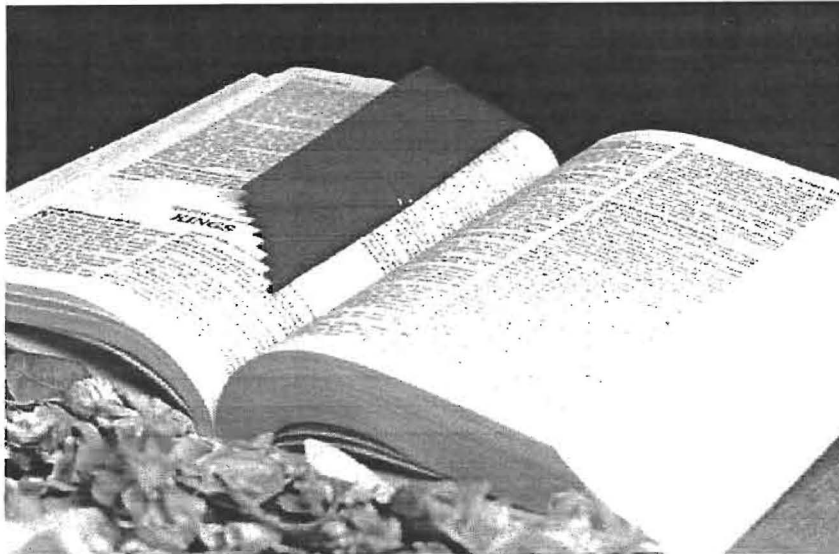


**24th Annual
Biblical Viewpoints Lectureship**

November 7-11, 2004

**Who Is A God Like Unto Thee?
Micah 7:18**



**Elizabethton Church of Christ
137 East "C" Street
Elizabethton, Tennessee 37643**

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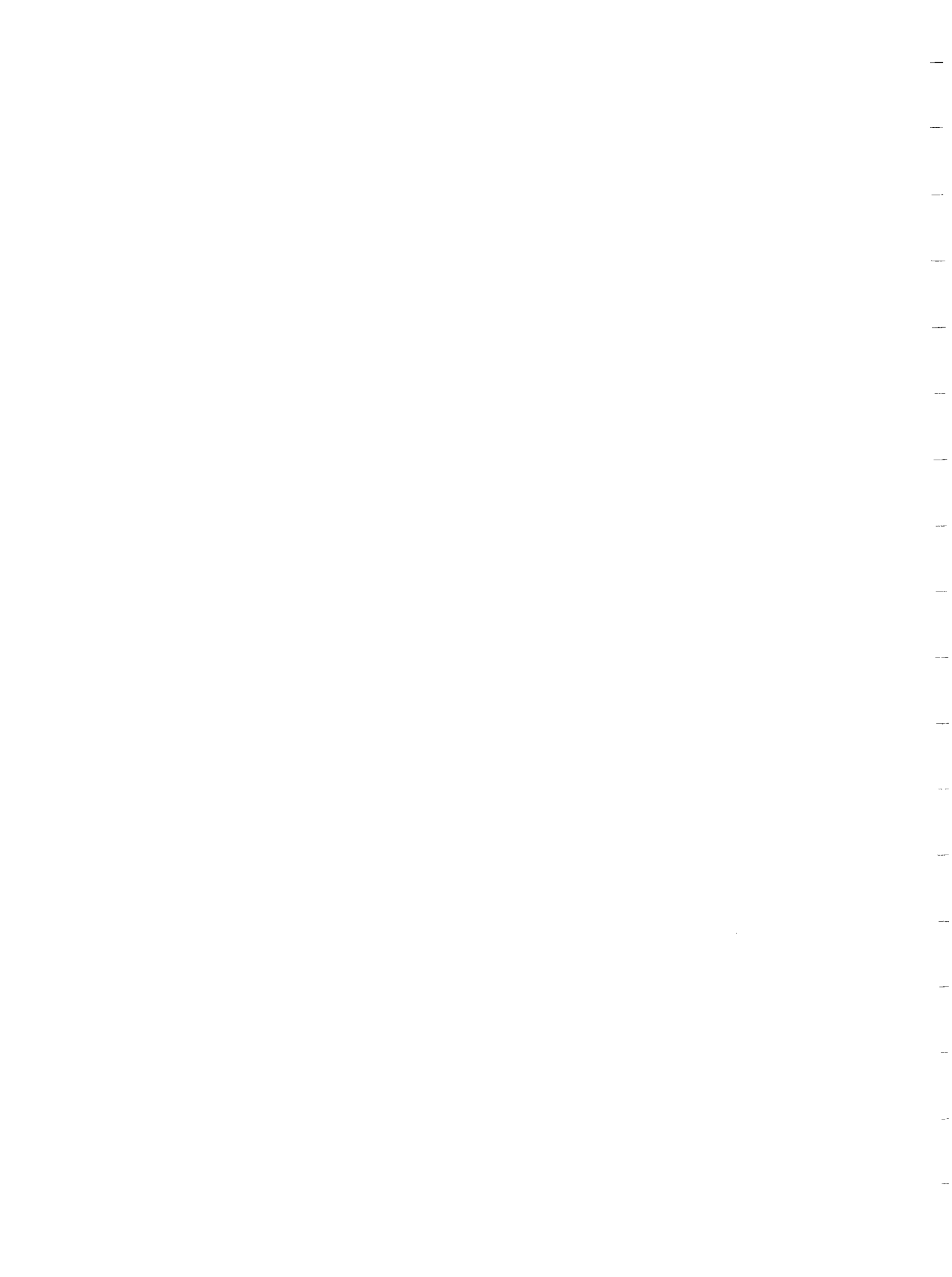


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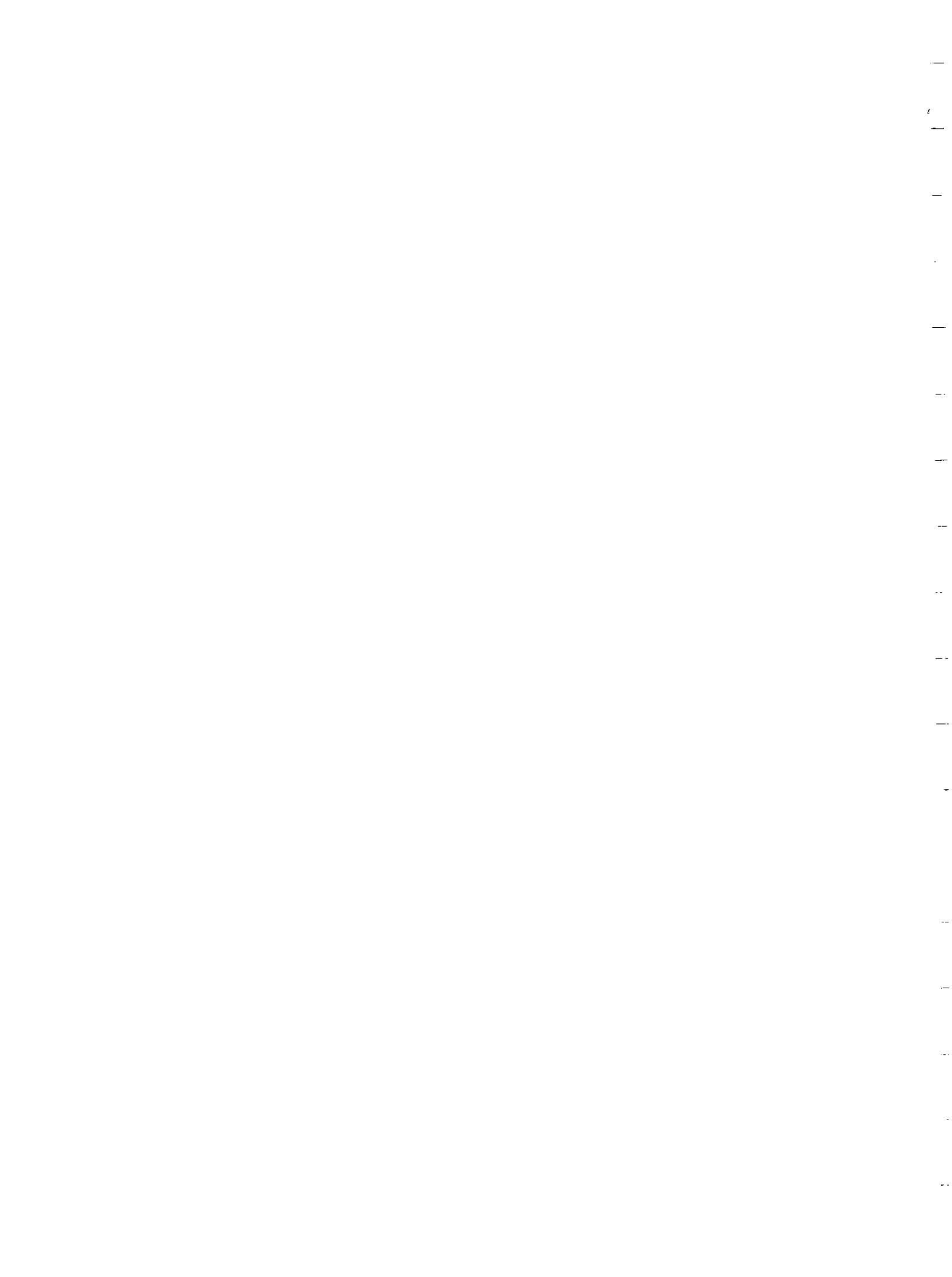
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The God Of Israel Vs. The Baals

Clayton Winters

I. The I Am, The Eternal And Omnipresent God

- A. Everything must begin with God, so it is necessary for us to understand some things relative to Him before we can understand many of the things in the Bible, especially idolatry.
- B. I AM indicates God's eternal nature: ever-existent, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and perfect in His holiness (Genesis 3:13-14).

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Psalm 41:13 "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen."

Psalm 90:2 "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God."

Psalm 93:2 "Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting."

Psalm 106:48 "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD."

Isaiah 63:16 "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."

Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place..."

Psalm 139:7-10 "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

Rev. 4:8 "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

- C. Not only does He possess these attributes, He is also God of the universe – Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 8:3-4; Isaiah 45:12; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; Rev. 4:11; 10:6).

II. Idolatry: Localized Deities In Contrast To The One Universal God:

- A. Israel was to inherit the land of a people who knew nothing of such monotheism. Their gods were legion: gods of mountains, valleys, territories, planets, storms, fertility, etc., that would test Israel's faith in the one True God to the absolute limit.

Exodus 23:32-33 "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee."

Exodus 34:15-16 "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods."

Deut. 6:14 "Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;"

Deut. 17:3 "And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;"

Deut. 29:18 "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;"

Deut. 32:17 "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."

Judges 10:6 "And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of Zidon, and the gods of Moab, and the gods of the children of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines, and forsook the LORD, and served not him."

1 Kings 20:23 "And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they."

B. In contrast to this, Jehovah is the One God of the universe, binding His people to Him by Covenant Law. Such a radical concept needed clear definition, thus the Decalogue from Sinai, and especially the first four commands (Deut. 28; Lev. 26:14-25).

1. "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" – the divine Creator and Ruler of the universe.

Genesis 1:1 "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

Deut. 6:4-5: "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Deut. 10:17 "For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:"

1 Chr. 16:25-26 "For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Psalms 96:5 "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens."

Jer. 10:11 "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

1 Cor. 8:5-6 "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."

Acts 17:24-26 "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;"

2. "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*" – the One God cannot be imaged, limited, confined, manipulated, or controlled by the objects and devices of men.

