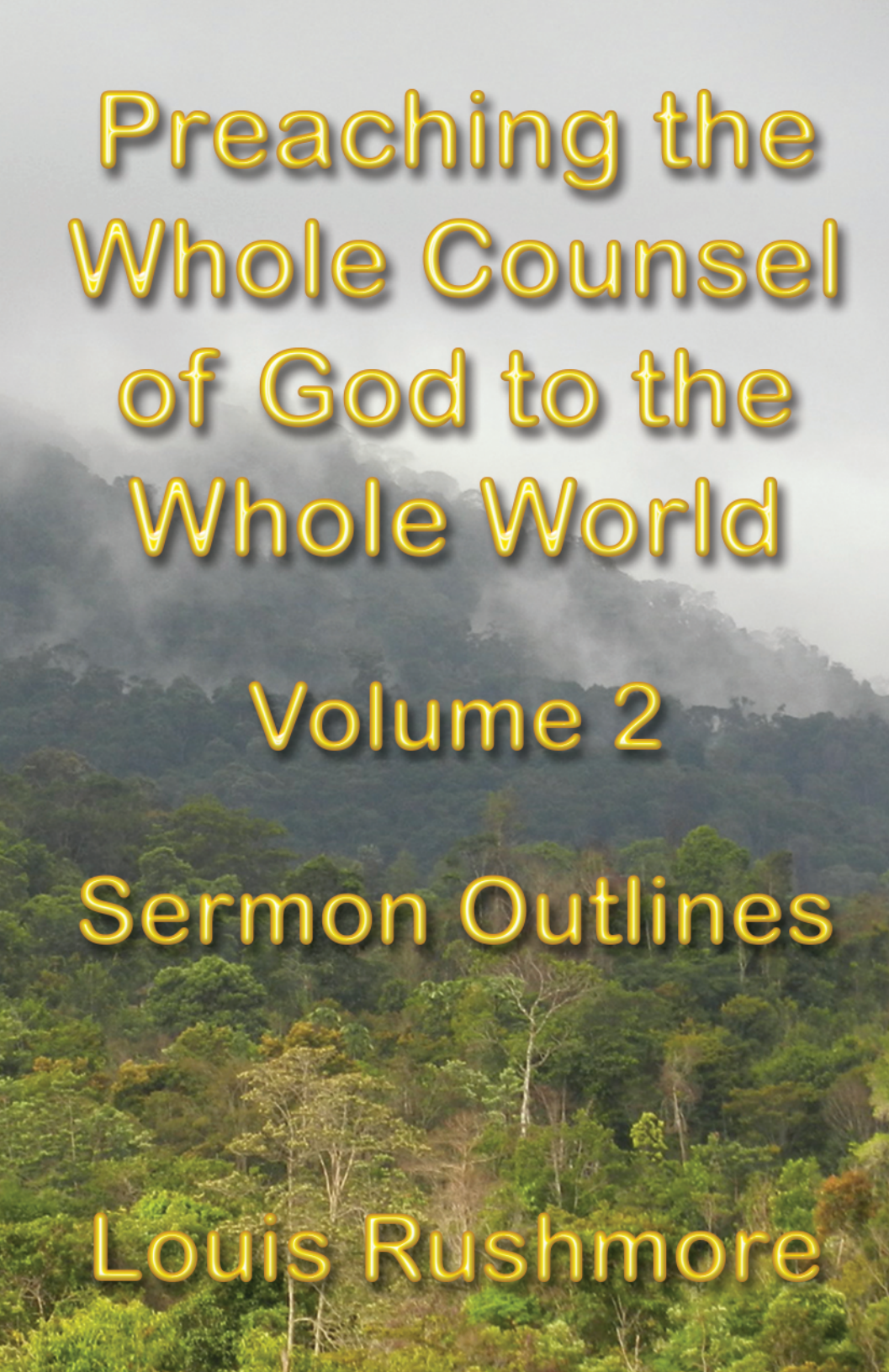

Preaching the Whole Counsel of God to the Whole World
Volume 2
Sermon Outlines
Louis Rushmore

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Sermon Outlines

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Preface

Louis Rushmore has preached in numerous states in the USA and in five foreign countries. Beginning in 1995 and for 10 years, he was a teacher at stateside school of preaching. Brother Rushmore has authored numerous books, several tracts and hundreds of religious articles over the decades. Since 1999 through the present, he has edited and published to the Internet the monthly religious journal ***Gospel Gazette Online***. In 2007 he became an Associate Editor of the quarterly magazine ***The Voice of Truth International***; since then, though, has become the Editor of ***VOTI***. Brother Rushmore is a Staff Writer for the ***Global Harvest*** publication, and his articles have appeared in several brotherhood magazines. Years ago, brother Rushmore was the Associate Editor a statewide prolife newspaper.

