

# The Whole Counsel of God

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“Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.  
For I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.”

Acts 20:26-27 NKJV

## From the Editor's Desk

DYLAN STEWART - 01 JAN 2025

It is with great joy that we present the third edition in our third volume of *The Whole Counsel of God*.

In this edition of the journal, we have included article discussing the “one cup” controversy that exists among brethren, as well as the universal application of instructions contained within New Testament epistles. Other articles address the following questions: “Who married the daughters of men in Gen. 6:1-4?,” “Does forgiveness of sins come automatically without repentance?,” and “Must we keep the Sabbath today?” We pray these articles, as well as all other articles included, will be of great spiritual benefit to you.



As stated in the last edition of the journal, I hoped to complete my commentary on Philemon. That effort was accomplished and the finished product can be accessed [here](#). If the Lord wills, I plan to put the finishing touches on my commentary on Colossians in the coming months. Once completed, that work will also be available on the website for, we sincerely hope and pray, your edification.

I would like to add that I will be teaching a class on Philippians at the East Albertville church of Christ in Albertville, Alabama for the next three months (January 5th – March 30th, 2026), if God permits. If you would like to join us as we look into these most important matters together, I know I, as well as my brothers and sisters at East Albertville, would love to share in the gospel with you. If you are unable to attend in-person but would like to follow along with our class, click [here](#) to access the church's YouTube livestream and video archive.

Thank you for all the encouragement that you provide, both in our communications with each other and in how you strive to live faithfully before our God. May God continue to bless you, use you as a tool for good, and keep you in His care and under His loving provision. We wish you success in the Lord in 2026. May all that we do bring honor and glory to Him.

(DTS)

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## The Shadows of Colossians 2:16-17

DYLAN STEWART | ALABAMA, UNITED STATES

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**Col. 2:16-17** reads, “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” In light of his reference to the Law of Moses in **Col. 2:14**, Paul clearly had in mind here restrictions that the Old Law placed upon food, drink, and special days. “Food or in drink” refers to the daily observances, “festival” refers to the yearly observances, “new moon” refers to the monthly observances, and “sabbaths” refer to the weekly observances all required by the Law of Moses (see **2 Chron. 2:4, 8:12-13; Neh. 10:33; Ezek. 45:17**). The Law of Moses implemented very strict regulations concerning food and drink (**Lev. 11**); the Law of Christ, on the other hand, has no such restrictions (**Rom. 14:1-4, 17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5**). Likewise, the Law of Moses had very strict regulations upon special days/observances (**Num. 28-29**). Since the Old Law was taken away and nailed to the cross with Jesus (**Col. 2:14**), no person has a right to condemn another for not keeping Moses’s Law. In fact, if a Christian binds a law from the Old Covenant that is not also required under the New Covenant, he nullifies the death of Christ and loses his salvation (**Gal. 2:21, 5:1-4**).

The ordinances of the Law of Moses (**Col. 2:15**) were a “shadow of things to come.” A “shadow” is not the “substance,” or “reality” (NIV), because shadows are temporary. The Law of Moses was a temporary “shadow” (**Heb. 10:1**), serving the purpose of pointing to the true “substance” - Jesus Christ (**Gal. 3:19-25**). However, some are confused by Paul’s use of present-tense verbiage (“are” a shadow of things to come) in this passage. As result, many contend that the requirements for weekly sabbath-keeping is still binding today. Such a conclusion ignores that Paul just stated the shadows present in the law of Moses were abolished upon Christ’s death (**Col. 2:14**). Additionally, such a conclusion ignores the fact that something can be spoken of as a “shadow” without it still being practiced.

For example, **Heb. 8:5** says the Levitical priesthood and the Old Testament tabernacle “serve” (present-tense) as shadows, but that does not mean we still use the Levitical priesthood and tabernacle in our service to God today (**Heb. 7:11-28; Acts 17:24**). Likewise, **Heb. 9:13** tells us the blood of bulls and of goats “sanctifies” (present-tense) for purification of the flesh, but, given the writer’s point in the next verse, it is obvious that only the blood of Christ sanctifies.

Paul’s point in this passage is that the ordinances mentioned in **Col. 2:16** “are” (remain) a shadow of the “things that were to come” (NIV). Christ and Christianity have already come, and the shadows/types pointed to that reality. Therefore, all four ordinances listed in **Col. 2:16** ceased being binding at the cross, including weekly sabbath-keeping.

## “Whatever Is Not From Faith”

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The tendency has been with man since the beginning – perhaps out of fear or laziness, for some reason, it seems easier to let someone else decide matters for us. This is harmless enough in matters such as where to eat, or what flavor or color of something to choose. Yet, when we do this with spiritual things, the consequences can be devastating. Who knows how many people throughout time have believed and worshipped in certain ways because others decided for them? This is disturbing because the Bible tells us that we will stand before God as individuals, and be judged as individuals. **2 Cor. 5:10** says, “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad*” (NKJV).