Exodus 34:17 “Thou shalt make thee no molten gods.”

Exodus 20:23 “Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.”

Exodus 32:23 “For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.”

Isaiah 42:17 “They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

Acts 19:26 “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:”

2. The image thus made was far more to the heathen than a mere object; it became a god that they could possess, control, and manipulate for defense, protection, and blessing.

Exodus 32:1,4 “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him...And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

Acts 19:26 “Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands:”

- C. “*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.*” In its context this is far more than just using God’s name loosely. Rather, inspiration closely relates it to the vile practices of the idolatrous.

1. To associate God’s name with such was to profane it.

Leviticus 18:21 “And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through the fire to Molech, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.” NIV: “Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.”

Leviticus 20:3 “And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name.”

2. Their oaths were to be in His name, nor were they to profane it with false oaths
Deut. 6:13 “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.”

Deut. 10:20 “Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.”

Isaiah 48:1 “Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness.”

Leviticus 19:12 “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD.”

Matthew 5:33 "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:"

3. Blaspheming the holy Name was a vain usage.

Leviticus 24:16 "And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death."

James 2:5-9 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors."

4. Corrupt moral practices, while claiming God as Lord and Master, profaned His name.

Amos 2:7 "That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name:"

1 Cor. 6:15-20 "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

- D. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." He is the God of creation, not one of time, space, etc.

Exodus 20:7,11 "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Jer. 10:11 "Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens."

III. Warnings To Israel About "Buying Into" Amorite Corruption:

- A. God is just and righteous toward His creation: "*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*" (Psalm 85:10). Only as a last resort does he purge a land of its wicked and unworthy inhabitants. He destroyed the earth when men's thoughts were evil continually (Genesis 6:5); and Sodom and Jerusalem only **when their sins** were grievous and overspreading (Genesis 18:20). He would not destroy the Amorites until their iniquity was full (Genesis 15:16).

- B. God issued strong warnings against this "full iniquity" characteristic of the Amorites, charging His people not to engage in such, but to destroy everyone and everything connected with it.

Deut. 18:9-12 “When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.”

Deut. 20:17-18 “But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee: That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the Lord your God.”

Exodus 34:13-16 “But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

- C. But what was the evil that required such dire measure to stamp it out. Answering this will be the thrust of the rest of our lesson.

IV. The Idolatrous Fertility Cults:

- A. Baal and related idols.

The meaning of (lfb, *baal*) – “owner, husband, Baal.” One may own (*baal*) a house (Exodus 22:7), or rule over (*baal*) a territory (1 Chron. 4:22). A man may take a wife and marry (*baal*) her (Deut 24:1).

“The name is appropriated to the chief *male* divinity of the Phoenicians, the principal seat of whose worship was at Tyre, and thus corresponds with Ahstoreth, the supreme *female* divinity” ((McLintock & Strong, V. 1, p. 578).

- B. The function of Baal.

“He is above all the storm god who gives the sweet rain that revives vegetation. Dry years were attributed to his temporary captivity or even death. But at his revivification fields, flocks, and families became productive. In addition, he is a war and fertility deity who consorts with Anat (is later equated with Astarte). Both by reciting the myth of his role in reviving life at the autumn new year festival and by magical ritual of sacred marriage represented in the cult by the king, the queen and a priestess, the West Seminites hoped to ensure the earth’s fertility” (*Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, V. 1, p. 120).

- C. The licentious and immoral nature of the worship of Baal and other idol gods.

“Baal-Peor, or simply Peor, (was the name of a god of the Moabites, apparently worshipped by the prostitution (perhaps proceeds of the hire) of young girls (whence, according to the rabbins, the name, from (*paar*) to fracture i.q. to deprive of virginity” (McLintock & Strong, V. 1, p. 585).

“Ashtoreth was probably confounded with Juno, because she is the female counterpart to Baal, the chief god of the Syrians – their Jupiter, as it were; and with Venus, because the same lascivious rites were common to her worship and to that of Ashtoreth...” (McClintock & Strong, p 464).

Describing the worshipping at the high place (*bamah*): “All told, six activities may be traced: the burning of incense, sacrificing, the eating of sacrificial meals, praying, prostitution, and child sacrifice” (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, V. 1, p. 113).

“Archaeological cultic objects with exaggerated sexual features, as well as the myths themselves, support the OT notices about the degraded moral features associated with the cult” (Ibid., p. 120)

“The Babylonians were very greatly given to wine and the enjoyments which accompany inebriety. Women were present at their convivialities, first with some degree of propriety, but, growing worse and worse by degrees, they ended by throwing off at once their modesty and their clothing. Once in her life, according to Herodotus, every native female was obliged to visit the temple of mylitta, the Babylonian Astarte or Venus, and there receive the embraces of the first stranger who threw a piece of money into her lap” (McClintock & Strong, V. 1, p. 597).

V. **Stages Of Baal Worship In The Downfall Of The Holy Nation:**

A. Dancing around the golden calf: a return to what they were leaving.

Exodus 32:6,17-19,25 “And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play...And when Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, There is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount...And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

1 Cor. 10:7 “Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

B. The whoredoms committed at Baalpeor:

1. Israel was a Covenant People, remaining in the land as such only as long as she kept God's Covenant. Once she broke Covenant, God Himself would remove her. Balaam, who was forbidden to curse Israel (Numbers 22-25), evidently learned this; so he taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before Israel (violate the Covenant by engaging in Baal worship), and thus priming her for her eventual destruction (Rev. 2:14).

2. Thus Baalpeor becomes a tremendously significant event in defining Israel's plunge into sensual Baal worship: the downward path that led to her collapse.

Numbers 25:1-3 “And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.”

1 Cor. 10:8 “Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.”

Deut. 4:3 "Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor: for all the men that followed Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you."

Psalm 106:28-30 "They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead. Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed."

Hosea 9:10 "I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved."

- D. Ahab and Jezebel made Baal worship virtually the state religion of the Northern tribes.
1. Ahab constructed a temple of Baal in Samaria, and made a grove (Asherah pole, NIV; Asherah was a Canaanite goddess, and the pole, or grove, was her image that was set up).
1 Kings 16:31-33 "And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him."
1 Kings 21:25-26 "But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel."
 2. Elijah the prophet called for a drought to challenge fertility cult worship (1 Kings 17:1), culminating in the contest with Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18). He won a great victory, but it was short-lived in Israel; he was soon fleeing for his life (1 Kings 19:1-18).

- E. Through the lineage of Ahab and Jezebel, the religion of shame made its way to Judah when their daughter Athaliah married a Southern king, and soon destroyed that nation as well.

2 Kings 8:25-27 "In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son in law of the house of Ahab."

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Worship God In The Beauty of Holiness

Benny Burns

Text: Psalm 29:2 “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.”

Introduction:

- A. The “Hill of Jehovah God” must be climbed in purity of life, and sanctification of body and soul.
- B. Worship is especially beautiful if done by God’s people backed up by a holiness of life.
- C. True worship is the hardest task man had to perform. It requires the best we have to offer. John 4:24 “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”
- D. Let us consider what the Bible has to say on this most important subject.

I. There Is A Problem With Worshipping God:

- A. Can we worship any way we want to? Will God accept anything we offer? What if we do it just like God says, but our lives do not indicate that God is in us?
 - 1. Jeremiah 6:9-19 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall throughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine: turn back thine hand as a grapegatherer into the baskets. [10] To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. [11] Therefore I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days. [12] And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord. [13] For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. [14] They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. [15] Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. [16] Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. [17] Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. [18] Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. [19] Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.
- B. God will not accept anything man offers, man must offer what God wants, it has always been that way, it is that way now.
 - 1. The Holiness of God demands our own holiness if we worship God in the beauty of Holiness.
 - 2. What is the answer to this seeming plight of man? How do we raise ourselves to the Holiness level?

C. The Answer is Sanctification.

1. Listen to what the Bible has to say. John 17:17-19; Hebrews 13:10-15; II Thess. 2:13-14.
2. The sanctuary went out with the Old Law. There is no holy ground, no holy temple, no holy land. That which is holy today is the souls of human beings, the Holiness of God revealed through His Son and His Word.
3. The true Holiness of God promotes true worship. The most beautiful thing we can do is to glorify Jehovah God through His Son Jesus Christ. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Ephesians 3:21
4. The sanctified, the blood washed ones, are the only ones who have the right to worship God, calling on His name, doing His will from the heart. True worship in the beauty of Holiness is the hardest thing that man can do. It is planned, worked at, sacrificed for and in strict compliance to revealed truth. The Hill of Jehovah God must be climbed in order to see His great beauty.
5. 1 Tim. 2:8 I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.
6. When man comes to God for sanctification, he must be sincere, turning from sin, making the necessary adjustments. There is all the difference in the world of one continuing on in willful sins OR one trying to do better and drawing closer. Is the beauty of Worship seen in the raising up of actual hands (up and down motions as the Pentecostals do) or is it the beautiful lives lived by Christians, "...without wrath and doubting." Whenever we offer hand waving, hand clapping, and the appeal to the emotional (unscriptural singing), etc.; rather than daily Christ like living and walking with Him, we have lost our way.
7. In the words of Jeremiah the prophet, Jeremiah 7:3-11 Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. [4] Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. [5] For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; [6] If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: [7] Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. [8] Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. [9] Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; [10] And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? [11] Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.
8. JEREMIAH 8:4-7; 12:18-22 SHOWS THIS SAME CONTAMINATED CONFUSION.
9. Ezekiel 44:4-8; 17-27 Shows the same principle with the requirements of the Priest under the Old Testament.

- D. A textual exposition of Isaiah 6:1-8 reveals the beauty of Holiness in the Worship of God.
1. Verse one shows the beauty, the high and lifted up nature of God and His train filled the temple.
 2. Verse three shows that the glory of the Holiness of God fills the whole earth.
 3. Verse four shows the voice of God is a shaking and moving force.
 4. Verse five show the true nature of man, that when he knows God is near he must recognize his sinfulness.
 5. Verse six shows the need of man can be met by the taking away of his iniquities.
 6. Verse seven shows that rue worship of God in the beauty and Holiness is proven when many says , “Here am I send me.”
- E. GOD IS BEAUTIFUL WHEN WORSHIPED SINCERELY, MAN IS BEAUTIFUL WHEN EVER HE SHOWS FORTH THE IMAGE OF CHRIST IN HIS LIFE, WHEN EVER HOLY PEOPLE WORSHIP A HOLY GOD FOREVER AND EVER THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A BEAUTIFUL HOLY HEAVEN WILL BE REALIZED.

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A God Of The Prophetic Word

Terry R. Townsend

Introduction:

1. There's no god like our God- Jehovah, and in this lesson we will show that He is a God of the prophetic Word- a God of prophecy!
2. God's Word is reliable and sure. It is inerrant, infallible, and inspired (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
3. Yet, we live in a world that is at war with God's Word. There are those who despise it and are against everything it stands for. There are those who distort it and twist it to their own destruction. There are those who disregard it and claim that it's unreliable and irrelevant. May this never be!
4. Our purpose will be to show that we serve a God of the prophetic Word; i.e., a God of prophecy! His Word is true and sure! When He spoke to His prophets of old and foretold of future events, those events took place just as He said they would. We can trust God, and it behooves us to study and submit to His Will.
5. Our text for this study is taken from 2 Peter 1:19-21:
"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."
6. Let's consider three points from our text relative to God and His prophetic Word.

