find ourselves, God will grant to those who sincerely seek Him ... a reset button (Jer 29:13 and 33:3). He calls it being “*born again*” (Jn 3:3 and 1Pet 1:23). This is a brand new start where *everything* is subject to re-evaluation. And even in our Christian experience, if we find ourselves on some errant path, we can stop and ask for another reset button and

abandon our rabbit trail (Ja 1:5). The initial reset creates a “*babe in Christ*” (1Cor 3:1). A brand new baby knows little more than how to cry and suckle. That's about it. “*Like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow ...*” (1Pet 2:2). All Christians start out the same - knowing to cry out to the Lord, while craving milk. That's about it. We are drawn like a magnet to reading and/or hearing straight Bible. We are told to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2Pet 3:18). God has no intention of leaving anyone “*a babe in Christ*.” The fount for growth in Him is His Word. That *knowledge* then informs what are to be the aspired behaviors. If error is embraced in our knowledge, that area is a dead zone, and any behaviors arising from it are bad fruit. Accurate knowledge is the foundation and fount for life. We are called - to think.

## The Fields of Error are Often Massive

As a “*messenger of light*,” Satan, and his servants (angelic and human, - 2Cor 11:13-15), present false information as “*light*.” They seek to infect, and infest, their audience with error. Satan is a prolific teacher - theology being his specialty. He teaches things that seem right, seem spiritual, yet cater to one's flesh. That is what he did with Eve (and Adam was “*with her*” - listening). “*You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil*” (Gen 3:4,5). This is theology. Lies and partial truths, or twisted truths, lace his teachings. Their eyes were opened all right, but if “*knowing good and evil*” includes being able to discern good *from* evil, they came out of the box confused. Is it sin to be naked? And on the heels of that “*discernment*,” Adam presented this defense for his disobedience: “*The woman, whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate*” (Gen 3:7-12). I don't think this was simply the historical recounting of the events leading to ... “*and I ate*.” In one breath, he attempted to bring Eve - and God - into his sin. There is a lot of thinking behind Adam's statement. The catalyst for this sorry episode, which opened the floodgates leading to our current black sea of sin, was Satan's false theology ... which he presented as “*light*.” And this savage deception was successful *with no sin nature present* - as Adam and Eve were still in a state of innocence. So, for those of us plagued with an inherited sin nature, equipped with bents and faulty inclinations, how tough are we to overpower? For Satan, such an effort is probably like shooting fish in a barrel.

Satan is continually engaged in theological pursuits. The reality of a Creator he hates is ever present, and he is “*full of wrath*” for he knows he has “*but a short time*” (Rev 12:12). “*Full*” probably does mean “*full*” don't you think? Everything he thinks about, and does, is somehow tied into thoughts about God ... and what he can do to pervert His things and destroy His agenda. And angels may never eat, sleep, tire or become diverted by recreational activities or hobbies. In short, we might learn they never needed a break. The tragedy, and waste, of a spiritual creature being totally engrossed with the singular purpose of twisting what is true into falsehood, will be more fully appreciated at The Judgment. But, we have not been Satan's sole targets of fraudulent “*light*.” It is possible he targeted other angels and coaxed them into his doomed ranks. Then again, maybe they just volunteered themselves. But, there is Another he did attempt to corrupt with false theological “*light*.”

## Jesus in the Wilderness

“*If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here* (the top of the Temple); *for it is written, 'He will give His angels charge concerning You, to guard You,' and 'On their hands they will bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone'*” (Lk 4:10,11). Satan was quoting Psalm 91:11,12. He quoted it accurately ... and these verses are true. Jesus did not say these verses were meant for someone else. But what He does say is that Satan was *misapplying* these true statements. “*You shall not force a test on the Lord your God*” (Lk 4:12 quoting Deut 6:16). That means it is possible to take a true statement from the Word of God, misapply it, and in a sense make the passage

“false.” Of course, the passage is not false - the application is false. Such recklessness ... is common.