Sometimes, I fear that in the church, we may have promoted this same tendency without even realizing it. When people conform to the position brother “so and so” takes or believe something simply because a respected elder or preacher does, we are delegating a responsibility to someone else that we dare not forfeit. This responsibility is the individual duty given to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (**Phil. 2:12**). This is not to say that we should not study together and listen to the understanding of respected brethren. Nor is it to say that God has different standards by which He will judge different people. Instead, it means that we will each answer to God for ourselves.

In **Rom. 14:5**, Paul was addressing a controversy that was alive in the first century. He instructed the brethren, “*Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.*” In the same chap-

ter, Paul warned against acting with doubt by declaring, “*He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin*” (**Rom. 14:23**). Going against what one believes to be right is sin.

The question arises, What does acting “*from faith*” mean? Does it imply that whatever a person believes to be true is acceptable to God? Not necessarily! In the same context while Paul urged them to be “*fully convinced,*” he also proclaimed, “*Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves*” (**Rom. 14:22**). This tells us that a person can approve and believe the wrong things – things that can actually condemn him. So, what does acting “*from faith*” mean?

A few chapters earlier in the Roman letter Paul explained, “*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (**Rom. 10:17**). It is God’s word that produces faith, and a person must act based on his understanding of God’s word. The standard of judgment will be God’s word. In **John 12:47-48**, Jesus declared, “*If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*”

Since God’s word is the standard, what do we do when people draw different conclusions from that standard? If we could fully answer this question, we would, with one stroke wipe out most of the religious division that exists in the world today! I won’t

pretend to offer such an answer, but here are some parameters to set for ourselves.

### **DRAW PEOPLE TO THE WORD**

We must always be careful about the means we use to draw people. It must not be our particular philosophy of life, or “style” of faith (i.e., a slick order of worship or an emotional appeal). We must even be careful not to try and draw people to our understanding of God’s word. That is no different than drawing people to us. Instead, we must draw them to God’s word itself. By doing this, we show them how to decide for themselves what God would have them to do, and perhaps even help us discover flaws in our reasoning.

### **STRESS THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANS BEING INDIVIDUALS OF CONVICTION**

Each person must decide for himself what is right. We must always be true to the dictates of our conscience as it complies with Scripture. Far too many Christians sit back and let their preacher or their elders wrestle with some issue of Scripture, and then accept their views because they respect them so much. When we do that, how can we know that the choices they have made are sound? We must feel a compulsion to study matters for ourselves.

### **NEVER ASK SOMEONE TO VIOLATE HIS CONSCIENCE**

Though it may be hard for us to accept, we must realize that if someone else differs with our understanding of Scripture, the answer isn’t simply to have him surrender to our view. If we convince someone to change his thinking at the expense of violating his conscience, we have gained nothing. While following our conscience may be right or wrong (**Rom. 14:22**), it is always wrong to violate our conscience.

### **DO NOT HIDE THE TRUTH**

We should always work to make all information on a given topic available to people. In doing so, we help them make rational decisions for themselves. While we must be careful in the process not to introduce a false doctrine to the unlearned, we should be honest enough to answer challenges to our views. This is hard to do. It takes courage and preparation. It is much easier to battle falsehood by merely attempting to silence it. However, this usually leads, not the victory of the truth, but greater division. People become unaware of both sides of an issue. If something is true, it can take the heat of battle. If it is false, we must expose it.

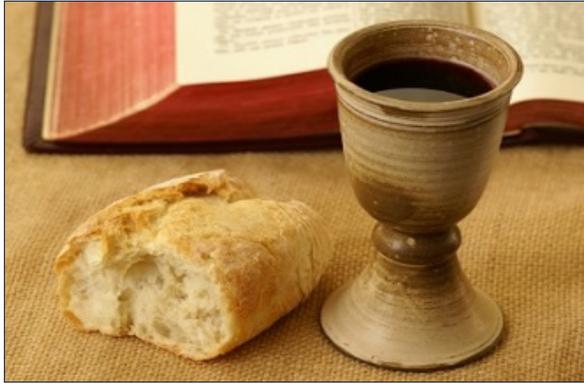
### **AVOID LAYING STUMBLING BLOCKS**

While there will be cases in which people ignore what the Scripture says, often people are sincerely trying to follow the Lord to the best of their understanding. When this concerns matters that do not hinder our fellowship with them let us not pass judgment upon them but work to grow with them avoiding any offense to them. Paul said, “*Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way*” (**Rom. 14:13**). Stumbling blocks may take the form of ridicule that discourages the one with rigid convictions, or harsh rebuke that turns away the one with loose convictions. Neither serves the cause of Christ.