I. The Prophetic Word And Its Authorship:

- A. As a momentous matter of pressing priority Peter desired that first and foremost they realize how Sacred Scripture came into being (2 Peter 1:20-21).
 1. Peter is speaking of Scripture whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament.
 2. No Scripture of either testament came of private interpretation; i.e., of one's own inventive skill as a thinker. The prophecies did not originate as a result of the prophet's peculiar or personal explanation. God, through His Spirit, guided these men into all truths!
2 Samuel 23:2: The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.
John 16:13: Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.
- B. Channels of revelation;
GOD - CHRIST - HOLY SPIRIT - INSPIRED MEN - WRITTEN WORD
Rev. 1:1-2, 11: The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw...Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

- C. God spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, but now speaks to us today through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus spoke to the apostles and gave them His Spirit to guide them and give them remembrance of all things (John 14:26).
- D. Thus, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable..." (2 Timothy 3:16)
- E. How wonderful, wise, and weighty are the comprehensive claims of this prophetic word upon our hearts since it came not by man's will but by God's will. God's Word is verbally and plenary inspired; i.e., inspired in its words and in total completion, in absolute entirety!

II. **The Prophetic Word and Its Accuracy:**

- A. Peter is saying that the transfiguration scene confirmed the Messianic prophecies and made clear the deity of Jesus Christ as God's beloved Son (2 Pet. 1:19). It would be difficult to perceive how anything could be stronger in evidence of Christ's Deity than what Peter, James, and John witnessed on that occasion. Seeing Moses and Elijah (God's spokesmen in time past) conversing with the Lord, and hearing that voice from heaven declare, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," further verified the validity of the prophetic word (Mat. 17:1-5).
- B. God's Word is sure, steadfast, firm, and 100% accurate! Over 2,000 prophecies of old have been fulfilled; thus, the prophetic word is reliable because it's accurate!
- C. SOME EXAMPLES OF FULFILLED PROPHECIES:
 1. Isaiah foretold of the Babylonian Captivity and the fate of Hezekiah's descendent's nearly 100 years beforehand (Isa. 39:6-7; Dan. 1:2ff).
 2. Jeremiah prophesied the 70 years of captivity (Jer. 25:8-14; Dan. 5:31).
 3. Daniel, in his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, foretold of four world empires, and how the church would be established during that fourth empire (Dan. 2:31ff).
 4. God, through His prophet Isaiah, foretold of a coming Medo-Persian king named Cyrus who would allow God's people to return home to rebuild Jerusalem- 150 years beforehand (Isa. 44:28; Ezra 1:1ff).
 5. Then there are the countless prophecies of the coming Messiah- Jesus!
 - a. His virgin birth foretold and then fulfilled (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:26ff).
 - b. He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matt. 2:1).
 - c. He'd be a priest after order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Heb. 6:20).
 - d. He'd be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Mk. 14:10).
 - e. He'd be sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 9:9; Mat. 26:15).
 - f. He'd be unlawfully tried (Psalm 2:1-3; Matt. 27:1-2).
 - g. He'd remain silent when accused (Isa. 53:7; Matt. 26:60-63).
 - h. His crucifixion- hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25-27).
 - i. His side would be pierced (Zech. 12:10; John 19:34).
 - j. Not a bone would be broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33).
 - k. He would be resurrected (Psalm 16:10; Luke 24:36ff).
- D. Without question, the prophetic word is accurate! When God spoke to His prophets and foretold of future events, those events took place!
- E. And when God's Word speaks of the Second Coming of Christ, we can be assured that it will one day take place!
1 Thess. 4:16-17: For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, & with the trump of God: & the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive & remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: & so shall we ever be with the Lord.

III. The Prophetic Word And Its Admonition:

- A. Peter admonishes his readers to “take heed;” i.e., to give close attention to ; to fix the mind upon (Present tense- continuous & uninterrupted action- “keep on taking heed”- 2 Peter 1:19).
- B. The testimony which Peter gave regarding the transfiguration was not designed to supplant the evidence which the prophets supplied of the deity and identity of the Lord, but to confirm and strengthen it! To Peter, James, and John the transfiguration but confirmed the prophetic word predicted about the Lord’s deity and the divine source of Christianity! The New Testament adds more, far more in the way of overwhelming evidence for Christ’s Deity and Christianity’s divine derivation!
Hebrews 2:1-3: Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;
- C. Peter, along with the Hebrew writer, admonishes us to seriously consider and examine God’s Word! It’s reliable and true, and it behooves us to take heed!
- D. Consider what happened to men of old who failed to take heed to God’s Word:
 - 1. Adam and Eve were told not to partake of the forbidden fruit, but they listened not and subsequently brought death into the world (Genesis 3:1ff).
 - 2. Those in the days of Noah failed to listen to God’s spokesman and thus perished in the flood (Genesis 6:1ff).
 - 3. Uzzah hearkened not unto the commandment of God and touched the ark and died (2 Sam. 6:3ff).
 - 4. Nadab and Abihu offered strange (unauthorized) fire before God and were struck dead (Lev. 10:1-11).
 - 5. Achan took of the accursed items in Jericho and brought death to himself and his entire family (Joshua 6:1ff).
- E. Paul writes, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4); thus, it behooves you and I to take heed and obey God’s Word!
- F. Those failing to adhere to God’s Word will be lost eternally! Those who do obey God’s Word and remain faithful to Him will spend eternity with Him in Heaven!
John 5:28-29: Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

Conclusion:

1. Peter, as he recalls the events surrounding the Lord's transfiguration, undoubtedly pondered within his mind the words of God- "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5). We must HEAR Jesus, for He is God's last will and testament (Hebrews 1:2)! His words will be that which will judge men in the Last Day (John 12:48-50)!
2. Indeed, we serve a God of the prophetic Word- a Word that is sure and true!
3. We can believe and obey the Bible, for it is authored by God Himself; it is accurate and without contradiction; it is the only true Source of Divine admonition!

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A God Of Creation

Wesley Simons

Introduction:

1. More Atheist and Evolutionist have been produced the last fifty years than ever before, why?
2. We must teach the truth on the origin of man.
3. In this lesson, we will see the shortcomings of evolution and the glory of creation.

I. Reasons Why Evolution Must Be Fought:

1. It attacks the existence of God (Genesis 1:1).
2. It attacks the Word of God (Genesis 1-3).
3. It attacks man's accountability (II Corinthians 5:10).
4. It attacks Jesus Christ (John 3:16).
5. It attacks the Church (Acts 20:28).
6. It attacks Heaven (John 14:1-3).
7. It attacks Hell (Matthew 25:46).
8. It attacks truth (John 8:32).

II. False Arguments Made By The Evolutionist On The Origin Of The Universe And Life:

1. Big bang theory.
2. Mutation theory.
3. Natural selection theory.
4. "I don't know" - I don't need to know theory.

III. False Arguments Made by The Evolutionist In General To Support Their Theory:

1. Comparative anatomy.
2. Vestigial organs.
3. Fossil record.
4. The evolutionary "men."
 1. Nebraska Man.
 2. Neanderthal Man.
 3. Pith down Man.
 4. Java Man.

IV. The Missing Links:

1. Nothing to space.
2. Space to matter.
3. Matter to living matter.
4. Living matter to animals.
5. Animals to human beings.
6. Non-intelligence to intelligence

V. Known Laws Violated By Evolutionary Theory:

1. Biogenesis (Genesis 1:26, 27; Acts 17:28, 29; Hebrews 12:9).
2. Spontaneous generation (John 1:1-3).

3. First Law of Thermodynamics (Genesis 2:1, 2).
4. Second Law of Thermodynamics (Hebrews 1:10-12).
5. Birth or Transformation argument (See Warren/Flew Debate).

VI. Way To Prove God's Existence:

1. By nature (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:18-20).
2. By revelation (Genesis 1:1).
 1. Argument for inspiration;
 - (a) If the Bible is of such nature that men could not have produced it, then the Bible is the inspired word of God.
 - (b) The Bible is of such nature that men could not have produced it.
 - (c) Therefore the Bible is the inspired Word of God.
 2. A few evidences for inspiration;
 - (a) Empty place in North (Job 26:7).
 - (b) Hung the earth upon nothing (Job 26:7).
 - (c) The earth is round (Isaiah 40:22).
 - (d) The phylum and kind classes could not be crossed (Genesis 1:24,25).
 - (e) Life brings forth life (Genesis 1:1).
 - (f) Paths of the sea (Psalm 8).
 - (g) Hittite Nation (II Samuel 11:3, 6,17).
 - (h) Stars cannot be numbered (Genesis 15:3-6).

VII. Things We should Understand As A Result Of Creation:

1. God is (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:18-20).
2. The power of God's Word (Psalm 1:18-20).
3. The order of authority (I Timothy 2:11-15).
4. All things belong to God (Psalm 89:11).
5. The earth is full of God's riches (Psalm 104:24).
6. Animals and men are not on the same level (Psalm 8:1-9; Genesis 1:26, 27).
7. To oppress one's fellow man is to oppress God (the maker) (Proverbs 13:41; 17:5).
8. God is the potter, we are the clay (Isaiah 64:8).
9. That man has a spirit within him (Zechariah 12:1).
10. In God we have our being (Acts 17:28).
11. We are not in a position to question God. (Romans 9:20).
12. Every house is built by some man. (Hebrews 3:4).
13. All souls are to be entrusted to the creator (I Peter 4:19).
14. That He who created the heavens and earth will bring them to an end (II Peter 3:3-7).
15. God is worthy of our adoration (Revelation 4:11).
16. All of the human race comes from Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:20).
17. Creation took place on six literal twenty four hour days and God rested on the seventh, thus our seven day week. (Exodus 20:8-11; Exodus 31:17).

Conclusion:

1. The Atheist and Evolutionist has everything to lose and nothing to gain. Psalm 14:1.
2. My advice to you is found in Ecclesiastes 12:1.
3. Obey God today - Hebrews 5:8-9
 1. Hear — Romans 10:17
 2. Believe — John 8:24
 3. Confess Jesus — Matthew 10:32,33
 4. Repent — Luke 13:3,5
 5. And be baptized — Mark 16:16

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A God of Design *Tim Hall*

Introduction:

1. Years ago a new road was built near my home. It was wider and straighter than most, and it encouraged people to drive faster. One curve, however, was banked in such a way that one would skid off the road unless their speed was slowed considerably. It was obvious that the designer of that curve hadn't done his work very well!
2. We generally don't consider the design of something unless it doesn't work as it should. We tend to overlook examples of good design.
3. Psalm 19:1-4 - In the case of this universe in which we live, examples of good design are literally everywhere to be found. We should take time to consider some of these examples; it will help us to see very important truths that will help us to live as we should.

Discussion:

I. God's Design As Seen In the Material Universe:

A. Examples among the birds and the bees:

1. Matthew 6:26 - Jesus urged us to look at the birds of the air, but why? There are lessons to be learned from considering the animals around us.
2. Honeybees: A typical swarm may contain 50,000 individual bees. There are three classes: the Queen, which lays the eggs; the Drones (males), which do nothing but mate with the Queen; and the Workers, which do a variety of work: tend the young, build the comb, gather pollen and nectar, protect the colony, etc. The Workers generally live only six weeks. In that short span, they are dedicated to their specific functions, but will switch to another task when extra help is needed. Where did these bees learn such behavior? How could bees have survived during the time such behavior was "evolving"? "The Bible student knows the answer to that query; the skeptic does not."¹
3. Mallee Birds: These birds, which live in Australia, dig pits in which to lay their eggs. They fill the pit with decaying leaves and pile sand on top of the pit. Once the eggs are in the pit, the bird pokes its beak inside the nest several times a day. Changes of temperature as slight as 1/10 of a degree are noted, and sand is either piled on or removed from the nest to adjust the temperature inside. "How can the bird tell just what temperature the eggs need? How did she know how to build her unusual nest? How does it happen that her tongue is a sensitive thermometer?"² Again, those who believe the Bible's description of the Creator know the answers to those questions.
4. Woodpeckers: There are many evidences of design in this bird.
 - a. It's arrangement of toes, sharp claws and stiff tail feathers enable the Woodpecker to easily climb up and down tree trunks.
 - b. Woodpeckers have an enormous appetite for insects. This helps to control the insect population, and helps protect the forests from disease-carrying insects.