Often, such misapplication is rooted in simple ignorance. When Jesus said, “*Apart from Me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5), I think that includes our ability to accurately understand any given Bible passage. After His resurrection, Jesus “*opened their minds (the disciples) to understand the Scriptures*” (Lk 24:45). I will come back to this. But to this point, the most common mistake that leads to misapplication is that one is missing some other truth that makes the current passage a conditional statement. That is exactly what Jesus “*fleshed out*” in His rebuttal to Satan. This promise in Psalm 91 had as a condition. The condition? One is not to foolishly jeopardize one's well being in an attempt to force God to act and thus prove this truth in Psalm 91.

Of course, many times the errant use of some passage is intentional. That is most likely the case with all of Satan's Bible uses. But, whether the error is “*innocent*” or malicious, hear this: “*the untaught and unstable distort (twist) ... the Scriptures, to their own destruction*” (2Pet 3:16). The “*untaught*” - who “*innocently*” claim errant things about God while using His Word are in extreme danger. No “*pass ... due to ignorance*” is extended. Silence is better than errant information about God.

## Why?

God's Word is holy. The primary meaning of “*holy*” is, “*to be set apart.*” His Word is completely set apart from this age and its value system. “*Thou hast magnified Thy word (promise) according to all Thy name*” (Ps 138:2). The Bible is an extension of, and is as solid as, Himself. Frank Zappa was right when he stated the Bible was from an alien intelligence. It is. Of course, if this “*Alien*” has no enforcement capability, who cares what He says about anything? But, ... He does.

## “god of this world” (lower case intentional) ... Lies and Partial Truths

Satan continued his theological assault on Jesus in the wilderness. “*I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours*” (Lk 4:6,7). Even though Satan is identified as “*the god of this world*” (2Cor 4:4), I am not at all convinced he ever did have this kind of power. Somehow, I do not think he installed David as king, or even Nebuchadnezzar for that matter. But, for the sake of argument, let's assume Satan's claim was entirely true. The problem is still this: he left out, “*the rest of the story.*” He conveniently left out the fate of all those who take this bait – that they will be eternally damned ... and have a part with him in an eternal lake of fire. A great curse in this age is that partial truth rarely leads to **the truth**.

Satan is a theologian. He will continue this work until God ends it.

## The “Many” of Matthew 7

In my writing, I often come back to the “many” of Matthew 7. “*Many will say to Me on that Day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your Name perform many miracles?' I will then declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness'*” (Mt 7:22,23). This exchange is astounding. Put yourself at the scene. This life has ended and the speakers know a return to this age is impossible. Eternity stretches in front of them and they know exactly Who they are standing before. Each “*Your*” in this exchange is an intensive in the Greek - thus, **the** emphasized word. The plea is passionate ... and panicked. They assert they had aggressively served, promoted and expanded His Kingdom while on earth. Preaching, teaching, casting out demons, performing many miracles ... and throngs of people responded! Yet, the King declares them *lawless*. Their knowledge was false. Their work was false. The “many” of Matthew 7 had learned, and then taught, massive amounts - of theological error. “*O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you ... opposing arguments of what is falsely called 'knowledge' - which*

*some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith*" (1Tim 6:20-21).

These people believed God had taught them the theology they embraced. They believed He had taught them the practices they employed. They were *certain* He had been their Teacher. Their error is eternal. They had made up their own Jesus, their own Christianity, their own Bible ... their own God. Even at the Judgment, they are completely floored by this reality. They are not among the frauds and charlatans who knew, while here, they were frauds. But, their colossal miscue will not be excused. In fact, as false representatives, their accountability has increased. Even genuine Christians are warned that to become teachers will result in "*a stricter judgment*" (Ja 3:1). These "*many*" worked evil. Error, no matter from what well it springs, is evil. It is destructive. It is death. God will act upon the responsible carriers of the error at the time, and in the manner, of His choosing.