There may be times in which differences are such that we cannot in good conscience continue to work in fellowship with our brethren. Alternatively, we may need to urge them to be more cautious in their conclusions. Even so, we must always bear in mind that, in all such matters, it is the Lord who will judge both matters and both sides.

## Must We Use One Loaf and One Cup?

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PUBLISHED NOV. 2025 AT [LA VISTA CHURCH OF CHRIST](#)



Some brethren contend that the Lord's Supper must be served using one loaf and one cup that everyone shares: "*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Brethren who advocate for one-cup complain that the mention of "*the cup*" and "*the bread*" is being ignored. Jesus' body was one, and so they contend that the cup and the bread must also be one to reflect the Lord accurately.

### THE BREAD WAS DIVIDED

**Matt. 26:26** reads, "*While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.'*" When Jesus established the Lord's Supper, he first divided some bread between the disciples. The term "*some*" is not directly in the Greek text, but the word for "*bread*" does not indicate how many loaves were the source of the pieces Christ divided. It is a minor point that we should take note of. However, let's assume that the pieces came from one

loaf, even though the text doesn't actually say that they did. Even though each disciple had his own piece of bread, the symbolism is not destroyed as they partook of the bread together when Christ commanded them to eat their piece. They were all sharing in the bread. That bread was not the actual body of Christ because he was with them at the time. We understand this is a representation of his body that in the future would be given on behalf of mankind's sins, including their own.

### THE FRUIT OF THE VINE WAS DIVIDED

**Luke 22:17-18** reads, "*And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.'*" A single "*cup*" was blessed, but it was distributed by dividing it among the disciples. Some argue that this was done prior to the Lord's Supper and is not how the actual Lord's Supper was done. The flaw in this reasoning is that the latter part of **v.17** says, "*I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.*" This refers to the Lord's Supper, as the accounts of **Matt. 26:29** and **Mark 14:25** clearly show. Just like the bread, each of the disciples had a portion before him. Luke's account provides an additional detail that Matthew and Mark's accounts skim over. Jesus first divided the contents of the cup and then instituted the Lord's Supper.

As you continue in Luke's account, you will realize that the bread was blessed, broken, and divided among the disciples

after the cup with the fruit of the vine was divided among the disciples. **Luke 22:20** begins by saying, “*Likewise He also took the cup after supper.*” The word “*likewise*” indicates that the same method was used for the cup as was done for the bread. It establishes the method in which the contents of the cup were distributed; it was divided and given to the disciples. Therefore, Luke’s account demonstrates that multiple cups were used in the partaking of the fruit of the vine.

The actual drinking of the portions from the cup was not done until after the portion of bread was eaten. **Luke 22:20** states, “*And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.’*” All counter-arguments made by one-cup believers ignore that the cup was first shared (**Luke 22:17-18**), then the bread was eaten (**Luke 22:19**), and then the shared cup was drunk (**Luke 22:20**).



What Luke’s account shows us is that the fruit of the vine was divided among the disciples, each receiving it in their own individual cup. The Lord then blessed the bread, divided it among the disciples, and had them eat it. He then took the cup from which the disciples had taken a portion for each of them, blessed the contents, and told the dis-

ciples to drink. One cup was not in use. Each disciple had their own cup to hold the fruit of the vine while they were partaking of the bread. Just as we pointed out with the bread, the fact that each had their own portion of the fruit of the vine means the symbolism that it represents, Christ’s blood, remains the same. That symbolism did not require each disciple to drink from the same container.

### THE LOCATIONS FOR PARTAKING ARE NUMEROUS

Let’s look again at what Paul stated in **1 Cor. 1:16-17**: “*Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.*” The apostle’s point is that as Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper, they all share in the body and blood of Jesus. By saying “*we*” when he is not present with the Corinthians, he is including every Christian. Thus, the Lord’s Supper represents the unity of Christians in Christ (**Rom. 12:5**). Although we are many separate individuals, we are united as one. Because those in Corinth were not close to Thessalonica, Philippi, Antioch, or Jerusalem, we know that there wasn’t a single loaf being shipped between the various congregations in a single day, which would have been physically impossible. Nor was a single cup being used by all the congregations. The fact that each congregation had its own bread and the fruit of the vine doesn’t ruin the symbolism that they were sharing this memorial. It was still a united action.

Each congregation partakes of the Lord’s Supper “*together*” since worship is done jointly (**1 Cor. 11:18, 20; 14:23**). But once again, that joint participation in each congregation does not depend on a single

loaf or a single cup to represent the unity of the believers around the world.