- c. The woodpecker hammers at the tree trunk at a rate of 15-16 times per second. Its head travels at more than twice the speed of a bullet.
- d. Its skull is designed to withstand great force, stress that is equivalent to 1,000 times the force of gravity, more than 250 times the force experienced by astronauts as they blast off in rockets toward outer space! The brain is encased in a skull with extra bond, surrounded by special fluid sacs that serve as shock absorbers.
- e. The woodpecker's nostrils are specially designed to filter out the sawdust it creates.
- f. The tongue is extra-long to enable it to search out insects once it has bored into the trunk. When not in use, this tongue is stored in the bird's right nostril.
- g. "The woodpecker must have had all its special designs right from the start to survive all that head-blasting!"³
- h. The acorn woodpecker on the Pacific coast gathers acorns and stores them in holes it has drilled into trees. Months later, when the acorns are filled with bugs and worms, it comes back to its feast. "[God] has written programs in the DNA of the acorn woodpecker that translate into an ability to recognize acorns and to know what to do with them, and to know that it is better not to eat them fresh but wait until they mature and are infested with insects."⁴

B. Examples from the laws of physics:

- 1. "If gravity were just 1033 times weaker than electromagnetism instead of 1039 times weaker, stars would burn a million times faster, making it impossible for them to produce the heavy elements necessary for life."⁵
- 2. "If the nuclear weak force were just slightly weaker in relation to gravity, most of the hydrogen in the universe would have been turned into helium, with profound consequences - such as no water."⁶
- 3. "If the so-called nuclear strong force were just 2 percent stronger, it would have prevented the formation of protons - meaning a universe with no atoms. If it had been 5 percent weaker, we would have a universe with no stars and therefore no elements necessary for carbon-based life."⁷
- 4. The earth is "just so", making life on earth possible. Some examples:⁸
 - a. The tilt of the earth on its axis; otherwise, seasons would not be as they are, and there would not be as much dry land as there is.
 - b. The size of the earth: if it were smaller, gravity would not hold air or water in place. If it were larger, our atmosphere would be pulled too close to the surface, and everything would weigh too much for life to continue.
 - c. Distance from the sun: If Earth were twice as far from the sun, we would have only one-fourth of the heat we now enjoy. Living things would freeze during winters that would be twice as long. If earth was half as far from the sun, the surface would be four times as hot, and most living things would perish.
 - d. "Earth alone in all the solar system contains a 'zone of life'. Only here can water remain liquid, and oxygen abounds in free, active form. While all this may seem odd to people who do not believe in God, nothing about

Earth seems odd to Christians.”⁹

5. Water:

- a. Water an exception to the rule: “When solids become liquids, they increase in volume, and when liquids become gas, they occupy even more space. This is true for all the elements except water. Water is the only rebel.”¹⁰ If this were not the case, water would not float when it froze, but would sink to the bottom. Life would not be possible in the oceans, lakes and rivers.
- b. Water’s ability to cleanse itself: “Water evaporates to become a vapor and condenses back to water again. Water runs down from highlands to lowlands, dissolving salt and minerals which are then deposited in the sea...A constant circulation of fresh water is made available.”¹¹

C. Examples from our own bodies:

1. **Cells:**

- a. It has been said that our bodies are comprised of 26,000,000 cells. Cells make up every part of us: muscles, skin, hair, nails, eyes, organs, blood, etc. But at the moment of our conception, there was only one cell! How did that happen? Inside every cell (including that first one) is DNA, the blueprint of what this person’s body will become.¹²
- b. “In other words, what is encoded on the DNA inside every cell of every living creature is purely and simply written information. We use a twenty-six letter alphabet in English; in DNA there is a four-letter chemical alphabet, whose letters combine various sequences to form words, sentences, and paragraphs. These comprise all the instructions needed to guide the functioning of the cell...Now, when we see written language, we can infer, based on our experience, that it has an intelligent cause. And we can legitimately use analogical reasoning to conclude that the remarkable information sequences in DNA also had an intelligent cause. Therefore, this means life on earth came from a ‘who’ instead of a ‘what’.”¹³

2. Proteins and amino acids:

- a. Cells are made up of proteins. “If you took all the carbon in the universe and put it on the face of the earth, allowed it to chemically react at the most rapid rate possible, and left it for a billion years, the odds of creating just one functional protein molecule would be one chance in 10 with 60 zeroes after it. Those odds are so infinitesimal that the human mind can’t comprehend them.”¹⁴
- b. Proteins are made up of amino acids: “...the probability of linking together just one hundred amino acids to create one protein molecule by chance would be the same as a blindfolded man finding one marked grain of sand somewhere in the vastness of the Sahara Desert-and doing it not just once, but three different times.”¹⁵

3. **The Human Brain:** The human brain is the most complicated structure in the known universe. It contains over 100 billion cells, each with over 50,000 neuron connections to other brain cells. This structure receives over 100 million separate

signals from the total human body every second. If we learned something every second of our lives, it would take three million years to exhaust the capacity of the human brain.”¹⁶

4. **Hunger and thirst:** “Our bodies have a built-in trigger, a gauge, which alerts us to our need for water: thirst. It is extraordinary to me how accurate our sense of thirst is. It is much superior to modern technology and science.”¹⁷
 5. Psalm 139:14 - David was right to praise God when considering his own body. we are indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made”.
- D. Hebrews 3:4 - Hundreds of examples can easily be found of intricate design in the universe around us and within us. What does all of this mean? That is just as the presence of a house demands the existence of a builder, so also the presence of an orderly universe demands the existence of a wise and powerful Creator. It couldn't have just happened!

II. God's Design As Seen In His Law And Commandments:

- A. Psalm 19:7-11 - This is the real point toward which the psalmist was aiming. If God's glory can be seen in the natural creation around us, it can also be seen in His laws and statutes. There is great reward in keeping God's laws, because they were designed for man's benefit.
- B. Examples of design as seen in the laws of God:
 1. Leviticus 13:45,46 - For centuries, no one knew why God commanded lepers to live “outside the camp”. Wasn't this just adding to the misery of these poor souls? Now, however, we know that the laws of quarantine are essential for well-being of society. It helps, protect others from being infected with communicable diseases.
 2. Leviticus 19:9,10 - Why would God command that certain parts of one's field not be harvested, or that produce that fell from the cart not be picked up? It was God's way of providing for the strangers and widows of the community. Without taking necessities from the farmer, it provided for the poor.
 3. Numbers 35 10-12 - Why set up “cities of refuge” throughout Israel? It may have been that a life was taken accidentally. A man should be given a fair hearing before judgment is rendered. All civilized societies now operate on this principle.
 4. Matthew 6:25,26 - When Jesus commanded us not to worry about the everyday details of our lives, did He know something about the damage done by worry? Again; God's design is for us to live an abundant life.
- C. The general principle stated:
 1. Deuteronomy 6:20-23 - Children would ask their parents why God had given the laws and commandments Israel was required to observe. What answer could a father give “for our good always”. Even when we don't understand why God has given certain commands, let us still obey in faith.

Conclusion:

1. Ecclesiastes 3:11 - Is it not obvious that God “has made everything beautiful in its time”? Design and orderliness are the standards of the universe, not the exceptions.
2. “I stand in awe of God because of what He has done through His creation. Only a rookie who knows nothing about science would say science takes away from faith. If you really study science, it will bring you closer to God.” (Dr. James Tour, professor at Rice University’s Department of Chemistry and Center for Nanoscale Science and Technology).¹⁸

Endnotes

- [1] Wayne Jackson, “Bee-havior Points to God” www.christiancourier.com, May 20, 2000.
- [2] Lawrence Richards, *It Couldn’t Just Happen*, Sweet Publishing, 1987, pp 105-106.
- [3] David Juhasz, “The Incredible Woodpecker” *Creation Magazine*, archived at www.answeringenesis.org.
- [4] Paul Brand, M.D., *The Forever Feast*, Vine Books, Servant Publications, 1993, pp.147, 148.
- [5] Patrick Glynn, *God: The Evidence*; cited in Timothy Johnson, M.D., *Finding God In The Questions*, InterVarsity Press, 2004, p. 45.
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] *Ibid.*
- [8] Examples from Richards, *op.cit.*, pp. 26,27
- [9] *Ibid.*, p. 24
- [10] Brand, *op.cit.*, p. 43.
- [11] *Ibid.*, pp.43,44.
- [12] Richards, *op.cit.*, p. 139.
- [13] Lee Strobel, *The Case For Faith*, Zondervan Publishers, 2000, pp. 109,110.
- [14] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] “Evidence For Creation” (no author given), www.creationevidence.org.
- [17] Brand, *op.cit.*, p. 48.
- [18] Strobel, *op.cit.*, p. 111.

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The God of Uncomparable Forgiveness

David Pharr

Text: Micah 7:18-19 Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. [19] He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

Introduction:

1. The meanings of the names of the prophets sometimes reflected the burden of their message. The literal meaning of “Micah” is “Who is like Jahweh [Jehovah]?” It is with this thought that he begins his beautiful doxology in the closing of the book. “Who is a God like unto thee?”
2. The question is rhetorical. The point is that no god, nothing, can compare to Jehovah.
 - a. Various thoughts come to mind:

He is the God who in six days “made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is” (Exodus 20:11).

He is the God that “who telleth the number of the stars; and calleth them all by their names” (Psalm 147:4).

He is the God who “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26).

He is a God that is “able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Matthew 3:9) and is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

- b. The song of Moses said: “Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exodus 15:11). Paul wrote: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Romans 11:33). He does “marvelous things without number” (Job. 5:9).
3. But Micah’s thought is on redemption. “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity?” Here is the God of Incomparable Forgiveness. Because of our familiarity with the gospel, we may take divine forgiveness for granted, but:

I. There Is Nothing That Compares To The Wonder Of God’s Forgiveness:

- A. People sometimes question whether God could really punish men for their sins. But when we consider who God is and what sin is, we might be moved to ask how forgiveness is possible. Sin by its very nature is offensive to God (I John 3:4) and is the opposite of his holy character (I John 5:17). Sin demands wrath (Romans 1:18, 32; 6:23).
- B. The story of the Bible is the story of God’s plan to bring about human redemption. So marvelous it is that the angels watched intently the unfolding of the mystery (I Peter 1:12).

Oh what marvelous mercy, what infinite love
What immeasurable grace I see!

(Looking at the text, there are two words—"mercy" and "compassion" which explain why He is a God that forgives.)

II. The Basis For His Forgiveness Is His Unique Mercy and Compassion:

- A. The basis is not the sinner's worthiness, nor that he has paid a price or earned a right. Forgiveness is not by "grace only," but it is only by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:3-5).
- B. Heathen religions see men as trying to persuade their gods to show mercy. Such religions are men seeking after their gods. The gospel shows God seeking after men, to show mercy. "And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 1:14). See Exodus 34:6-7.