## Unteachable

This next sentence may at first seem like word games - but it isn't. One can be unteachable ... yet be a great learner. What a statement. We are told of "*weak women ... always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (2Tim 3:6,7). The Pharisees learned the "*traditions of the elders*" and then "*invalidated the word of God*" as they taught these "*precepts of men*" as God's material (Mt 15:1-9). The doomed people of Matthew 7:21-23 learned all kinds of "*spiritual material*" ... that will prove to be anti-God. All these "*learners*" were unteachable - by God. This will be exposed at The Judgment. Whatever information had actually come to them from the God of the Bible will be displayed. Their rejection of it ... then replayed. And as they opted for a theology that suited them, Satan was right there ... feeding the vain imagination of choice. I think we will see all of this.

## Authority

Ultimately, this boils down to one issue. Who has the authority to declare what is true? Who can rightly inform us of God's character, values, abilities, pledges, and activities? As obvious as this is, I still must say it. Only one has that authority. And "*one*" in the last sentence should be capitalized.

## Recklessness

Rather than just make a series of statements about this, I want to approach this in a different way. Here are some questions. Answer these inside yourself as honestly and reflectively as possible. You may need some situations to develop before you can accurately respond. Your real answers may reside deeper inside of you than you now realize. For starters:

1. If something "*seems right*" to you, is that your primary criteria in settling an issue?
2. Do you think your concept of what is right and wrong is the actual moral center of right and wrong?
3. Is God subject to your sensibilities of what is right, including what He should do - or not do ... be like - or not be like?

Concerning question 1 and 2, "*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death*" (Pr 14:12). Maybe that passage caused Paul to say, "*I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted*" (1Cor 4:4). Obviously he did not see his own moral compass as the center of right and wrong as he then concluded, "*but the One who examines me is the Lord*" (1Cor 4:4). On the opposite end of this, is the story of Job. In the midst of his trauma, three friends came to comfort him ... and they talked. After contending with Job from chapter 3 through 31, "*these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes*" (Job 32:1). Fortunately, there were 11 more chapters ... and God did not let Job continue thinking he was the moral center of what is right or wrong in the universe. These two accounts pretty much answer question 1 and 2.

Concerning question 3, “*if anyone thinks he is something, being nothing, he deceives himself*” (Gal 6:3). That pretty much sums up God's view about us ... and our opinion about much of anything. Not too flattering and not terribly diplomatic, but sometimes a direct blow to one's ego ... is love.

“*What if God willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?*” (Ro 9:22). “*Who can say to Him, 'What are You doing?'*” (Job 9:12). “*Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord or as His counselor has informed Him? With whom did He consult and who gave Him understanding? Who taught Him in the path of justice and taught Him knowledge and informed Him of the way of understanding?*” (Isa 40:13,14 - go there to read the answer in the next verses). So, He is to make an account of Himself to you ... or me?

## Misrepresenting God

At first blush, you might think He does not mind being misrepresented. After all, it happens all the time. But subscribing to such a position is cardinal error. This entire debacle of sin, including all the false declarations about Him, has been allowed with the view to one primary Day ...

## Judgment Day

Few of us have much appreciation for that coming, fixed Day (Ac 17:31). I know I don't, because if I did ... I would not keep sinning so much. But, that appointment will be kept by all - both sinners and saints. “*It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes The Judgment*” (Heb 9:27). Every deed, every word, every thought, and every secret will be exposed (Rev 20:12, Mt 12:36, Ro 2:16). All will be fully recompensed - good or bad (1Cor 3:8, Rev 20:13, Mt 25:31-46). Even the influences from these activities will be tallied and recompensed - good or bad (1Ti 5:24,25). “*But to the wicked God says, ... these things you have done, and I kept silence. You thought that I was just like you. I will reprove you and state the case in order before your eyes*” (Ps 50:16,21).