### HOW COULD A LARGE CONGREGATION PARTAKE?

One-cup brethren typically argue that if a congregation is too large to have one loaf and one cup, then the congregation must divide into smaller churches. This argument, however, is without foundation because you won't find a command or example of this occurring in the New Testament. The Jerusalem church initially had 3,000 members and continued to grow from there. Yet, it is always referred to as a single congregation. Logic tells us that the only way the Lord's Supper could be served to such a large group would require multiple loaves and containers for the fruit of the vine.

### A METONYMY OF SUBJECT

There is a figure of speech called a metonymy of subject. Metonymy occurs when one item is used to represent all. It is not an uncommon form of speech:

- *"Your men shall fall by the sword, and your mighty in the war" (Isa. 3:25).*
- *"For they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, and from the distress of war" (Isa. 21:15).*
- *"I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them" (Jer. 9:16).*

In these examples, God is not talking about a single "sword." Instead, He is saying the people would die in a battle where many swords will be used. Why use the singular instead of the plural? Because it emphasizes the fact that it was a battle controlled by one source (God). It emphasizes the unity of action among the many parts.

We can see the metonymy of subject in *"the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17)*. Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote this to the Corinthians, but he speaks of the cup and the bread which he, the Corinthians, and all Christians, for that matter, partake. It is *"the cup"* and *"the bread,"* which are taken by Christians all over the world. The singular is being used when we know multiple is involved. It makes it stand out and makes us realize that the focus is on unity in the participation of this memorial.

## MYTH BUSTERS

**"They will turn away their ears from the truth & will turn aside to myths"**  
(2 Tim. 4:4, NASB)

**"They did it first, so I will do it back..."** This is the worst, antithetical-to-Jesus-statement we could ever make. You are not called to match someone, you are called to rise above them.

**"You have heard it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other toward him also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak also"** (Matt. 5:38-40).

(Kyle Ellison | Alabama, United States, Dec. 2025)

## To All The Churches

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In the closing remarks of his Colossian letter, Paul told the church, “*Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea*” (**Col. 4:16**). As we see, the epistle addressed to Colossae was also intended to be read to the Laodiceans. Likewise, the letter to the Laodiceans was intended to be read by the Colossians. Many wonder about the canonicity of the Laodicean letter. If this letter was/is a necessary part of the New Testament canon, then we trust it survived and is included in our Bibles via a different name (most scholars believe the letter to Laodicea is actually the Ephesian epistle which, at the time of Paul writing Colossians, had made its way to Laodicea). Whatever the case, we can see from this text how the contents of New Testament epistles would be repeated to Christians in other places. In fact, the physical letter itself would often circulate throughout other churches. These letters reached other churches than the original primary audience because New Testament epistles applied to all churches across all regions of the world. This fact is especially evident in numerous Pauline epistles.

Paul began his letter to the Galatians by stating, “*Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), and all the brethren who are with me, To the churches of Galatia*” (**Gal. 1:1-2**). The teachings of the Galatian letter were not limited in application to just one church in Galatia; it applied to all “*churches of Galatia*.” Likewise, **2 Cor. 1:1** informs us that Paul addressed his second Corinthian letter not just “*to the church of God which is at Corinth*,” but also to “*all the saints who are in all Achaia*.” Examining this verse, Albert Barnes noted:

“It is probable that there were not a few Christians scattered in Achaia, and not improbably some small churches that had been established by the labors of Paul or of others. From Romans 16:1, we know that there was a church at Cenchrea, the eastern port of Corinth, and it is by no means improbable that there were other churches in that region. Paul doubtless designed that copies of this Epistle should be circulated among them” ([Albert Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament](#)).

Thus, the second epistle to Corinth applied not just to Corinthians, but it this inspired letter also applied to people outside of Corinth.

Other inspired writers beyond the apostle Paul also designed their letters to be received and accepted by those outside the primary audience. For example, in **Rev. 1:4** the writer says, “*John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is*

to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.” The book of Revelation was written by John and primarily intended for seven churches located in Asia, yet each church needed to hear what the Spirit said “to the churches” and not just what the Spirit said to their specific church (**Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 28; 3:6, 13, 22**). Jesus – through John – harshly rebuked several of these churches, and each church would learn things about other churches that they would then need to apply to themselves. For example, when the church in Pergamos read John’s revelation, not only would they realize that they needed to address the brethren who held to the doctrines of Balak and the Nicolaitans (**Rev. 2:10-15**), but there would also be cause for introspection when they read the Lord’s address to Laodicea wherein He explained how He hated their lukewarmness (**Rev. 3:15-16**). Jesus addressing the issue of lukewarmness was not directly intended for Pergamos, but if their hearts were right, they would learn much about what the Lord expected from them as they considered what He said Laodicea. Similarly, when Jesus rebuked Thyatira He stated that, as result of His judgment against Jezebel, “*All the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts*” (**Rev. 2:23**). When the other six churches read the Lord’s address to Thyatira, they would learn a vital lesson about the wrath of God even though that lesson was primarily intended for another church.