(Next we notice this line from verse 19: "and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." This reminds us that:)

III. There Is Nothing That Can Compare To Its Completeness and Perfection:

- A. Casting them into the sea suggests complete removal from his sight. God does not forgive a little at the time.
- B. Consider some ways this is expressed in the Bible.
It is comprehensive. Exodus 34:7 says he forgives "iniquity and transgression and sin."

Sins are "blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

"He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

Five times in Psalm 118: "His mercy endureth forever."

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12).

"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Romans 4:8).

When he forgives, he cleanses us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

"[T]hough your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

He "washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5).

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14).

- C. The point is that God does not merely excuse sin, or ignore it. When he forgives sin, he obliterates it, erases it from the record, remembers it no more forever. He not only removes the pardon, he takes away the indictment.

(The wonder of God's incomparable forgiveness has been misinterpreted by some so that they presume that God forgives no matter what. But notice the wording in verse 18: "he passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage." This reminds us that:)

IV. God's Forgiveness Is Always Consistent With His Requirements:

- A. God's actions are never arbitrary, not even his forgiveness. God deals with every person according to the same impartial principles (Acts 10:34f). He does not just decide (as Calvinism teaches) to pardon some and damn others without regard to their actions.
- B. "Remnant" refers to those who seek his forgiveness. Micah 7:7-9 shows that there were some among the rebellious of Judah who were seeking God's pardon. God has never forgiven anyone who has not sought forgiveness (cf. John 5:40).
Always there has been a plan, a procedure for seeking forgiveness. In the gospel age it is shown in texts such as Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; et al.
A clear demonstration of this was in the Lord's prayer of Luke 23:34, which was not answered until Acts 2:38-41.
- C. Thus the assurance that sins will be cast "into the depths of the sea" applies to the penitent remnant. One thing God cannot do, even in his incomparable mercy and compassion, is to forgive a sinner who will not repent. God would rather save than destroy, but his own righteousness prevents his saving the impenitent.

Conclusion:

This Old Testament text is one of the most assuring of all the Bible, yet it is only a "shadow" of the full message of forgiveness which is in Jesus Christ.

"Who is a God like unto thee?" What greater blessing than forgiveness of sins? What greater need than to seek his pardon? What better time than now?

*O the height and depth of mercy!
O the length and breadth of love!
O the fullness of redemption,
Pledge of endless life above.*

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A God Who Provides Refuge

David Irick

Introduction:

1. The word refuge is defined as “a shelter or protection from danger, difficulty...a place of safety, shelter or safe retreat.”¹
2. In every aspect of life we see the need for a place of refuge. As children we ran to mothers who served as refuges when hurt, sick or afraid. Today we have shelters for women who are battered and abused. Many have sought shelter from storms in places of refuge established by local authorities. Every man has worked out in the bitter elements of winter and looked forward to the shelter and protection of a warm home. Every society of people have recognized the need for shelter and protection from enemies and the harsh conditions of nature.
3. God is likened to a refuge. He provides shelter, protection from danger and is our safe retreat when in need! Is it any wonder the Bible describes God as a tower, a hen with her chicks, a fortress, a shield and a buckler? It is God who affords the peace of mind to make life comfortable enough to be worth living. He is our hope, comfort and the peace that passeth all understanding!

Discussion:

I. God Is A Refuge For The Physical Necessities of Life:

- A. Man Must Have Food, Clothing And Shelter To survive.
 1. This is a self-evident truth that all must agree!
- B. God Is A Refuge For the Physical Necessities of Life
 1. Psalm 37:25 (I remember visiting Orlie Harrison who often quoted this verse as we talked. It was just as true and applicable when first written as it is today!)
 2. I Kings 17:1-16 (God took care of Elijah through a widow woman. Elijah was sent to a widow woman to be fed, but why a widow? Is it not rue that Elijah was sent to this special woman to aid her in this time of need as well?)
 3. Deuteronomy 29:5 (Israel wandered in the wilderness, but their shoes and clothes never wore out.)
 4. Luke 12:14-36

II. God Is a Refuge For Overcoming And Dealing With Sickness:

- A. Sickness Is A Common Problem;
 1. Both young and old suffer from sickness and pain. No one is exempt from such trials of life. We seek help from doctors as we should, but the Bible teaches God is a mighty refuge in times of need!
- B. Our God Is A Mighty Refuge In Dealing With Sickness;
 1. II Kings 20:1-7 (God lengthened Hezekiah's life).
 2. Philippians 2:25-27 (God had mercy upon Epaphroditus).
 3. Matthew 15:22-28 (The woman whose daughter is vexed with a devil seeks Jesus' aid and is rewarded. Consider that her persistent nature gave evidence of her concern and that in turn was rewarded. We should learn from her good example and be diligent in seeking God's help!).
 4. Hebrews 9:27 (This doesn't mean we can escape sickness, pain or death. Did God love Abraham, Moses, David, Paul or John? Yes, but they still passed from this life through death).

III. God Is A Refuge For Those In Physical Danger:

- A. Life Is Filled With Physical Dangers;
 - 1. Thankfully we live in an area where crime is low. But there are times when we are faced with various types of physical danger. Each day becomes a potential day of danger.
- B. God Is A Refuge For Christians When In Danger;
 - 1. Esther: (Notice how God delivers the Jew's from Haman's evil plot. God, without a miracle, works through the natural affairs of men to keep His people from physical harm. This should give us the utmost confidence to know that while miracles have ceased God can still work in our world today and be our refuge!).
 - 2. Psalm 23:5 (Consider the 23rd Psalm).
 - 3. I Samuel 17:37, 45-47 (God delivers David from Goliath).

IV. God Is A Refuge For Those In Spiritual Danger:

- A. This Is Man's Most Pressing Danger!
 - 1. I John 3:4 (Sin is a transgression of His law).
 - 2. Romans 6:23 (The wages of sin is death. That is when in sin, we have died spiritually and are without hope!).
- B. God Is A Refuge For all mankind If We Properly Seek After Him!
 - 1. Hebrews 6:17-20 (God has provided Christians with hope that becomes an anchor to the soul!).
 - 2. Titus 1:2 (Christians have the promise of God that gives comfort to the heart)
 - 3. Luke 23:39-43 (One thief was nearsighted and wanted a miracle of deliverance from the cross. The wiser of the thieves realized he needed safety for his soul and was rewarded!).
 - 4. Luke 15:11-32 (Perhaps no other Biblical account expresses the tragic physical effect of sin in one's life, and the loving nature of the Father better than this parable.).
 - 5. Luke 16:24 (Remember there is a time of accountability when God will not be a refuge!).

Conclusion:

- 1. Have you taken advantage of our great spiritual refuge? Every man will seek shelter during harsh weather because the need is immediately recognized. But only the wise will seek shelter for his soul when the threat is not pressing.
- 2. Plan of salvation.

Endnote

¹ Webster's New World Dictionary, Second College Edition, pg. 1149

A God Of Perfect Unity And Harmony

Micah 7:18

Eddy Craft

Introduction:

- A. Let me again call your attention to our text for this lectureship. “**Who is a God like unto thee**, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18). We want to show that there is not a god like Jehovah.
- B. This is especially true when it comes to the perfect unity and harmony of God. The unity of purpose, theme, and structure of the Bible has proven its inspiration. God has given us a unique piece of literature in the Bible. Its perfect harmony demonstrates the source from whence it comes!

I. The Unity of The Scriptures:

- A. Do you think that it is reasonably possible that forty men, from varying backgrounds, and scattered across more than a thousand years in time, could have designed some sixty-six books which accidentally came together in such a powerful way to revolutionize the world? Impossible!
- B. The sacred scriptures were written by some forty different persons, over a span of some sixteen hundred years. These authors, from a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds, writing in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek), produced a volume of sixty-six books that is characterized by such an amazing unity and beautiful continuity which cannot be the result of human origin.
- C. From Genesis to Revelation there is a marvelous unfolding of the general theme of man’s fall and God’s plan to redeem him. No serious student of the Bible can fail to be awed by this vast body of consistent evidence, which can argue only for an inspired document.
- D. There are countless thousands of instances of minute agreement between the Biblical writers in matters of History, culture, geography, biography, etc, for which there is absolutely no explanation save that of divine inspiration.
- E. This is seen in a powerful way in what the Apostle Paul wrote. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all **speak the same thing**, and that there be **no divisions** among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the **same mind and in the same judgment**” (1 Corinthians 1:10). If it were not for the unity of purpose there is no way this verse could be obeyed. Believe it or not we can all speak the same thing!

II. Purpose and Theme of The Bible Began In Eternity:

- A. Christ as the theme of the Bible and redemption for man as the purpose had its beginning in eternity. Notice a number of verses that so state.
Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.
Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.
Rev. 13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; [19] But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Ephesians 3:10-11 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, [11] According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- B. There is unity, a unity of theme that saturates the whole of divine oracles. The Bible is the story of one problem-sin-with one solution, Jesus Christ. Jesus is seen either directly or indirectly in every book of the Bible. For example, Christ is the promised seed in the book of Genesis, in Exodus, He is the passover lamb in Leviticus, He is the Holy sacrifice in Numbers, He is the brazen serpent, etc.
- C. I was predicted, prefigured and presented in the typology of the Old Testament: Hebrews 9:7-9 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: [8] The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: [9] Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience. Hebrews 10:1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. It was consummated with the coming of Christ Jesus as revealed in the New Testament: Ephesians 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. Galatians 4:4-5 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, [5] To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.
- D. Deity worked all this out for us before the world ever began. It is therefore no wonder that we have such great unity of purpose, theme and structure.
- E. The unity of purpose, theme and structure as proof of the inspiration is well pointed out by Brother David R. Pharr from the following statement: "The beginning student may feel that the Bible is a confusing collection of disconnected parts. Whether, or how, each part is related to others parts is not immediately obvious and many never appreciate how wonderfully the pieces are related. The careful and persistent student discovers, however, that every section of Scripture contributes meaning to the overall theme. When we understand that every part has its place and that adds to the message of the whole, we appreciate that it is no longer a puzzle but a marvelous portrait of redemption, a mural of salvation through Christ." (Good News Journal, May 1996 p. 5).

III. A God Of Perfect Unity and Harmony Is Seen In The One Church:

- A. The one church did not grow out of the ideas and opinions of men. This is not a doctrine of which man is fond.
- B. Denominationalism is the opposite of unity and harmony. As a matter of fact they tell us that we ought to agree to disagree. Folks that is not the unity of God. The Lord only built one church. Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. There is but one body and that body is the church. Ephesians 1:22-23 And hath put all things under

his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, [23] Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. Ephesians 4:4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. All the saved are added to this one body. Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. The Bible makes it clear that Christ is the Savior of the body and as we have already seen the body is the church. Ephesians 5:23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body.

- C. If we are going to maintain the unity of God we must follow His platform of unity. Ephesians 4:1-6 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, [2] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; [3] Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. [4] There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; [5] One Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. This brings about perfect unity and harmony.

IV. A God Of Perfect Unity and Harmony Is Seen In The One Savior:

- A. Christ is our only hope. John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.
- B. There are not many Saviors. Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Buddha cannot save. Mohammad cannot save, only the Christ can save!
- C. The expression that many if not all of us have heard that it doesn't matter which way we go, you go your way and I will go mine and we will all end up in heaven. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Conclusion:

- 1. In every thing that God does we see a perfect unity and harmony.
- 2. This is clearly seen in what the Bible teaches about the Godhead. There are three persons that make up the Godhead but are one in purpose and unity. Jesus points this out in His prayer to the Father. John 17:20-21 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; [21] That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

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A God of Longsuffering

Michael Gilbert

Text: Micah 7:18

Thesis: God's delight in mercy is not a condoning of sin, but a demonstration of love designed to lead men to repentance.