His determinations on Judgment Day will reverberate through the halls of eternity. God will overwhelm everything ... anything ... all things. That will be **His** Day. His conclusions on every iota of activity in this age - angelic and human - will alone constitute reality. He will prevail in every instance. “*There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord*” (Pr 21:30). Not a solitary, errant point about anything will survive that Day. No one's opinion will matter. I might as well abandon all contrary matter now. Why wait? Why coddle hot coals?

## So, What is the Worst Sin One Can Commit?

Many insist that all sins are the same before God. Pilfering a pencil from work is equal to the premeditated slaughter of a bunch of co-workers in that same workplace. Prescribing unnecessary medication, in an act of defensive medicine, is equal to dismembering a preborn in a woman's womb. Or telling a person you were late because of traffic (when you fiddled around on your computer too long) is the same as looking toward heaven and cursing God. God, they contend, sees all these matters the same.

Well, in a few ways they are all the same. “*The wages of sin is death*” (Ro 6:23). Every sin has a death penalty from God built into it. Also, if left unpardonable, each one carries an eternal consequence for the perpetrator. Alternately, if a sin does find pardon, it will only be because the blood of the Son of God was applied to it. But sin equalities probably end there. Case in point ...

## Before Pilate

When Pilate warned Jesus about His silent treatment, he said, “*You do not speak to me? Don't You know I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?*” At this, Jesus did answer, “*You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given to you from above. For this*

*reason, he who delivered Me up to you has greater sin*" (Jn 19:10,11). The crucifixion of the Son of God will not be credited to Pilate as an act of righteousness (he did sin in this), but Judas' part in this affair, and that of the Jewish authorities, is greater sin. If Judas' had kept his unrighteous hatred internal - that would not have carried the same punishment from God as will the physical murder of the Christ. All sins are not the same. Indeed, each sin is ...

### A Black Snowflake

Every sin is totally unique in circumstance and impact. Each one produces unique fallout for the perpetrator. Black snowflakes they are. But these snowflakes do not fall down to earth. They hurtle through time and space ... drawn, as if by a magnet, toward heaven. They are then either immersed into the blood of Christ, and are expunged, or become an entry into a personal book each moral being has waiting for them at the Great White Throne (Rev 20:11,12). All sins carry death, but God's reaction to each sin is an entirely different matter. Still not convinced? Tell me about this one.

### ***"Therefore I say to you***

*... any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven ... either in this age or in the age to come ... (he) is guilty of an eternal sin' - because they were saying, 'He has an unclean spirit.'*" (Mt 12:31,32 and Mk 3:28-30). While I do not claim to fully understand this passage (the Mark passage hopefully sets boundaries to the offense), I am sure of one thing: There is no other passage like this in the Bible. Among men, this sin stands alone. No other sin automatically brings the consequence of eternal doom. This sin attributes the activity of God to Satan. While there are some misrepresentations about God that can find pardon, this offense falls outside any possible mercy. In light of this, I suspect any misrepresentation of God is among the most dangerous of all sinning. Misinformation about His word, will, priorities, promises, commands, demands, actions ... constitute high offenses. As the God of truth, who only stands in truth, any misrepresentation seeks to place Him in a place that is not true. This highly offends Him. What ... a massive understatement. When you add in people's desperate need for accurate information about Him - this offense compounds exponentially. Do not participate in these sins. I am talking ... to me.

### ***"I Don't Know"***

The ego of man often has a hard time uttering these words. This is particularly true when one is in a position of advocating for an important cause. The advocate often believes that if a question is answered by, "*I don't know*" - weakness is admitted and authority is diminished ... maybe even destroyed. Therefore, answers must be presented. This is a trap and major contributor to the errant theology, and resultant practices, in Christian circles.