Louis Rushmore has a keen interest in the ***organization*** of sermons and their agreement with a lesson's stated thesis. He believes strongly in ***book, chapter and verse*** or ***thus saith the Lord preaching.*** His approach to sermon preparation and presentation is less centered on entertaining oratory and more on disseminating biblical information for those who desire to feast on God's Word. **Biblical and effective preaching involves 'reading in the book in the law of God distinctly, and giving the sense, and causing the hearers to understand the reading' (Nehemiah 8:8).**

The organizational pattern of a sermon can almost be reduced to filling in the blanks for its various sections (i.e., title, text, thesis, song, introduction, body, conclusion and invitation). The most critical part of the sermon is the ***thesis***. Everything included in the sermon must correspond to fulfilling the goal of the thesis. Nothing that does **not** directly relate to the thesis should be included in the sermon. The ***introduction*** prepares the hearer for the main teaching of the sermon and may include an encapsulated foretaste of the body of the lesson. The ***body*** emphasizes and makes the case for whatever from God's Word is being taught. The ***conclusion*** briefly reviews the teaching just completed in the body and does not introduce new material. The ***invitation*** is most effective when it naturally flows from the rest of the sermon and is connected to it with a ***transitional sentence***. For

a sermon to be as useful as it needs to be, it will not only provide information, but it will also challenge the listeners to make whatever corrective action may be needed in their lives. A sermon that provides information only or identifies the sin problem without presenting the needed action or cure for sin in our lives is sadly incomplete.

Desiring to be as useful of a servant of God as he can presently and hoping to leave something behind for the good of fellow servants and truth-seekers after his demise, Louis Rushmore respectfully offers these sermons for one's consideration and use.

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Authority in Religion

Colossians 3:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17

Thesis: To emphasize the absolute necessity of recognizing the correct, authoritative standard in religion—the Bible.
Song: "Back to the Bible," "Standing on the Promises"

Introduction:

1. The generation in which we live has little to no respect for authority in any area of life.
2. Frequently, in the home, children fail to respect the authority of their parents.
3. At school, pupils often refuse to acknowledge the authority of teachers, principals and staff.
4. Everywhere around us, we see a common disrespect for the authority of the laws under which we live.
   a. Stealing and robbery are commonplace.
   b. Murder and rape sometimes seem epidemic.
   c. Almost no one voluntarily obeys traffic laws.
   d. Many people cheat on their taxes.
5. All of the disrespect for authority in the home, at school and for the laws of our nation has grown out of a lack of respect for the authority of God.
   a. God is not respected because people do not respect the authority of God's Word—the Bible.
   b. This breakdown of respect for God and His Word is not attributable to God, but to mankind.
6. As a nation, our homes and our churches have failed to teach respect for the authority of God.
   a. Any home that is not anchored by the Word of God is itself adrift and ill prepared to instill in its family members a deep-rooted respect for the authority of God (or the home, the school or the nation).
   b. Every church that does not exist and conduct itself strictly

according to God's Word is unable to properly inspire respect for God and His Word in anyone.

Body:

I. The world seems to be clueless regarding the true source of authority in religion.

A. Each religious group supposes to have its own religious authority or standard.

1. Yet, each religious group purportedly worships the same God!
2. Yet, each religious group purportedly expects to arrive in the same eternal Heaven.
3. These notions defy commonsense and do not even make good nonsense!

B. These so-called authorities and standards are far from being universally accepted authorities and standards, and they differ greatly from Bible doctrine in many cases.

1. Book of Mormon, Catholic catechism, the *New World Translation*, confessions of faith, creeds, manuals, disciplines, etc.
2. Popes, contemporary apostles, conferences, councils, etc.
3. Manmade traditions and opinions of learned men (theologians).
4. The attitude of the religious world today is not much unlike the defective attitude of Israel during the period of God's judges, Judges 21:25.