Introduction:

1. Our God truly is a God of longsuffering.
 - a. America is still standing, with all her sins.
 - Same-sex marriage; abortion; divorce; ungodliness on television
 - b. Unfaithful congregations of God's people are still in existence.
 - liberalism; weak public stands for truth; lukewarm
 - c. Unfaithful, worldly children of God are still alive physically, although not spiritually.
 - refusing to worship God and study His word; immodest dress; "Sunday only" Christians;
2. Were it not for the longsuffering of our merciful God, we would surely have been destroyed long ago.
 - a. Micah expressed it this way, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy."(Micah 7:18)
 - b. However, God's delight in mercy is not a condoning of sin, but a powerful demonstration of His love, designed to lead men to repentance.
 - c. In regard to this thought, we will notice three things:
 - (1) Who Is A God Like Unto Thee?
 - (2) God Pardons Iniquity And Passes by Transgressions
 - (3) God Delights In Mercy

I. Who Is A God Like Unto Thee?

- A. God is Powerful: He treads upon the high places of the earth(Micah 1:3)
 1. God came forth out of His place(Micah 1:3)
 - a. God never moves for trivial reasons.
 - (1) God "moved" as cloud by day/fire by night to get His people to the land of Canaan – this had a grand purpose(Micah 5:2).
 - (2) God "moved" from Heaven to earth to bring salvation (John 1:1, 14)
 - b. Dinner invitation to President Bush from me is trivial, would not cause the President to "move" and eat with me.
 - c. In this instance, God moved to punish the sin of His people.
 - "For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel." (Micah 1:5)
 2. At God's presence, the mountains were melted(volcanoes) and the valleys (earth) was ripped open (earthquake)
 - a. This is figurative language describing the greatness of our God.
 - b. This happened as:
 - (1) easy wax melts before a fire and,

- (2) as easy as water pours over a waterfall (steep place).
- B. God is Patient: God only “moved” after years (nearly 1,000) of warnings to His people.
1. God only “moved” in judgment of their sins after sufficient warning. (2 Kings 17:12-18)
 2. God will one day “move” in judgment of the world (2 Peter 3:9).
 3. The world has had plenty of warnings:
 - a. Jesus Himself (John 3:16; 1:10 – “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not”)
 - b. The Scriptures (John. 20:30-31)
 - c. The lives of Christians (1 Peter. 2:9, 12)
 - d. Most people have at least heard of Christianity or Jesus of Nazareth.
 - e. The testimony of nature (Acts 14:17)
 4. God’s longsuffering is seen in that we are 2,000 years removed from the cross.
- C. Who is a god like our God, who is so powerful He is able to destroy us because of sin, yet so patient with sinful man?
1. Idols are not (Isaiah 44:14-19)
 2. Money is not (Matt. 6:19-24; 16:26) “Earth holds no treasures, but perish with using...”
 3. Pleasure is not (Heb. 11:25; Eccl. 12:13-14)

II. God Pardons Iniquity and Passes By Transgressions:

- A. Even after all the sins of the children of Israel, God was still willing to forgive them! (Micah 7:18)
1. Idolatry (Micah 1:7).
 2. Minds on evil continually (Micah 2:1).
 3. Covetousness (Micah 2:2).
 4. Despised fellow man (Micah 2:2).
 5. Refusing to hear the word of God (Micah 2:6).
 6. Government corruption (Micah 3:1-4).
 7. Tolerating false teachers (Micah 3:5,8).
 8. Hypocrisy (Micah 3:11).
 9. Forgiveness, for the children of Israel, came through;
 - a. Repentance of sins (Micah 6:6-8).
 - b. The mountain of the Lord’s house (Micah 4:1-2).
 - c. The baby of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).
 - d. The promise to Abraham (Micah 7:20; 12:3).
- B. Even after our sins, God is willing to forgive us if we will repent (Romans 5:6-9)!
1. Christians who don’t condemn the lottery (I Timothy 6:9).
 2. Christians who don’t condemn/engage in immodest dress (Matt. 5:28).
 3. Christians who don’t condemn mixed swimming (Matt. 5:28).
 4. Christians who refuse to take a stand on the moral issues of our day (John 12:43).
 5. Christians who do not seek the kingdom first (Matt. 6:33).
 6. Forgiveness, for all mankind today, comes the same way;
 - a. Repentance of sins (Acts 17:30-31).
 - b. The mountain of the Lord’s house (I Tim. 3:15; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23)
 - c. The baby of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:4-6; Luke 2:30-31, 36-38)

- d. the promise to Abraham (Gal. 3:29; 4:4-5)

III. God Delights In Mercy:

- A. Does not retain His anger forever (Micah 7:19);
 - 1. Men can hold grudges, even after repentance occurs (Ephesians 4:32).
 - 2. God will forgive, if we will only repent (Ezek. 33:11).
- B. His delight in mercy does not mean that sin will go unpunished.
 - 1. Israel and Judah still had to go into captivity, even after the promise of Micah 7:18.
 - a. Micah 1:16; 3:12.
 - b. Micah witnessed the carrying away of Israel by the king of Assyria (2 Kings 17:6).
 - c. David (Bathsheba - 2 Sam. 11/sin in numbering the people - 2 Sam. 24)
 - 2. This world will still be destroyed, even though God is longsuffering (2 Peter 3:9-10).
- C. God desires all men to be saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4).
 - 1. John 8:32; John 14:6.
 - 2. People will not be lost in hell because God doesn't care, but because they refuse to thank God for caring about them!

Conclusion:

- A. No, God's longsuffering with sinful man is not a condoning of sin, but a demonstration of love designed to lead men to repentance. This is seen in the fact that:
 - 1. Even though He has the power to punish sin immediately, He is patient with man.
 - 2. He pardons iniquity and passes by transgressions and,
 - 3. He delights in mercy.
- B. When we truly understand those three things about God, we can say with Micah, "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18).
- C. We can also fall on our face and say with the psalmist, "But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth" (Psalm 86:15).
- D. What about you? Have you repented of your sins and given your life to Christ? Or, "...despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" (Romans 2:4).

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A God Of Justice And Judgment

Jim Palmer

Text: I Thessalonians. 1:7-9 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. [8] For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. [9] For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

Introduction:

1. "Who is a God like unto thee?" What a marvelous theme, what a majestic and matchless God! Truly, it is a privilege and honor to be asked to close out this final night of this series. My thanks are extended to the elders of the Elizabethton church and to the directors of this Biblical Viewpoints Lectureship."
2. My purpose is to show that while God is a God of longsuffering and compassion, He is also a God of Justice and Judgment. The courts of men may often punish the innocent and free the guilty; but God's judgment will be just, impartial, and final: there will be no other court of appeal.
3. From the outset of this lectureship, our thoughts have been concerned with the study and understanding of the complexities of God as He has revealed Himself in His word. Beginning at Micah 7:18, the question we have sought to fathom is, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy."
4. As we seek to contemplate and comprehend this seemingly incompatible duality of God, we must consider that this is not the only 'mystery' about Him. Another such concern is His Supremacy and yet His Humbleness, His Nearness and His Distance. How then to understand Paul at the Acropolis, [Acts 17:27 - That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:] and yet to diligently seek Him that we might be rewarded by Him [Hebrews 11:6]?
5. William Barclay wrote, "... as we read Your word, humble us at the sight of Your holiness, and then comfort us with the memory of Your mercy. Humiliate us with the realization of our sinfulness, and then uplift us at the sight of Your love... When we are lazy and lethargic, let Your word stimulate us to thought and to action. When we are restless and distracted, let Your word calm our troubled hearts with the peace that passes understanding."
6. So we are seeking a God far above us and yet the God who loves us enough to have come and lived among us, both at once distant and intimate, glorious, awesome, and loveable.
7. As we begin our considerations tonight, my purpose will be to follow this pattern: answering the question--
 - a. What is God's Justice and Judgment?
 - b. Examples of God's Justice and Judgment as revealed in the scriptures.
 - c. That Day When Justice and Judgment will Be Revealed.looking at --
and discussing --

Discussion:

I. What Do We Mean by God's 'Justice and Judgment?'

- A. By further way of understanding the things that God has revealed to us in His word, two words we should consider at the outset: propitiation and expiation. Examining the

difference in these two words, that sound so much alike, helps illustrate God's justice and judgment.

1. First, consider PROPITIATION -

- a. 'This means the turning away of wrath by an offering. It is similar to expiation but expiation does not carry the nuances involving wrath. For the Christian the propitiation was the shed blood of Jesus on the cross. That blood sacrifice turned away the wrath of God so that He could pass "over the sins previously committed" (Romans 3:25). It was the Father who sent the Son to be the propitiation (I John 4:10) for all (I John 2:2).
- b. Offering whatever will turn away anger; paying the penalty. Propitiation has to do with persons, expiation with things. Sin arouses the wrath of God; if people are to be forgiven, something must be done about his anger. Jesus' death on the cross brought about a process of propitiation; it was the means by which by which divine anger was averted from sinners (H. Shaw 354).

2. Then we look at the meaning of EXPIATION -

- a. 'The word expiation begins with the prefix ex, which means "out of" or "from." Expiation means to remove something. In Biblical theology it has to do with taking away or removing guilt by means of paying a ransom or offering an atonement. It means to pay the penalty for something. Thus, the act of expiation removes the problem by paying for it in some way, in order to satisfy some demand. Christ's expiation of our sin means that He paid the penalty for it and removed it from consideration against us. On the other hand, propitiation has to do with the object of the expiation. The prefix in this case is pro, which means "for." Propitiation has to do with what brings about a change in God's attitude toward us, so that we are restored to the fellowship and favor of God. In a sense, propitiation points to God's being appeased. If I am angry because you have offended me, but you then appease me, the problem will be removed. Thus propitiation brings in the personal element and stresses that God is no longer angry with us. Propitiation is the result of expiation. The expiation is the act that results in God's changing His attitude toward us. Expiation is what Christ did on the cross. The result of Christ's act of expiation is that God is propitiated. It is the difference between the ransom that is paid and the attitude of the One receiving the ransom.' (Tabletalk, June 13, 1990)

B. Truth is ready at all times to administer both judgment and justice. As God is love, so God is justice. These qualities are in God's mind in complete harmony and unity, but this ONE attribute of God is made manifest in man's consciousness too often in diversity. It is through the mind of Christ instilled in our hearts that we see the unity. When the justice and love of God were united at the cross, there is balance, poise, and righteousness. When judgment is divorced from love, and works from the head alone, there goes forth the human cry for justice. In his mere human judgment, man is hard and heartless; he deals out punishment and vengeance without consideration of motive or cause, and justice goes awry.

C. What are the characteristics of God's justice?

1. God's justice is THE Characteristic OF GOD: as Moses and the children of Israel

sang in the long ago, 'Who is like unto thee....glorious in holiness?' Exodus 5:11 and as Exodus. 34:5-7 declares, 'And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. 6 And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.'