When it comes to Bible representation it is possible to say, "*I don't know*" ... and actually be the stronger brother. For example, my article, "*The End of the World and the Bible*" presents the broad strokes of the two primary eschatology systems - where they agree, disagree, and the root cause for that disagreement. I also reference some of the offshoots of these two systems. If all the positions turn out as error (they can not all be correct and it is possible none of them are), then my position of knowing them all, and settling on none, may indeed prove to be the stronger position. God may not have taught anyone the minute particulars of our unfolding future. My, "*I don't know*" is filled with knowledge from all the camps ... and I might know more than most adherents of any of the systems. How many of them really know the reasoning behind opposition beliefs? By the way, I have one point in that article that is the primary basis for my "*I don't know*" position. No one has been able to address my point - and neutralize it. And the truth is - I do not think anyone, in this age, will be able to do so. If you want, go read it and see. It has to do with John the Baptizer and Elijah.

My point is this: There is nothing wrong with an intelligent, “*I don't know*” response. That seems like an oxymoron ... but it isn't. One can know all the points on each side of some Biblical “*argument*” yet, not be certain what is right - and that be a favorable “*stance*” in God's sight. The reason is simple. It is at this exact point where great dangers and great victories intersect.

### **“Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Lk 24:45).**

Let's assume for a moment that you do gain some accurate understanding from the Bible. When you stand before God at Judgment, will you look Him in the eye and say you figured out His truths by your own smarts? And you embraced the accurate material because you decided it was true? “*Apart from Me you can do nothing*” (Jn 15:5). Does that apply here? Consider these next three points.

#### **First, ... Growth**

When discussing the body of Christ, the Church, Paul said it “*grows with a growth that is from God*” (Col 2:19). That surely includes more than simple numerical growth as Paul also compares teaching to watering and concludes it is “*God who causes the growth*” (1Cor 3:7). As a very young Christian, I earnestly approached God with this request; “*Please, just teach me about the United States* (its place in the end time scenario). ” I desperately wanted to know. I soon ran across this passage - and knew it was in response to my diligent, repeated inquiry. “*It is not for you to know times and epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority ...*” (Acts 1:7). I was requesting to be taught calculus when the Teacher knew I needed to learn addition. Thirty plus years later, I still am ... learning addition. My point is this: if I am to grow, I must discern what the Teacher is teaching and apply myself there. The student does not set the agenda - and this is a One-on-one tutoring proposition I have entered. As I learn, He makes growth occur. Any other courses I take up ... drought. No growth.

#### **Second, ... Unbelievers**

I must wait until The Judgment to have this next assertion validated. I believe that any proper understanding of God's word is the result of God's illuminating work. But that does not mean that a mind so opened always yields to this correct understanding. Ben Franklin was once quoted as saying that he wasn't that concerned with what he **did not** understand in the Bible ... but what he **did** understand. Thomas Paine, in Age of Reason One and Two, clearly understood many things the Bible forwards ... and he despised it. Satan probably understands ... about all of it. This ability for moral creatures to understand the Bible is a gift from God - and those who reject it will find those decisions as part of their final accountability. Such contemplations bring me no joy. But, the finally reprobate are not the only ones who understand Scripture - and reject it.

#### **Third, ... Believers**

While a lot of my work is directed toward non-Christians, much of it is not. In fact, most of my material is directed at the brethren. Whether sitting in pews, standing in pulpits, or teaching in Bible Colleges or Seminaries, I have often wondered why so many Christian's are so far off on even the most basic subjects. Am I somehow especially privileged with an open mind ... that God has withheld from His other children? Am I on “*an inside track*” that He does not allow them to access? “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let Him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him*” (Ja 1:5). So, why all the error? Why all the conflicting teaching on creation, money, sex ... you name it. What's the problem?

### **“Take Care How You Build”**

There are a host of reasons why Christians spout error. Sometimes they are so enamored by a

speaker, they will not entertain material contrary to that one's declarations. "*'I am of Paul,' and 'I am of Apollos,' and 'I am of Cephas' ...*" To this, Paul rhetorically asked, "*Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?*" (1Cor 1:12,13). But human nature stays the same through the ages. These fleshly seeds in the Corinthian church are now dwarfed by the institutionalized sects of our day. Distinctives in practice and doctrine are set in stone ... well, actually clay. Those inside the chosen sect will not entertain anything contrary to their modern day Talmud - church bylaws, traditions, doctrines, rituals, etc. And those who make their living from the sect ... get out your calculator to figure that one out. Entertaining anything contrary to the sect's distinctives is a sure fired way to short circuit "*a career*" and/or any upward mobility. "*Denominational loyalty,*" or some version of that call, trumps all.