II. There are only two possible sources of authority in religion —God in Heaven or man on Earth.

A. Jesus Christ recognized these two sources of authority in religion when He asked the Pharisees to discern if the baptism of John was from Heaven or men, Matthew 21:23-27.

B. Earlier in His ministry, Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for relying upon the authority of men for worshipping God, Matthew 15:9.

C. Only the authority of God is acceptable to Him; the authority of men in religion is not acceptable to God and is sinful.

III. Authority in religion is of fundamental importance.

A. There must be an authoritative standard to which one can appeal to properly order his life and to which one can appeal for resolution of conflict.
   1. Pragmatically, this is imperative in secular life; therefore, we have civil law, a judicial system (courts), the U.S. Bureau of Standards, rules for sports, etc.
   2. A standard of authority is no less essential in one's religious life.

B. There is an authoritative religious standard, irrespective of whether mankind commonly acknowledges it.
   1. Religious confusion and division are commonplace and the direct result of the adoption of different human standards in religion instead of God's Word—the Bible.
   2. If each religious group in any community adhered to one common standard of authority, overnight all would be united into one religious body—one church.
   3. Further, if that common standard of authority were the Bible, all would be New Testament Christians and members of the non-denominational church of Christ.

IV. True authority in religion lies with God.

A. Authority involves the right to command and give final decisions.

B. God is the originator of all religious authority.
   1. Jesus Christ has all authority in Heaven and on Earth, Matthew 28:18, ASV.
   2. Jesus delegated authority to apostles and prophets of the first century, Matthew 18:18.

C. These men ("earthen vessels," 2 Corinthians 4:7), in turn, wrote the Word of God—the New Testament, cf., 2 Peter 1:20-21.
   1. This means that the very authority of God is inherent in

the words of the Bible.

2. Hence, the Bible is the religious authority by which we must live our lives and by which we will be judged at time's end, John 12:48; Revelation 20:12-15.

D. God's Word—the Bible—alone is the standard in religion.
   1. It is not enough simply to be sincere, John 4:24.
   2. We need a "Thus saith the Lord" or authority for everything we believe, teach and practice, 1 Peter 4:11.
   3. Left to his own ingenuity, mankind will stumble and fall to his spiritual death, Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12.
   4. The Word of God is sufficient, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:3.
   5. The Word of God in its written form is as authoritative as it was in its original spoken form!

V. Divine authority in religion demands a life of faith.

A. Certainty in religious matters comes only from the Word of God.
   1. Human experience cannot guarantee divine sanction of one's preparation for eternity, but the Bible can.
   2. Human judgment cannot assure divine appreciation of conduct in worship or in life.

B. Only a Bible-based faith will effectively serve one in this life and prepare him for eternity in Heaven with God.
   1. Faith is necessary to please God, Hebrews 11:6.
   2. Personal faith is correctly derived from the system of faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7.
   3. True faith is not a blind leap in the dark, but it relies on biblical evidence, Romans 10:17.

C. We walk by faith, then, when we perform what is clearly authorized by God's Word. This authorization takes the form of:
   1. Direct statements or commands,
   2. Apostolically approved examples
   3. Divine implications from which we necessarily draw corresponding inferences

VI. Divine authority tests manmade doctrines.

A. God's plan of salvation includes faith.
   1. The Bible says we are saved by faith, John 8:24.
   2. Some teach that we are saved by faith alone, though James 2:24 says "not by faith alone."
   3. Salvation that includes faith is authorized by God.
   4. Salvation by faith alone is authorized by mankind and is false!

B. God's plan of salvation includes repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.
   1. Bible authority: Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16.
   2. Many says that baptism does not save, but Peter said differently, 1 Peter 3:21.
   3. Repentance and baptism for the remission of sins is authorized by God and is true.
   4. That baptism does not save is a doctrine of man and is false!

C. God authorized a specific kind of music in worship—singing.
   1. Bible authority: Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19.
   2. Many practice singing and instrumental music in worship.
   3. Singing is authorized by God.
   4. Instrumental music for New Testament worship is authorized by mankind and is false!