D. God's Justice is Retributive [repayment in punishment].

1. Rewarding Just Recompense of Reward - Matthew 16:27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.
2. Returning Good for Good and Recognizing Remissiveness - Matthew 25:31-46 - Those on the right and those on the left, each reminded of the hungry, the thirsty, sojourners, naked, sick, and those in prison.
3. God's Eternal Principle – Seed produces after its own kind, from the beginning, it will always be so. - Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

E. God's Justice is More than Just any 'Merit Based System.'

1. Our accomplishments demonstrate our attitudes. - Matthew 6:1-4.
2. Our attitudes lay bare our actions (Matthew 6:6).
3. Yet God's justice goes beyond merit.
 - a. His rewards exceeds our efforts. Mark 10:30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.
 - b. He makes our unprofitability His gain-Luke 17:10 So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.
 - c. This is grace, not merit, because His cost far exceeds our worth.
4. So, it is more than a mere merit and reward system. Matt. 20:1-15

F. God's justice shows grace but also avenges those who have been wronged.

1. Revelation 16:4-7.
2. 2 Thess. 1:6-9 'since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,'

G. God's justice has many facets, a multitude of aspects.

1. On one hand His justice is retributive, giving each man/woman what they deserve.
2. His justice is full of grace giving more reward than one deserves.
3. His justice shows vengeance on those who have been wronging others.

- H. Things that God's Justice and Judgment is NOT.
1. By looking at what God's justice and judgment is not, we can better understand God's justice and judgment.
 2. Some feel that whenever something bad happens to them it is a sign of sin, and they are getting what they deserve.
 - a. Modern man did not originate this idea, it goes back a long way.
 - b. Remember Job's associates – Eliphaz the Temanite, Zophar the Naamathite, and the shortest man in the Bible, Bildad the Shuhite (shoe height)? Job 8:1-6.
 - c. Remember those kind souls rejoicing at the blind man's sight being restored? - John 9:1-3.
 3. It is true that God can and does chasten us for sin- Hebrews 12:5-6
 4. However not all suffering is a result of personal sin.
 - a. Bad things happen to good people.
 - b. Many wicked people go through life with a minimum of suffering.
 - c. Look at the life of Christ, what wrong did he do?
 5. Another false doctrine regarding God's justice is that Adam's sin is passed on to all men.
 - a. Nothing could be further from the truth.
 - b. The very idea is repulsive to common sense and an insult to God's system of justice. :
 - c. Ezekiel 18:20.
 6. A third false doctrine is that the justification of man is unconditional.
 - a. They say 'man does not contribute a whit' toward salvation; that he plays no part in his redemption.
 - b. This doctrine violates the justice of God.
 - c. It would also then make God responsible for some men not being saved.
 - d. If the Bible is true, and it is - man does indeed have a part.
 1. Acts 2:40 And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.
 2. Heb. 5:8-9 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;
 3. Mark. 16:16 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.
 7. A fourth false doctrine is that God's justice is demonstrated only in love.
 - a. They say, 'All will be forgiven because of God's love.'
 - b. God says - True justice carries rebuke and punishment as well as love.
 1. Romans 11:22.
 2. Hebrews 10:31.
 3. Sometimes we just need to get ready for our chastisement; I heard of one such ETSU student – He failed all his college work. He e-mailed his mother: "Failed everything, dismissed from school; Prepare Papa to meet me." His mother e-mailed back, "Papa prepared; Prepare thyself to meet him! "This is the message a lot

of us need in view of the coming judgment. God is prepared. We need to prepare ourselves!

8. A fifth and final false concept of God's justice is that it is 'friendship with cruelty.'
 - a. As we struggle to understand the evil allowed to continue around us, we sing that plaintive hymn, 'Farther Along.'
 - b. We do not have to wait until farther along if we examine His word; consider those verses just read- Romans 11:22; Heb. 10:31, and those verses immediately preceding our text – II Thess. 1:4-7.
 - c. God's mercy is longsuffering to us, as well as those around us.
 - d. God's mercy is sure in its execution of His vengeance.
 - e. Roles will be reversed in that day.
 1. Sufferers will receive rest and peace.
 2. Persecutors will receive punishment and suffering.

II. Scriptural Examples of God's Justice and Judgment

- A. By looking at how God dealt with man in the past we can see how he will deal with mankind in the future.
- B. The Flood.
 1. Genesis 6:5-7.
 2. Genesis. 6:8-9.
 3. God in His justice would destroy the world but yet also provide a way for the righteous to be saved.
 4. Completed justice equals eight righteous souls saved and all others destroyed.
- C. Sodom and Gomorrah.
 1. Why? – verse 20 – cry is great and sin is VERY grievous!
 2. Shall Genesis 18:25 Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! not the Judge of all the earth do right?
 3. The bargain was struck, ten righteous = God's justice.
 4. The righteous were ALL saved, Lot, his two daughters-complete justice.
- D. The Egyptians- Exodus 3:19-22 But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out My hand and strike Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in its midst; and after that he will let you go. And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and it shall be, when you go, that you shall not go empty-handed but every woman shall ask of her neighbor, namely, of her who dwells near her house, articles of silver, articles of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters. So you shall plunder the Egyptians."
- E. The account of the rich man and Lazarus;
 1. Luke 16:19-25.
 2. Consider the great injustice on the earth yet perfection in the end.

III. That Day When Justice and Judgment Are Revealed:

- A. So what is the purpose of the Final Judgment? We need reminding that the trial then, and trials now are very different. Trials today are investigative, but its purpose will be to reveal either exculpatory or incriminatory evidence.

- B. That trial on the great and terrible day of the coming of the Lord will be for publication and execution of our sentence. 2 Cor. 5:10.
- C. Why is it that some sinners will remain lost, but some sinners will be saved? Can God be just in condemning some and saving others who have done the same thing? Only those who do God's will have tasted the goodness of God, they will not experience the wrath of God in that day, they will receive the reward. In that day all men will understand God's justice and judgment, and every soul will be in agreement as to the equity of the decision, God's fairness. There will no longer be any atheists or agnostics, every knee will bow. Those who go away into eternal punishment will know it has been a fair trial, and so will those of us who enter into the joy of our Lord. God will be both glorified and vindicated in the judgment.
- D. God's impartiality will manifest itself in that day. There will be no respect of persons: not for wealth or poverty [Lev. 19:15], not for race or nationality [Rom. 2:11], and not for earthly power or prestige [Deut. 1:17].
- E. It is bearable here now because God's goodness is still here, when it leaves, at that great and terrible day, then hell begins for those who know not and have not obeyed the will of God [2 Thess. 1:7-9].

Conclusion:

- A. The Bible is full of examples of God's justice, and by them we know He is JUST.
- B. We must never confuse our understanding of justice with that of God's.
- C. God is always just whether we understand it or not.
 - 1. God looks upon the heart.
 - 2. He knows all the facts.
 - 3. He sees the beginning and the end at the same time.
- D. God will deal justly with you and with me on judgment day – Romans 5:9–'Much more then, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.'
- E. Knowing that God is both a just and merciful judge, will you not obey even tonight His loving path to justification and sanctification, being baptized in water for the remission of your sins?
- F. What you need to do, do now while we stand and sing for your encouragement!

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Creation Versus Evolution
A Paternity Test for the Universe
Roby Ellis

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. [2] And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. [3] And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. [4] And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. [5] And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. (Genesis 1:1-5)

In the following verses of this first chapter of Genesis, we read of the creation of all living things in our universe. For literally thousands of years, this passage of Scripture has been celebrated as a true account of the birth of time by both Jew and Christian. For almost as long, however, skeptics on every hand have cast shadows of doubt on these verses of the sacred Volume, questioning their source, intent, and authorship, among other things. Comments such as "Moses could not have written the book of Genesis," and, "One day couldn't really mean one day," have fueled the fires of enemies of the cross of Christ for too long. We, not only as Christians, but as members of the human race. Seek an ultimate answer to the origin of our species.

The Theory of Evolution

Most are aware of the general theory of evolution, a theory which affirms that mankind is descended from a class of organisms of lesser complexity through a process of random selection. Evolution suggests modification through genetic mutations which bring about organisms of increasingly greater complexity with each successive generation. This theory has been around for a great many years and has been gaining ground rapidly since the mid-19th century publication of *Origin of the Species* by Charles Darwin and even more rapidly since the infamous Scope's Monkey Trial in the 1920's, in which a man was prosecuted for teaching the evolutionary model in a public high school. Today this theory is taught in most public schools and virtually all universities (even "Christian" ones) nationwide.

The repercussions of this model for the creation of the universe may never fully be known. The model conveniently removes any supernatural intervention by a being higher than man and therefore removes also any responsibility that mankind might have toward this creator. Unfortunately for the advocates of this theory, the evolutionary models which they have created have failed every scientific test to which they have been put in the last century and a half. Regardless of these failures, however, thousands of scientists have chosen to not believe in a creator, choosing rather to accept their "science falsely so called."

Why Do So Many Choose Not to Believe?

Perhaps we should first ponder why people choose not to believe that the universe is the design of a higher intellect. Maybe the answer lies within the realm of human nature. For millennia men have looked up at the stars and wondered. They have wondered how the moon and the stars move, what holds them in their courses, how long they have been there, where they will be tomorrow, next month, next year. Brilliant men of the days of ancient Greece such as Archimedes, Eudoxus, Erathosthenes, and Apollonius (just to name a few) searched to unlock the mysteries of the heavens. Thousands of years

after these men lived and died with these questions in their minds, there is still so much that we still do not understand about the universe in which we live. Mankind was trained by the God of Heaven to ask why things work the way they do. Why does the Earth revolve around the sun? Why do Salmon instinctively flock to the place they were born? How long have men just like us looked up at the stars and wondered such things?

These thoughts have driven men to make fascinating discoveries in all of the fields of science, including mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology and geology. It seems that even more appealing to mankind than his love for a good problem is the feeling that comes when one has been solved. To unlock a mystery of the universe is almost like opening a box that has been hidden for ages, whose contents have not been handled by another human being for centuries. The only difference is that these boxes have never been opened by man. When one thinks of how grand it would be to understand the events surrounding the origin of the cosmos, what an extraordinary problem this presents! How disillusioning it is however, to learn that the problem cannot be solved with man's wisdom.

The Creator of the Universe

If the knowledge of the beginnings of the worlds cannot be obtained with the use of mathematics, physics and astronomy, how then can it be obtained? Paul declared to the Romans that, "the invisible things of Him [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they [unbelievers] are without excuse" (1:20). According to the great monarch and psalmist David, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1). Truly the existence of a higher being is evidenced by the existence of the universe itself since an intelligent design logically necessitates an intelligent designer.

What then can we learn about "the invisible things of God" from "the things that are made?" Let us consider some of the creation to see what it tells us about the creator of the cosmos. To begin, let's consider the word "cosmos" itself. The word is actually a transliteration of the Greek word κόσμος (*kosmos*), meaning "order." It is from this word that we obtain the word "cosmetics," a word used in our own language to identify anything used to beautify - or to set in order - the outward appearance of a person or object. The universe is orderly, in every aspect following a strict set of both simple and complex laws set forth apparently by some legislator to which the whole of nature yields itself without dispute. Is it not reasonable to believe that this great and powerful creator is also the great and powerful legislator who has ordered the motion of the planets and the courses of the vast galaxies? Let's go further.

Consider for a moment the motion of the planets. For centuries men looked up at the stars in utter amazement, puzzled and perplexed by the seemingly unending nature of the heavens. At some point in the development of all civilizations, men and women began to notice that the celestial bodies were not static, but dynamic. The earliest Scientist were what we would term astrologers. These men charted the courses of the stars and discovered that the future location of any star could be predicted with great precision. This led many of them to believe that the future itself could be predicted by their knowledge of the positions of the heavenly bodies. Modern science and simple reasoning teach us that these things are merely superstition, but we can learn from the precise movement of the planets that the creator and legislator of the universe demands order.