But, sometimes a Christian is just plain obstinate. He/she wants to believe what he/she wants to believe about God - His character and nature, His will and priorities, His actions and promises. What "*seems right*" to them ... rules. When instructed to "*examine all things carefully and adhere to the good*" (1Thes 5:21) that means it is possible to do otherwise. Unfortunately, it is common to do otherwise. That is part of the reason for The Believers Judgment (Ro 14:10-12). The "*wood, hay (and stubble)*" destined to burn at that time includes the material of error the saint held fast. Some will watch everything burn up, "*but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire*" (1Cor 3:10-15). Is that really how you want this to go down? Dump the garbage now.

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## **There Actually is a Fourth Group**

When a person believes they *do* understand Scripture - and insist God has taught them on the matter - and yet their position is error ... this stance is exceedingly perilous. The "*many*" of Matthew 7 alluded to earlier, are in this fourth group, but they have other company ... a lot of other company. This fourth group also has actual Christians in it. While they are not destined to perish with the Matthew 7 crowd (as the Christian's fate will be to "*suffer loss,*" - yet emerge from The Judgment saved - 1Cor 3:15), all who are in this fourth group still have one thing in common: while in this age, it was impossible to persuade them of their errant opinion. They left this world tenaciously clinging to their error either in doctrine or practice. After all ... God had taught them, right? The reason I say this is an exceedingly perilous group to be a member of is because those in it - well, eternity can go either way. From our perspective, we have no clue if they will be part of Matthew 7 lost souls - or saints, "*saved, yet so as through fire*" (1Cor3:15). And the truth is - they don't know either. No one of the Matthew 7 group had any idea they would be there. Only God knows which way it is going to go for those populating this group. All I can say is - make sure you are not in it. Do whatever it takes.

## **Freedom of Religion: A Two-edged Sword**

Freedom to study, and then speak about the Bible, is blessing unparalleled. This is an abnormal historical situation. I also know my appreciation for this circumstance is wanting. But, as I have known nothing else, such freedom seems normal ... just as being alive seems normal. Freedom to choose what to read, what to think, what to say, where to work, where to live - you name it - this all seems normal. This is the positive edge of the sword.

Concerning Bible representation in such an environment, there is a negative edge to this sword. Because repercussions for inaccurate declarations rarely occur, such activity abounds. One can speak with little forethought and/or study ... and nothing of much consequence usually happens. So, people do. But even in Old and New Testament societies, where one's life might be forfeited for any representation of YHWH (accurate or inaccurate), false prophets and false teachers still arose. How much more in a society of basically unrestricted religious freedom? Just in the small circles I have run, the amount of error proclaimed in the Name of the Lord, is stunning. And though I have asked for comments to my articles and ebooks, my responses to those have changed over time. At first, I engaged everyone, but now, I pick and choose. The amount of un-teachability is amazing. I still thank the person for reading and responding - and I do mean that - but I can often tell they are so set in their opinions there is no point continuing the conversation at present. I give them to God, trust Him to work, and move on. "*Wherever the tree falls, there it lies*" (Eccl 11:3).

## Fallout

When a Bible promise or declaration is erroneously presented, many negative things can occur. For example, when it is declared that God requires Gentiles to "tithe" their cash to the local church for life (all six points of that "*command*" being eternally false), when household expenses cannot be met (often followed with a bankruptcy action), the validity of the Bible, and its God, is then questioned. "*The 'windows of heaven' were not opened. I tested God in this - and He failed.*" But the failing actually rests with false teaching and resultant errant understandings. As another example, are you aware there are at least fourteen possible Biblical reasons for human sickness/malady? How many "*healers*" teach that? Indeed, even the designation of "*a healer*" is errant. The New Testament refers to "*gifts of healings*" (1Cor 12:30) - all plurals - but there is no hint of a "*healer*." There are positions of apostle, prophet, teacher, overseer, and deacon (1Cor 12:29, Ja 3:1, 1Ti 3:1-7, 1Ti 3:8-13) - but no healer. The bottom line is this: God honors what He says, but not what He doesn't.