D. God authorized a specific organization for the church.
   1. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the Head of the church, from whom elders of independent congregations derive authorization to guide the church, deacons serve the church, teachers teach and preachers preach, Ephesians 5:23; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:13; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.
   2. Denominations typically opt for an ecclesiastical hierarchy and are guided by missionary societies, earthly headquarters, conventions, etc.
   3. The New Testament pattern for church organization is authorized by God.

4. Denominational patterns of church organization are man-made and sinful.

E. This type of a test can be applied to everything one believes, teaches or practices religiously.
   1. If something is authorized by God (through the Bible), it is right and acceptable to God.
   2. Whatever is authorized by men is unacceptable to God and sinful.

Conclusion:

1. Men will never unite on the conflicting creeds, theories and human speculations, but they can unite on the Bible alone as the final, absolute, standard of authority in religion.
2. Unless one submits himself totally to the authority of God—through the written Word—he has no respect for God, but will be condemned by that Word at the final Judgment.

Invitation:

1. When Jesus comes again, He will punish the disobedient, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
2. However, at the last day, Jesus will save the obedient, Hebrews 5:8-9.
3. Only through compliance with biblical authority can one approach eternity with boldness and confidence, Hebrews 10:19.
4. Have you obeyed the Gospel, 1 Peter 4:17?

Respect for the Bible

Psalm 119

Thesis: To encourage a greater respect for the Bible.
Songs: "Give Me the Bible," "Standing on the Promises"

Introduction:

1. We live in a time when people often have little respect for sacred things.
   a. Neither God nor His Word, the Bible, receives the respect they deserve.
   b. Commonly, little more respect is shown for our nation or society, the home or family life, or even human life itself.
2. A greater respect for God and His Word would cause people also to have a greater respect for the foregoing.
3. The often-wayward course that America is pursuing will not vary until Americans derive a renewed respect for God and His Word.
4. Likewise, if the church loses proper respect for God and His Word, it will die.
5. Lack of respect for the Bible equals a lack of respect for God.

Body:

I. Proper respect for the Bible begins with a proper attitude. "And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved," Psalm 119:47.

A. One cannot properly understand Scripture with an improper attitude toward Scripture.
   1. Many imagine that the Bible is much like any other book.
   2. If one attempts to study the Bible as manmade books are studied, he will shortchange himself.

B. The Bible is a unique book, the only one in its class.
   1. To class it with manmade books dilutes its influence.
   2. The Bible is more than simply another literary piece.

C. The Bible cannot be taught as other books.
   1. Again, the Bible is unique, the only one in its class.

2. To teach it as though it were a history, science or merely a human book on any subject dilutes its influence.

II. The Bible deserves respect in its entirety, from the beginning throughout its pages. "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever," Psalm 119:160.

A. For instance, Genesis One is as true as any portion of Scripture.
   1. No theory of beginnings ought to be allowed more or even equal esteem to the Creation account in the Bible.
   2. To compromise Genesis One undermines the foundation of trust on which the whole Bible rests.

B. Anyone willing to compromise on Genesis One or any other Scripture, ultimately will compromise on any passage or maybe the entire Word of God.
   1. Compromising on any portion of the Bible strikes a heavy blow to confidence in the inspiration of the Bible.
   2. Failing to hold any segment of the Bible as sacred greatly diminishes the sacredness of the Bible in its entirety.

III. The Bible deserves respect for it in its entirety. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments," Psalm 119:6.

A. Many people pick and choose the parts of the Bible they want to accept.
   1. It is true, of course, that not everything in the Bible applies to mankind today, e.g., Patriarchy, Judaism, Miracles, etc.
   2. However, God, and not man, has already selected the law under which we live (and by which we will be judged), John 12:48; Revelation 20:11-15.

B. Even some Christians purport that some portions of the Bible are inspired whereas other portions are not inspired.
   1. If this were true, mankind would be faced with the impossible task of discerning the difference (i.e., lacking inspiration).
   2. Attempting to disarm the Bible regarding unpopular doc-

trines destroys the integrity of the Bible.

IV. The Bible is right on any subject that it addresses. "Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way," (Psalm 119:128; 98-100).

A. Obviously, the Bible is not a science or a history book, as such.
   1. However, about whatever the Bible speaks, it tells the truth.
   2. Often the Bible recorded even scientific truth before scientists were aware of it.