It is certainly true that New Testament epistles addressed specific problems in specific churches, but, as we see from the aforementioned examples, the instructions were/are applicable to all saints everywhere: “*To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs*

*and ours*” (**1 Cor. 1:2**). The first Corinthian letter was primarily intended for the Corinthians, but the truths contained therein apply to “*all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ.*” Therefore, what Paul taught the Corinthians equally applied to the Romans; it equally applied to the Galatians; it equally applied to the Ephesians; and it equally applies to us today!

The truths recorded in the New Testament show no partiality. In fact, not only do these truths recorded throughout the New Testament apply to every church and every saint, but they also apply to every person, even the non-believer: “*He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day*” (**John 12:48**). God’s truths apply to every person of every era and every culture. Time, geographical location, cultural differences, etc. will never change the truth of what God’s book teaches, nor will those things change our need to conform to what God’s book requires.

## **SWORD SWIPES**

**“Shun profane and vain babblings”**  
(**2 Tim. 2:16a, KJV**)

**New Testament Christianity cannot be restored without New Testament personal evangelism.**

***“Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles ... Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”*** (**Acts 8:1, 4**). (DTS)

## Who Married the Daughters of Men?

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**Gen. 6:1-4** says, “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.” People often refer to this text as one of the most difficult in the Bible; there is much disagreement about what the verses mean.

**Gen. 6:1-4** describes a time before the flood when the sons of God married the daughters of men. A commonly held position is that the “*sons of God*” are angels, as this phrase is sometimes used to refer to them (**Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Psalm 29:1-2**). Rebellious angels, they say, came to the earth in human bodies and married “*the daughters of men*” (humans) because of their beauty.

(Some argue that these “*sons of God*” were lesser gods instead of angels. Others explain the verses by saying that evil spirits took over the bodies of wicked men). Even though they were heavenly, spiritual beings, according to some, these angels had sexual desires. This union produced children who became “*giants*,” resulting in the earth’s wickedness that led to the flood (**2 Pet. 2:4** and **Jude 6**, which speak of angels who sinned, are tied into this viewpoint). This position is very ancient, with many believing it today.

First, the interpretation that “*sons of God*” are angels contradicts Jesus’s teaching in **Luke 20:35-36**, which says angels do not marry. Next, if this position is true, it is interesting that only humans, not angels, are condemned. One writer put it like this:

“Even more serious is the problem of why judgment should fall on the humans and on the earth if the angels of heaven were the cause of the trouble. God should have flooded heaven, not earth. The culprits came from above; the women seem to have been doing nothing except being beautiful!” (Kaiser et al.107).

As noted, some passages refer to angels as the “*sons of God*.” However, the Bible uses this description in another way – it can refer to followers of God, and there are many more cases of this use in the Scriptures.

For instance, in the Old Testament, Israel is called the sons of God. **Deut. 14:1** says, “*You are the children [“sons,” ESV] of the Lord your God.*” When Moses returned to Egypt, God told him to tell Pharaoh, “*Thus*

says the Lord: *Israel is My son, My firstborn*" (**Exod. 4:22**). In **Jer. 31:9**, He also said Israel is His firstborn son. Speaking to restored Israel, **Hosea 1:10** says, "*You are sons of the living God,*" and **Prov. 14:26** reveals, "*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.*"

Passages abound in the New Testament where this description occurs. Consider them:

- **Gal. 3:26** – "*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*"
- **Rom. 8:14** – "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*"
- **Rom. 8:19** – "*For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*"
- **Matt. 5:9** – "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*"

With this in mind, to help us understand **Gen. 6:1-4**, it is important to consider the context.

**Gen. 4-5** list the descendants of Cain (who murdered his brother) and Seth (Adam and Eve's third son). Cain's descendants, listed in **Gen. 4:16-24**, say little about whether they were righteous or unrighteous, except for one, Lamech, a murderer. In contrast, after the birth of Seth, **Gen. 4:26** says, "*And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the Lord.*" It says nothing like this of Cain's descendants. **Gen. 5** gives the descendants of Seth; among them were Enoch ("*who walked with God*"), Methuselah, and Noah. Thus, it might be concluded that the descendants of Seth were generally righteous, and those of Cain were generally unrighteous. After having spoken of sons and daughters being produced upon the earth, the verses then mention the "*sons of God*" (descendants of Seth) marrying the "*daughters*

*of men*" (descendants of Cain) in **Gen. 6:1-2**. This union resulted in wickedness upon the earth, which brought on the flood described in **Gen. 6-8**. If marrying between the two lines is not meant, the Scriptures could still be speaking of the righteous marrying the unrighteous, regardless of lineage. Nevertheless, this verse does not teach that angels came to earth and married women.