So, am I saying I am right about everything? That is not even the point. "*Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another*" (Pr 27:17). That is the point - or at least part of it. If I can demonstrate some practice or belief is wrong, you have a responsibility to examine my contentions honestly and carefully. I have the same responsibility toward you. Any other course is to deny one's priesthood before God. This leads to an extremely important discussion.

## A Royal Priesthood

"*He has made us to be ... priests to His God and Father*" (Rev 1:6). "*You all are ... a royal priesthood*" (1Pet 2:9). When a person receives Jesus Christ, many things occur in that instant. Here are two. Each Christian is made a priest to God and simultaneously placed into the royal priesthood. When "*the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom*" (Mt 27:51), God was finished with the Levitical priesthood. Jesus is now **the** High Priest "*according to the order of Melchizedek*" (Heb 7:17). This is an eternal position, and He is the only High Priest that will ever be. Indeed, this is the only priesthood order emerging from this age that God will eternally recognize (Heb 7:17,21,24 and 28). Each Christian is appointed as a priest in this order under Jesus, the High Priest. Full access into the holy place before God the Father has been granted as the Christian enters through His flesh - the true veil (Heb 10:20). Inquiries, requests, or the offering of thanks and sacrifices are presented there on matters great or small. The earthly tabernacle, over which the Levites presided, was simply "*a copy and shadow of the heavenly things*" (Heb 8:5 and 9:23-24) which was abandoned when the new order was initiated at Christ's death.

This priesthood position is an office - and gift from God. It has been secured for each Christian by the blood of the King. Jesus went to, and through, the cross to make this direct connection with the

Father possible. For those who are given this unparalleled opportunity, and avail themselves of it, another discovery awaits. This secure link is a two-way pipeline.

With the sin barrier removed by the Son, the Father's hands are freed to work in the Christian, on the Christian, and through the Christian - His priest - in unique, powerful and constructive ways. As priests, God regularly imparts theological insight to them. After all, they are priests of the living Creator. And sometimes the imparted material is quite timely for the need of the moment. "*When they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to speak. For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you*" (Mt 10:19-20). Other times, in less intense settings, He simply imparts insight to His own so they discern His will and priorities. In light of this, please explain to me how any Christian ... can be a layman. What an offensive and asinine religious invention. But to my present point, know this: to dismiss a matter that a Christian brings to you, without a true entertaining of the information, is a denying his/her priesthood. God often works through His priests to communicate His message. He has always done that. I am also certain He tests us regularly by bringing messages through vessels our pride and ego want to dismiss. My next article (now done) is on this matter in greater detail.

### **Beginning to Conclude: Points to Myself - Here's the Deal**

If I am going to represent the Bible, my task is actually quite simple ... just say what it says. In order to do this, I am admonished, "*Make haste to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth*" (2Ti 2:15). I decided on the phrase, "*make haste*" for the word, "*spoudazo*." Some have chosen, "*study*" or "*be diligent*." The word involves earnest, intense, immediate, diligent attention to a matter ... in this case, immediate intensity to learn what the Author of the Bible has communicated to us through His word. This verse is a command with an implicit warning. One reason God commands His children about this is because ... it is possible to choose otherwise. God, Almighty, please help me abandon insanity.