B. The Bible has the last word on any subject that it addresses.
   1. The Bible is correct on facts that can be independently corroborated: historically, topographically, geographically, politically, etc.
   2. Therefore, the Bible is as credible regarding what it says on subjects that cannot be corroborated with the sciences and history, e.g., eschatology, salvation, other spiritual matters.

C. Hence, the Bible is absolute, not subjective.
   1. The church is obligated to discern Bible doctrine, as opposed to supposing that the church is the source of doctrine.
   2. The Bible alone is the source of instruction relative to salvation, worship, Christian service and doctrine.

D. Bible doctrine is distinctive.
   1. Therefore, most of the time there is an obvious difference between Gospel preaching and denominational preaching.
   2. Denominational preaching is usually comprised of popular contemporary ideas of men, but Gospel preaching derives its content from an ancient document, the Bible.

V. One needs to respect the Bible with his whole being. "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart," Psalm 119:2.

A. The Bible heart is comprised of intellect, emotions and will.
   1. The Bible as God gave it is adapted to man as God made him.
   2. Each facet of the human composition—intellect, emotions and will—must be used together in embracing the Word of God.

B. An imbalanced or partial response to the Bible is substandard and counterproductive.
   1. An mere emotional response overrides the intellect and will.
   2. A mere intellectual response is emotionally hollow and may hamper the will.

VI. The Bible has cleansing power. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word," Psalm 119:9.

A. Young and old can only find soul-cleansing power through the Bible.
   1. No other source to which one can turn can lead one to redemption, because only through the Christ of the Bible is redemption possible, John 14:6; Ephesians 1:3, 7.
   2. God has not obligated Himself to any other system of redemption, Hebrews 10:26.

B. Only the Bible has the solution for cleansing the sins that afflict even congregations.
   1. Congregations can sin as well as individuals, for which the individuals that comprise the church (and hence the church) need to repent, 1 Corinthians 5; Revelation 2-3.
   2. Cleansing individual Christians from sin, cleanses the congregation, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

VII. We must respect the Bible's counsel. "Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors," Psalm 119:24.

A. God's wisdom is far superior to the wisdom of men.
   1. Human wisdom hides God, spiritual truth and redemption from men, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.
   2. Divine wisdom affords the attentive the opportunity to be right in all things that the Bible addresses (both material and spiritual matters).

B. Even God's inspired advice is worthy of adoption.
   1. In most instances, God's instructions are obligatory (not optional).
   2. There are, though, some discretionary matters in which

one may opt to adopt or dispense with God's inspired advice, 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, 26.

VIII. The Bible must be respected even when what it says is unpopular. "I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame," Psalm 119:31.

A. The Bible is the most popular book in the world.
   1. The Bible in one version or another outsells all other titles.
   2. The contents, though, of the Bible are not as nearly popular as merely superficially acknowledging it.

B. Obviously, Bible doctrine is very unpopular.
   1. Why else would so many different churches with their conflicting doctrines, etc. exist?
   2. Christians must be true to the Bible irrespective of whether they find Bible doctrine to their liking.

IX. One needs to respect the Bible when making decisions. "I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me," Psalm 119:30.

A. The greatest decision anyone can make is to become a child of God.
   1. Faith, repentance, confessing Christ and baptism, according to the Bible, will make one a Christian, Romans 10:17; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 22:16.
   2. False doctrines of faith only, infant baptism, sprinkling for baptism, joining a church, human creeds, etc. spring forth from a defective respect for the Bible.

B. The Bible ought to be consulted respecting every decision made in life.
   1. Marriage and home life decisions would be better made with the Bible as counsel.
   2. The Bible ought to be the counsel of every congregation about to make a decision about virtually anything.

C. Imagine how it would be if even every Christian accepted the counsel of the Bible.
   1. Every Christian would attend all the services he could,

give as he was prospered and tell others about the saving Gospel of Christ.

2. Every congregation would be spiritually strong and vibrantly engaged in every facet of the church's mission.

X. We ought to respect the Bible when attempting to answer religious questions. "So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word," Psalm 119:42.

A. Every religious question deserves a biblical answer.
   1. We are to speak as the oracles of God, 1 Peter 4:11.
   2. Through study and anticipation, we can be ready to answer at least the fundamental questions regarding the Christian faith, 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15.