More amazing perhaps than the function of bodies on the macroscopic level is the function of bodies on the microscopic level. In sharp contrast to Aristotle's long-accepted notion that all matter consisted of varying quantities of earth, air, fire, and water, the Greek philosopher Democritus was the first to suggest that atoms were the building blocks of which all things consisted. We now understand

that atoms consist of a nucleus composed of neutrons and positively charged protons surrounded by a cloud of negatively charged electrons. Perhaps the most interesting of these particles is the electron, which can jump out of and into various orbits around the nucleus or even leave the atom altogether in search of another. Even more interesting than this is the fact that no one has ever actually seen an electron. This is due to the fact that electrons move too quickly to be seen with the human eye or even to be photographed. Knowledge regarding their existence requires a certain degree of faith based on very clear evidence that such particles must exist. After all faith is the "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

The God of the Bible

We see then that the creator of the universe demands order. Do we have evidence to show that the god of the Bible shares this characteristic? Let's look at some of the clues found in the Bible itself. First consider the typology and flawless allegories we find in the Scriptures. In Genesis 22, for example, we read Moses' account of Abraham's offering of Isaac per the request of God, the same God who had previously promised Abraham that through Isaac he would become the father of many nations. In the gospel accounts of the crucifixion, we find an almost identical portrait, in which a Father shows his willingness to offer his only Son. Each antitype in the Genesis 22 history foreshadows its type in the mountain that Jesus ascended before his crucifixion.

What other similarities can we find between the creator of the universe and the God of the Bible? Let's look at the prophecies of the Bible. It has been estimated that there are over 1,000 unique prophecies in the Old Testament whose fulfillment have been verified, approximately 300 of these being Messianic in nature. These prophecies foretell the birth, the ministry, and the death of Christ with amazing detail hundreds of years before their fulfillment.

Take a look at another similarity between the creator of the universe and the God of the Bible. An often neglected book in the study of the Old Testament is the third book of the Torah, namely, the book of Leviticus. This book can be cumbersome and difficult to read as much of the information regards the daily and periodic tasks laid before the priests and the other Levites. Within the 27 chapters of this book, very specific instructions are given regarding the cleansing of unclean persons, the various works of the tabernacle, the ritual washings of the priests, and especially the offering of sacrifices.

Situated in the outer court of the tabernacle, the altar of burnt offerings was a very important instrument in Levitical worship services. It was upon this altar that the daily sacrifices were offered along with sin and free-will offerings brought by the people. It was also upon this altar that the Pascal lamb was offered in preparation of the Feast of the Passover. Very explicit instructions regarding the slaughter, cleaning, and burning of these animals are plainly set forth in the book of Leviticus. Instructions were also provided to inform the Levites regarding what was to be done with the unburned parts of these animals. Truly we can see from a study of this book that the God of the Bible demands that things be done in an orderly fashion.

An Unmistakable Conclusion

Time would indeed fail us here to set forth all of the evidences that clearly suggest that the creator of the universe who set the laws of nature into motion is the one and only God of the Holy Bible. We could look further into the book of Numbers and read of the orderly arrangement of the tribes of Israel and the sons of Levi in the camp surrounding the tabernacle. We could read further of their marching orders which might resemble those of a great army. We could read the laws set forth to govern the people of Israel in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy. In every book of the Sacred Volume we can see the mighty and steady hand of the Creator of this universe, the God of the Bible.

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Our God and Young People

Chris Jordan

“You are the church of tomorrow.” This is a well known statement that has been heard both from the pulpit and from the elders in the Lord’s church for many years. How true this powerful statement is, and yet it is still sometimes overlooked. Young people tend to live their lives in the present and forget about the future. The youth of any congregation consists of very important members which make up the body of the Lord’s church. Young people have very large responsibilities in the Lord’s church, yet sometimes face the greatest number of temptations. It is not always easy being a young person in the world today. However, although young people are faced with such strong temptations, the Bible states that they will not be tempted without a way of escape. “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV) Young people in the Lord’s church must realize both their role and their great influence that they have with their family and with their friends.

Today, young people are faced with temptations like popularity, dating, drugs, alcohol, dancing, sex and modesty. There are even overlooked issues such as the music that is listened to and the movies that are watched. All these things are stumbling blocks that Satan loves to present. Popularity has always been important to young people. The word popular means “liked or enjoyed by many people.” Everyone wants to be accepted by others. Unfortunately, many times young people who are Christians will do things that are displeasing to God so they can be popular with others in this world. Some choices may result in a person being “liked” by the world, but not being “liked” by God. The scriptures teach that it is not always possible to be popular with both the world and with God. “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (1 John 2:15 NKJV)

Dating becomes a part of a young person’s life at an early age. Some teenagers are dating by the time they become fifteen or sixteen years old. Many young people today begin dating because of peer pressures surrounding them. The question will arise, “Who should I date?” Unfortunately, the issue of popularity appears once again in this decision making process. It is important for a Christian to seriously consider who he or she should date. Obviously, just because a couple is dating does not mean that they will get married. However, Christians need to be very careful who they allow to influence their life. The following is a popular statement by a man named Dan Bowman, a deacon at the Elizabethton Church of Christ. “If you run with skunks you are going to stink.” How very true this statement is. “Do not be deceived, evil company corrupts good habits.” (1 Corinthians 15:33 NKJV) Parents also have a large responsibility to encourage their children to choose good companions. It is wise to date a Christian with the same goals and interests in Christianity. It is not a sin to date a non-Christian, but it is very unwise for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. It is very important to find a Christian spouse who will help lead another Christian to heaven. It is sometimes said, “A happy marriage is the nearest thing on earth to Heaven.”

More than ever, young people are faced with the temptation of trying drugs or alcoholic beverages. Once again, these issues refer back to popularity. Many choose to consume drugs or alcohol in order to blend in the crowd. In the world we live in today, about 1370 young people will take an illegal drug within the next hour. It has been said that 57% of all illegal drugs are sold on school campuses. In a recent year,

there were 732 deaths (641 males and 91 females) attributable to illicit drugs. There were 7,095 hospitalizations and 58,571 hospitalization days attributable to drugs. There are now over 3 million teenage alcoholics. Over 7000 young people die each year in alcohol related accidents. Some other statistics state that each year, 12 million college students drink 6 million gallons of beer. 82% of high school seniors are trying alcohol. What does the Bible say about these issues? "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Corinthians 10:31 NKJV); "I will not be brought under the power of any." (I Corinthians 6:12 NKJV); "Envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:21 NKJV); "Abstain from every form of evil." (I Thessalonians 5:22 NKJV) The Bible gives many reasons of why drugs and alcohol are not pleasing to God. Young people need to be aware of the dangers involved in using such substances. The dangers are not only to their physical bodies, but also to their relationship between them and God. Young people must be walking examples of Christ, not examples against Christ. It is equally important to stay away from those participating in such behavior.

Is dancing right or wrong? This is a question asked by many young people today. Many people in the Lord's church see nothing wrong with dancing. Several parents allow and even assist their young person in preparing for such occasions. If one studies God's word and tries to follow Jesus' example, then he or she will discover that dancing is something a Christian should avoid. No matter how one approaches it, dancing creates emotions which lead to lustful thoughts. Therefore, dancing can be lasciviousness. "Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21 NKJV) The Bible also states that Christians should not be stumbling blocks to others. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6 NKJV) Forty-four young men were once asked what their feelings were toward the young ladies with whom they had danced. Forty-one said their thoughts were impure. Would parents allow their children to be embraced by the opposite sex in this way for this extended period of time in their own home? A Christian should also ask the following question. Can this be done to the glory of God? "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:17 NKJV) In order to have a good time, there are many other activities Christians can become involved in. Dancing is proven to be of the world. In the scriptures, Christians are repeatedly advised not to be of this world. Young people ought to think twice about going to the school dances and to proms. What would be the most pleasing to Christ? Parents need to teach their children about the dangers of this world at an early age.

Another issue facing young people today is pre-marital sex. Everyday, the number of teen pregnancies is rising. Even the numbers in the Lord's church are unfortunate. Fornication has been and will always be a sin in God's eyes. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites," (1 Corinthians 6:9 NKJV) In Galatians 5:19, Paul lists fornication as one the works of the flesh that will cause one not to inherit the kingdom of God. Today the world is a "sex-obsessed" world. Many times, when the television or radio is turned on, the material is sex-related. The world has even suggested that sex is necessary to prove someone's love. Sex is a wonderful thing created and approved by God, but

only in marriage. Sex outside of marriage can cause many additional problems. Couples must be very careful about the situations they place themselves in when they are dating. So many actions could have been avoided if God was allowed to be a part of the decision. Some excellent advice would be to start every date with a prayer. Including God in dating will result in making better decisions.

Modesty is also a rising issue in the Lord's church. Often times, the lack of clothing can reveal more of the body than a Christian should be revealing. Some Christians go to public beaches and public pools and blend in with the rest of the world by the attire they wear. Christians are to be set apart from the world. "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (Matthew 5:14 NKJV) Others must be able to differentiate between true Christians and others in the world. Christians should also be careful about some of the activities they involve themselves in which require them to wear clothing that is immodest and shameful for a Christian to wear. "Abstain from every form of evil." (1 Thessalonians 5:22 NKJV) Christians must consider whether God would approve of the clothing they are wearing. Much of this could also be prevented from the home. Parents are to be an example to their children by their dress as well. Unfortunately, some Christians wear things in public that should only be worn in the privacy of the home. Christians must be very careful of the clothing they wear around mixed company. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 NKJV)

Some of the most over-looked issues in the world today are the music that is listened to and the shows or movies that are watched. The amount of filthy language and sex-perverted material that is in both music and Hollywood today is astounding. It is difficult to even turn on the radio or television without hearing or seeing something that is contrary to God's word. Today, very good movies and even songs are ruined because of the language or perverted material that they contain. It is becoming more difficult to go to the theater without having to take a stand by walking out. Even on some very popular radio stations, air shows are filled with material that a Christian should not be listening to. This world has become numb to all of these things that create entertainment, and it has forgotten God. Christians need to be very careful about supporting these activities. The scriptures teach that everything of this world belongs to God. Christians need to be aware of how they spend the Lord's money in order to be entertained. God's people cannot associate with people who behave like this. God's people need to put only positive things into their minds. A Christian must decide to remain pure instead of watching a filthy movie or buying a filthy CD. It is very easy as Christians to become numb to these things if they are not avoided. One way that a young Christian can teach others about God is to live the way Christ lived. Obviously, Christ would not listen to or watch most of the material that is in the world today.

Having said all of this, those who are striving everyday to imitate Christ must guard themselves against these temptations. One must continue daily in the studying and meditation of God's word. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15 KJV) God's word must be included in every aspect of a young person's life. "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12 NKJV) One must also have a prayerful Christian life. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs Christians to "pray without ceasing." As a young person, it is very important to be the best example that one can possibly be. Sometimes young people feel like they are not an influence to others. This is a false conception. Most young people have the opportunity to influence hundreds of other young people each day. "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct,

in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12 NKJV) Another way that young people can remain faithful in the Lord’s church is to become and to remain active! Some of the most faithful members of the Lord’s church are men and women who are active in the Lord’s church. Parents should encourage their children to be active in the church, such as being involved in the youth group, attending bible camps, and attending bible classes or devotionals. These are all wonderful tools and aids that are available to parents to help raise their children in the admonition of the Lord. Young people need to always remember the powerful influence and role they have in the Lord’s church. They truly are the church of tomorrow!

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