Some interpret **Gen. 6:4** to mean that "*giants*" (NKJV) were born of the union of angels with women. But, first, we must understand that the first part of the verse discusses something which happened before the sinful marriages of **Gen. 6:1**. It says, "*There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men.*" Let's look more closely at the word "*giant*" (NKJV). Most modern English translations render the original word as "*Nephilim*" instead of "*giants*." This word is a transliteration of the original Hebrew word and means "to fall upon or attack." Another definition is a person who is a bully or tyrant. Consider the following comments from the Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary:

"But although the idea of gigantic power does underlie the language of the sacred historian, the term Nephilim seems to bear a deeper significance; and if etymology may guide us, it describes a class of men of worthless and at the same time of violent character. It is commonly traced to fall, and considered to signify either fallen ones, apostates, or falling upon others. In the first sense many of the fathers applied it to designate fallen angels. But it evidently describes a particular class of men, and hence, the latter meaning is preferable, intimating that the Nephilim were marauding nomads-men of a vio-

lent, overbearing, lawless character-who abused their bodily powers to obtain their selfish ends; who were constantly roving from place to place in quest of plunder, and, emerging suddenly from their retreat, made attacks both on the property and the lives of men.”

Mike Willis, in his commentary, points out, “The text does not emphasize their physical size (which has nothing to do with moral degeneracy) or that these were a hybrid race (which again says nothing about their moral conduct), but their violence” (306).

The last part of **Gen.6:4** reveals the aftermath of the marriages (**6:1**): “*Afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.*” These were “*mighty men,*” generally a positive description; however, in this context, it describes people who used their strength for tyranny and oppression and became well known for it. The world was full of violent people. All of this set the stage for the flood soon to come.

Again, this is a difficult passage. But, the most plausible position seems to be that the sons of God (descendants of Seth/righteous men) chose to marry the daughters of men (descendants of Cain/unrighteous women). They based their choice on physical beauty rather than character, which led to rampant wickedness and the resulting flood.

#### **WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED**

*Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright © 1997-2014 by BibleSoft, Inc.*

*Kaiser, Walter C., et al. Hard Sayings of the Bible. Intervarsity Press, 2010.*

*Willis, Mike. Truth Commentaries Genesis 1 Genesis 1-25a. Vol. 1, Truth Publications Inc., 2021.*

## **THINK ON THIS**

**“Meditate on these things”  
(Phil. 4:8, NKJV)**

*“Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete” (2 John 12).*

**If we learned anything from the pandemic, it’s that there are dozens of different ways to communicate: Zoom, Facetime, GoToMeeting, etc. But what we also learned from the pandemic is that these “virtual meetings” are a poor substitute for the real thing. Even though we can see someone’s face through this new technology, it’s just not the same. We need personal contact.**

**Let’s use social media to encourage and exhort one another in the faith, but let’s not use this technology as a substitute for in-person contact. When we see someone who is discouraged and lonely; when we hear someone is struggling and feeling hopeless; when we see a brother or sister who is weak in the face of temptation or who is actually caught in a transgression; let’s remind ourselves of the power of being physically present with someone in their trial. Sometimes we need to bypass the convenience of technology to let our brother or sister know we care enough about them to meet face-to-face.**

**\*Abbreviated\* (David Maxson | Alabama, United States, Dec. 2025)**

## Forgiveness Is Not Automatic

BRYAN DOCKENS | NEW MEXICO, UNITED STATES

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Erika Kirk told an audience of 60,000+ gathered at State Farm Stadium in Arizona and at least 20 million more watching online, “That man... that young man, I forgive him”, referring to her late husband’s assassin Tyler James Robinson. Charlie Kirk was shot in the neck eleven days earlier. Some time ago, Jeff Metcalf responded to his 17-year-old son’s stabbing death by Karmelo Anthony at a high school football game, “I already forgive this person. Already.” That was five days after Austin Metcalf’s murder.

It has become common for well-meaning people to immediately and unconditionally pardon the most heinous sins without awaiting any expression of remorse whatsoever on the part of the perpetrators. Christ Jesus very clearly taught that no one can expect to receive forgiveness from God who does not also forgive his fellow man (**Matt. 18:21-35**). As seriously important as it is to forgive others, sadly, what Jesus taught and practiced in this regard has been exaggerated, taken to an extreme He never intended. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, both the servant and the one who owed him asked for patience from their respective creditors.