B. Psychology and philosophy books are the improper sources of answers for religious questions.
   1. Just think of how inappropriate it would be for a medical doctor to look up medical advice in a math book.
   2. Likewise, we need to turn to God rather than the think-so's of fallible mortals.

XI. We need to respect the Bible when we find ourselves in the midst of difficulties. "They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts," Psalm 119:87.

A. Seasons of distress are the least opportune time to diminish one's respect for the Bible.
   1. The Bible is a refuge, especially during times of personal misfortune.
   2. Congregations, too, ought to consult God's Word during times of turmoil.

B. The early church relied upon God's Word in the face of grave adversity.
   1. Early Christians clung in their faith to the Bible even when doing so led to their deaths.
   2. The comfort of God is superior to the comforts of this planet and the spiritual preservation is something on which the child of God can rely when nothing else can re-

lieve life's distresses, 2 Corinthians 1:3; Matthew 11:28.

XII. Mankind needs to respect the finality of the Bible. "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven," Psalm 119:89.

A. God has the first and the last word on every subject on which He has chosen to speak through His Word.
   1. We will be judged by those words, John 12:48.
   2. God's Word is changeless!

B. It already has been delivered and no amendments or post-scripts will be forth coming.
   1. Inspired writers affirmed that the Word of God has been once for all delivered, Jude 3.
   2. No other Gospels are coming, Galatians 1:6-9.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible truly is a book like none other.
2. Every accountable soul needs to fully embrace the Bible with his whole being.
3. The Bible is a unique and a distinctive book that can give man the best of life and of eternity.
4. The Bible is the wisest counsel on all subjects that it addresses to which a human can appeal.
5. The Bible is not always popular in what it says, but it is always right.
6. The Bible has the only answer that matters to every religious question.
7. The Bible will see the child of God through difficult times.
8. The Bible is God's final Word to us this side of eternity.

Invitation:

1. In the Word of God, one can find the necessary information how to live his life on earth and prepare for a home in Heaven.
2. First, one must accept the blessings of the Gospel on the terms of God, Mark 16:16.
3. Afterward, one must remain faithful and repent on those occasions when he sins, Revelation 2:10; Acts 8:22.

The Word of Our God Shall Stand Forever

Isaiah 40:8

Thesis: To demonstrate from Scripture that the Word of God is the only thing on which one can always rely.

Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. No one and nothing on this earth is completely reliable, except the Word of God.
2. Spouses, children, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters sometimes falter are not always reliable.
3. Sometimes we fail ourselves, too.
4. Only the Word of God is a sure thing on which we can always rely.
5. Unfortunately, mankind often places his confidence in himself, other people, material wealth, pleasure, etc., none of which is either reliable or durable beyond the present existence.

Body:

I. God's Word is reliable because God Himself is reliable.

A. God's Word is as durable as God is durable and eternal.

1. Mankind's word is sometimes worthless because mankind is not always reliable.
2. Mankind's word is sometimes worthless because being frail he sometimes is incapable of keeping his word.
3. God, though, is eternal, Psalm 90:2.

B. Isaiah 40:8 is quoted by inspired New Testament writers twice, James 1:10-11; 1 Peter 1:24-25.

1. The grass in these and similar passages refers to the temporal nature of mankind's existence on the earth, Psalm 90:6; 103:15-16; Job 14:1-2.
2. The Word of God, however, which comes forth from our eternal God, contrasts to all that is temporal, including ourselves.

II. As God's character is changeless, His Word is likewise changeless and reliable.

A. The nature of our eternal God never changes, Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17.

B. God's Word is reliable because it is settled in Heaven, Psalm 119:89.

C. God's Word is reliable because it will endure beyond the present world in which we live, Matthew 24:35.

D. Especially the Word, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, is of primary importance because it endures forever, 1 Peter 1:25.