If I obey what God does teach me, He will teach me more. "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*" (Ro 8:32). He will not withhold anything of value if He has already given His Son. What could possibly be of greater value? The windows of heaven truly are opened (but, not by some new cash "*tithe*"). And it is unquestionably God's will that I grow - you grow - in His things. But, a child who does not want to listen ... can't be taught much. To self: "*Listen, learn, live.*"

God Himself takes responsibility for His own words and actions. I do not need to defend Him. Indeed, it is the other way around. When Gideon destroyed the altar of Baal and the Asherah beside it, the men of the city went to his father's house and demanded Gideon be turned over for execution. Gideon's father turned the whole matter around. "*Will you contend for Baal, or will you deliver him? Whoever will contend for him will be put to death by morning. If he is god, let him contend for himself, because someone has torn down his altar*" (Judges 6:28-32). It appears his father was saying he would kill any person who came to Baal's aid in this matter. His father's logic prevailed. Any god that actually is God and is truly offended can, and will, defend Himself. The Author of the Bible is exceedingly clear that He will act ... at the time, place, and manner of His choosing. I am to steer clear of these transactions between Creator and creature. Warn? Yes. Act? No. "*Vengeance is Mine, and retribution. In due time their foot will slip, for the day of their calamity is near and the impending things are hastening upon them*" (Deut 32:32. Also Ro 12:19 and Heb 10:30). Intercede for them? Think on that.

A common error of humanity is the effort to make God in the image we want. Most endeavors we undertake in life start with at least some percentage chance of success. The effort to make God what we want in personality, values, actions or priorities not only starts at zero percent chance of success, but immediately enters negative territory - less than no chance. "*For I, the Lord, do not change*" (Mal

3:6). This is the most futile undertaking one can take on. Robin, abandon those fields. Scorched earth.

To successfully communicate the things of God, use common words. The New Testament was written in “*common*” Greek - the universal language at that time. Systematic Theology may have a place in seeking to understand what God is communicating by topic, but much of that vocabulary is foreign. Soteriology, propitiation, exegesis, epistemology, dispensation, incarnation, etc. Additionally, a lot of church talk can be phrased differently. “*Justified*” replaced with, “*made right with God*” or “*sanctified*” replaced with, “*set apart*.” And then there is all the religious jargon like, “*called into the ministry (clergyites)*,” “*secular work*,” “*layman*,” “*tithe*” - plus all the invented rites of ordination, confirmation, etc. Robin, carefully build on the foundation with “*silver; gold and precious stones*” (1Cor 3:12). All else will become scorched earth.

Do not become over-familiar with holy things. God's word is eternal (Ps 119:89). “*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law (His word) - to fail*” (Lk 16:17). Do not use God's word flippantly, in jest, or as the butt of jokes. God does not see this as cute, funny or insightful. “*Foolishness*” proceeds “*from within and defile(s) the man*” - making him/her common (Mk 7:20-23). Indeed, the Bible contains the very words that God uses to give life and cause growth (2Tim 3:15,16, 1Pet 1:23,24 and 1Tim 4:6). Robin, memorize and speak those words. They are spiritual gold from heaven ... the opposite of scorched earth.

Also know that if I do not believe some part of the Bible, that will have no effect upon it. If I misrepresent it, that will not alter its meaning. If anti-God forces kill me, that will not change the Bible. If every Bible, and every quote of it found in other literature, is rounded up and burned, that will not impact any of its declarations and promises. What an honor that He lets me read it, study it, share it, be affected and infected by it. Robin, what an astounding and totally undeserved honor.

## I Wish I Could Say

... that I had a hand in writing the Bible. Just one little couplet in the Proverbs ... or one little historical verse somewhere. But, like Paul, “*I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is in my flesh*” - my natural self (Ro 7:18). And after being a Christian for over thirty years, my natural self still remains incapable of benefiting anyone. In fact, it is proceeding from bad to worse as it is “*being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit*” (Eph 4:22). As a present tense, this is ongoing action. If I fail to renounce, attack and kill my old man, he just gets more skilled in his sin. But, by God's favor, I have found my work ... to proclaim Another's. And may I, by that same favor, be enlightened and empowered to tell my world what Jesus said.

## Conclusion

While you may have read this, I wrote this ... to me.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

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