It is often said that Jesus of Nazareth forgave His killers as He hung from the cross of Calvary, but that is not an accurate assessment of what transpired. “*Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’*” (**Luke 23:34**). Jesus prayed to the Father that His killers would be forgiven, but He did not grant them automatic forgiveness. Please, consider the difference. Whether or

not they would receive forgiveness depended on how they responded to the gospel. By the mercy of God, some of His murderers did get their sins remitted, but there was a process to that.

When the apostle Peter preached on Pentecost Day in Jerusalem, he told his audience that they were personally responsible for murdering God’s Son. “*Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know — Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death*” (**Acts 2:22-23**). He was still speaking to that same crowd when he continued: “*Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. ‘Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, ‘Be saved from this perverse generation.’ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*” (**v.36-41**). Again, Peter directly blamed his hearers for crucifying the

Son of God. They could have taken offense that a preacher would dare shame them publicly for their sins, but they knew better. They were ashamed of themselves and convicted in their hearts, assured of their guilt. They needed to know what to do, so they asked, and he answered: repentance and baptism would remit their sins. Telling them they still needed to be saved, they accepted what he said willingly and submitted to baptism. As a result, thousands of souls were saved.

What Jesus Christ prayed for from the cross, that those who murdered Him would be forgiven, did, in fact, come to pass! Nevertheless, it was not an automatic forgiveness they received simply because He prayed. Rather, they had to hear the gospel preached, be persuaded of whom Jesus is and convicted of their own sins. They had to obey what they were commanded to do – namely, to repent and to be baptized. Only then was His prayer fulfilled.

Something similar happened when the first Christian to suffer martyrdom was being stoned to death: *“When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:54-60).* Like Jesus before him, Stephen requested the for-

giveness of his murderers. He did not forgive them, himself, but asked the Lord to do so. Their forgiveness was possible, but neither automatic, nor immediate.

Of those involved in stoning Stephen to death, the only person named was *“a young man named Saul.”* Concerning this *“Saul, also called Paul” (Acts 13:9)*, Stephen’s prayer was answered affirmatively. Observe Paul’s own words: *“I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women, as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished. Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ So I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said to me, ‘I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.’ And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me. So I said, ‘What shall I do, Lord?’ And the Lord said to me, ‘Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.’ And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus. Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there, came to me; and he stood and said to me, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight.’ And at that same hour I looked up at him. Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth. For you will be His witness to all men of what you have*

*seen and heard. And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:4-16).* Stephen prayed for his killers to be free from the sin of murdering him and at least one of them, Saul of Tarsus, was forgiven by the Lord. However, Stephen did not personally forgive Saul or any of those who hurled stones at him or falsely accused him. He prayed it would happen, but could not do it himself because the requisite repentance had not occurred.

A Christian is not free in Christ to forgive anyone without the offender first repenting, as Jesus preached, *“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (Luke 17:34).* The goal is to forgive a wrongdoer, but that is at the end of the process. When one is sinned against, the offended party is commanded by Christ to rebuke the offender, which means he is to inform him of his fault. The expectation is that the offender will then repent, which means turn away from his wrongdoing. Following repentance by the offender, the offended party must then forgive him. If repentance is not forthcoming, then neither should forgiveness be forthcoming.

Some fear that withholding forgiveness from an offender who refuses to repent would cause the offended party to be guilty of being “unforgiving.” The Holy Spirit does warn about this, saying through the pen of the apostle Paul: *“But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be [among other things] unforgiving ... having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!” (2 Tim. 3:1-5).* One who is unforgiving is a perilous person, who denies the power of godliness,

and who deserves to be shunned. There is a difference, though, between one who will not forgive because he is spiteful and vengeful and one who cannot forgive because the conditions for forgiveness have not been met.

What can a person who has been wronged and wants to forgive the wrongdoer do until the wrongdoer repents? He must practice longsuffering and forbearance! *“As the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Col. 3:12-13).* “Longsuffering” means exactly what it sounds like, to suffer long. The Greek word from which it is translated is defined by Thayer as patience, endurance, perseverance, and slowness in avenging wrongs. “Bearing with,” or “forbearing” in other versions, is defined by Strong as to put up with. Longsuffering and forbearance are the qualities of character that allow a Christian to forgive others. These qualities must always precede forgiveness and need to last until forgiveness is possible. The one who desires the forgiveness of those who have harmed him, but still awaits their repentance is not bearing a grudge, grinding an ax, or pursuing revenge; rather, he is suffering long and forbearing, which are traits of true godliness.

God’s goodness is manifested through the forbearance and longsuffering that lead sinners to repent so that they can be saved! *“Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4)* *“The Lord is ... longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).* These characteristics should also be reflected in God’s people.