Conclusion:

1. On whom or what do you rely in this life?
2. If you rely on anything or anyone, including yourself, you will be let down from time to time.
3. Only God's Word is reliable and durable enough to lead us successfully through this life into a blissful eternity.
4. Of Isaiah 40:8, Coffman observed, "It points to the only dependable and certain anchor that men have, namely, the word of the Lord"

Invitation:

1. This unchangeable, reliable Word of God is the means by which obeying one is born again—saved—can legitimately anticipate spending eternity with God in Heaven, 1 Peter 1:22-25.
2. Have you been truly born again, John 3:3, 5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Hebrews 10:22; Acts 22:16?
3. Are you relying on the durable Word of God, or have you erred from the faith, 1 Timothy 6:10, 21; 2 Timothy 2:18; 1 John 1:9?

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Holy Bible

2 Timothy 3:15

Thesis: To emphasize the holiness and sacredness of the Bible.
Song: "My Precious Bible," "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. The Bible is holy and sacred.
   a. By the Bible, I mean both the Old and New testaments.
   b. I mean by the Bible those translations that most correctly reflect with accuracy the original languages in which the Bible was written, and the message of God He preserved in those manuscripts.
2. Further, the holy and sacred nature of the Bible does not depend upon the appreciation anyone has for it.
   a. The Bible is inherently holy and sacred.
   b. That is, the Bible is holy and sacred irrespective of whether mankind recognizes it as the Word of God and reveres it.
3. The Bible is holy and sacred because it is the Word of God.
   a. There is sufficient internal and external evidence to validate the Bible as the Word of God, therefore making it holy and sacred.
   b. Therefore, mankind is obligated to submit humbly to the God-given instructions contained therein.

Body:

I. There are several perspectives of the Bible that alone do not constitute conclusive evidence that the Bible is holy and sacred.

A. The Bible underlies the customs and laws of the major portion of the western world.
   1. For centuries and until recently, law and ethics have been attributed to the Bible.
   2. Still, the way in which the world dates it letters, calendars, etc. corresponds to Jesus Christ.
   3. The benevolent institutions throughout the world owe their existence either directly or indirectly to God's Word.

4. However, merely because much of the world has been affected by the Bible does not prove that the Bible is the holy and sacred Word of God.

B. The Bible claims to be holy and sacred.
   1. Throughout the Bible, it claims unequalled authority over mankind, promises rewards for obedience and threatens punishment for disobedience, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
   2. However, the Bible is not the only volume claiming to be the Word of God, and the Bible's prophets are not the only ones who are claimed to be prophets of God (e.g., *Koran*, *Book of the Mormon*, *Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures*, Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy).
   3. That the Bible claims for itself holiness and sacredness is not by itself conclusive evidence that it is the holy and sacred Word of God.

C. The Bible contains several prophecies that have been fulfilled.
   1. The Old Testament has hundreds of prophecies, most of which were fulfilled in the New Testament.
   2. However, skeptics might attempt to classify several of them as self-fulfilling prophecies.
   3. Some prophecies and their fulfillment, though they fortify the faith of those who already believe in God, may not convince the unbeliever of the holiness and sacredness of the Bible, as the Word of God.

D. Multitudes of people around the world who believe and study the Bible may seem to validate the Bible as the holy and sacred Word of God.
   1. However, there are more people in the world who do not believe the Bible is the Word of God.
   2. Multitudes subscribe to other world religions or no religion at all and no religious book.

E. The Bible has been accurately translated from vast collec-

tions of manuscripts in the Bible's original languages.

1. Though an admirable feat, the same might be said of several other prominent ancient documents.
2. The preservation of ancient documents and their accurate translation into English, for instance, does not prove that the Bible is the sacred and holy Word of God.

II. The holiness and sacredness of the Bible as the Word of God depends on an objective analysis of reliable evidence.

A. The Bible enjoys a remarkable harmony with itself that is unparalleled by any document of human origin.

1. The Bible was written by about 40 human penman over about 1,600 years and covers about 4,000 years of history; the human penman were from various backgrounds, lived in various countries and most of them did not know each other.
2. The Bible nowhere contradicts itself and appears to have been written by a single penman.
3. The harmony of the Bible surpasses the harmony and reliability of any volume of human origin, suggesting that the Bible is divine in origin.
4. The harmony of the Bible is one of several building blocks of evidence that with other similar building blocks relate to the holiness and sacredness of the Bible as the Word of God.