## A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks” (Hebrews 11:4, ESV).

### **Must We Keep the Sabbath Today?**

CARROL SUTTON

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The sabbath is mentioned in the Scriptures more than 160 times. Although there is a lot of information given about the sabbath many people do not understand the truth regarding the sabbath. There are a number of religious groups that teach that the sabbath should be kept or observed today as it was in Old Testament times. In view of this, a study of the question, Must we keep the Sabbath today?, is justified and should prove helpful to many. Our human traditions, preferences, likes or dislikes do not constitute the proper standard by which we can determine the truth about this subject. God’s truth, as revealed in the Scriptures, is the standard by which we can determine God’s will on this as well as on all other religious subjects. Our appeal will be to the Scriptures.

#### **WHAT DAY IS THE SABBATH?**

God has not left us to wonder or guess about what day is the sabbath. When God gave the ten commandments (not mere suggestions) He said, “*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God*” (Exod. 20:10 also see 31:15; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:14). **NOTE:** This settles it! The seventh day, not the first, is the sabbath!

#### **WHO GAVE THE SABBATH LAW?**

It is obvious from a reading of the Scriptures that God gave the Sabbath law through Moses. In Exod. 20 and Deut. 5 we have an account of the giving of the ten com-

mandments, which included the commandment to “*remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*” Deut. 5:15 says, “*Therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*”

In their prayer to God in Neh. 9:13-14 the Levites said, “*Thou earnest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant.*”

We learn from John 1:17 that “*the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*” Speaking to Jews, Jesus said: “*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?*” (John 7:19). **NOTE:** The same law that said, “*Thou shalt not kill,*” also said, “*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*” Moses gave that law.

We learn from Matt. 15:4 that “*God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother,*” and from Mark 7:10 that “*Moses said Honour thy father and thy mother.*” **NOTE:** It is obvious from reading these two passages that Moses said what God commanded. It necessarily follows that God gave the law (including the sabbath command) through Moses!

## TO WHOM WAS IT GIVEN?

**Exod. 20:1-2** says, “*And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*” Then the ten commandments were given (including the sabbath command). In **Deut. 5:1-3** we read, “*And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.*” In **v.6** God said, “*I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*” In **v.12** He said, “*Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.*” In **v.15** God said, “*And remember that thou was servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand out and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*” We learn from **1 Kings 8:9** that “*there was nothing in the ark [of the covenant] save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.*” The Lord told Moses to speak unto the children of Israel, saying, “*Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbaths, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever*” (**Exod. 31:16-17**). **NOTE:** The evidence is clear! God through Moses gave the sabbath law to the children of Israel!

## WHEN WAS IT GIVEN?

The Israelites were first told to “*observe*” the sabbath just prior to the giving of the ten commandments at Sinai (**cf. Exod. 16-**

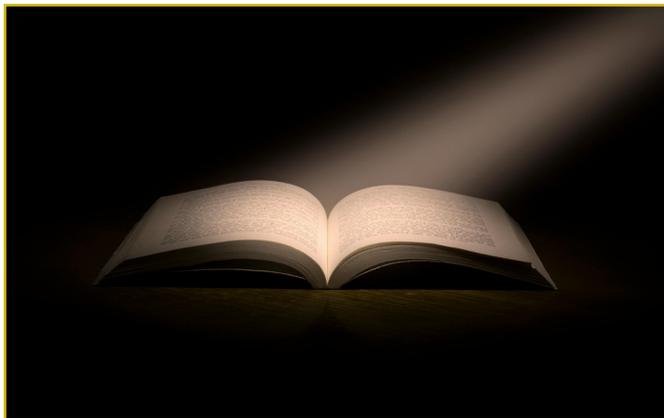
**20**). The Levites, in their prayer to God, said, “*Thou earnest down also upon the mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandest them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant*” (**Neh. 9:13-14**). Also read and study **Deut. 4:10-13**. **NOTE:** The sabbath was “*enjoined*” on the Israelites at Sinai (Horeb)! There is no Scriptural evidence that God ever commanded any one prior to this time to “*keep the sabbath!*”

## WHY WAS IT GIVEN?

Here are two basic reasons why the sabbath law was given. First, it was given because the Israelites were servants in Egypt and God brought them out! In addressing Israel, Moses said, “*And remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day*” (**Deut. 5:15**). Second, it was given as a sign between God and the children of Israel! **Exod. 31:13** says, “*And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.*” In **v.17** He said, “*It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever*” (**cf. Ezek. 20:12**).

## OBSERVATION

The sabbath law was not given universally to all peoples! It was limited in scope! To show proper respect for God and His Word we must limit the sabbath law to those to whom it was given! Yes, without question, the sabbath law was applicable to a certain group of people for a limited time!



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