B. The Bible is historically correct despite formerly being suspected of being historically inaccurate.

1. For instance, archaeological excavations have verified that the walls of Jericho fell flat and outward, as the Bible records, Joshua 6.
2. Archaeological discovery has verified the biblical record that Belshazzar was king in Babylon when the Persians conquered it, Daniel 5.
3. The accuracy of Bible history surpasses the accuracy of merely mortal accounts of history, suggesting that the Bible is divine in origin.
4. This, too, is a building block of evidence.

C. The Bible, though not a science text, is scientifically correct whenever it addresses science.
   1. In 1856, Hubert Spencer supplied for science a basic principle: Time, force, action and matter are vital elements to scientific research; the Bible first recorded these respecting creation, Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning [time] God [force] created [action] the heaven and the earth [matter].
   2. Matthew Fontaine Maury, father of modern navigation, discovered the 'paths of the sea' (gulf stream and ocean currents) recorded in Psalm 8:8.
   3. The Bible also addresses the treasures to be found in snow and hail, which science has verified, Job 38:22.
   4. Genesis 6:15 records the perfect ratio of dimensions for modern shipbuilding, 3,200 years before modern man discovered it.
   5. Though the human penmen may not have been aware of the significance of the scientific information included in their writings, the inclusion of unknown scientific information in the Bible points to a divine penman.

D. The Bible contains many prophecies that cannot be successfully construed as self-fulfilling, which therefore prove the Bible to be divine in origin, as well as holy and divine.
   1. About 2,000 B.C., God promised that a Messiah would be a descendant of Abram or Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3; this was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.
   2. Prophecies regarding the death of the Messiah are beyond the possibility of deceitful fulfillment (i.e., self-fulfilling), Psalm 16:16-17; 34:20; Isaiah 53:5, 9, 12 (his hands and feet were pierced; none of his bones were broken though the bones of two others crucified with him were broken; he was numbered in his death with outlaws; he was whipped prior to crucifixion; etc.).
   3. During the time of the Babylonian kingdom, Daniel prophesied and named the next two world kingdoms, Daniel

8:20-21 (Media & Persia; Greece); secular history saw them both come to power per the details of the prophecy.

4. Fulfilled prophecies such as these validate the Bible as the holy and sacred Word of God.

Conclusion:

1. Historically, scientifically, prophetically and harmoniously the Bible is proved to be divine in origin.
   a. A divine penman, therefore, is equally authoritative in all matters addressed in the Bible.
   b. The Bible, then, is holy and sacred as it claims.
2. After the Bible is validated, all other passages pertaining to the holiness and sacredness of the Bible can be considered as corroborative evidence.
   a. The Bible is exactly what it claims to be!
   b. Being holy and sacred, the Bible is worthy of our earnest study and application to our lives.

Invitation:

1. Each of us needs to turn to the holy and sacred Word of God for direction in spiritual matters.
2. For instance, what the Bible says respecting salvation for everyone living today is critical to the eternal well being of humanity, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

God's Answer Book

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Thesis: God's Word (the Bible) provides all the answers mankind needs for spiritual living and preparation for eternity in Heaven.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. The Bible is divine in origin, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Galatians 1:11-12.
   a. The Bible is not merely the product of well-meaning men, 2 Peter 1:20-21.
   b. Certainly, the Bible is not the work of evil men or Satan.
2. The Bible affects all mankind.
   a. Every accountable soul is amenable to it and will be judged by it, Revelation 20:12.
   b. Some who stand before the throne of God will hear their salvation declared, Matthew 25:21.
   c. Some souls will be lost despite God desires all to be saved, Romans 1:16; 2 Peter 3:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
3. All people are affected by the Bible irrespective of whether they realize it.
   a. Those who ignore the Bible and think they have avoided the issue regarding the eternal disposition of their souls are mistaken, Matthew 12:30.
   b. Christians are wondrously affected by the Bible in this life and will be further affected by it in the world to come.

Body:

I. The Bible reveals man's origin.

A. The popular notion of evolution is incapable of revealing the origin of mankind.
   1. Macroevolution is riddled with numerous missing links and thereby unable to explain the transition from species to species it claims resulted in the development of humans.
   2. However, fretting over supposed species development is

getting the cart before the horse and senseless until the evolutionist can explain the origin of matter (from which life supposedly spontaneously developed).

3. Further, macroevolution is incapable of explaining intricate design characteristic of the created universe, sometimes which design depends on a number of characteristics working together simultaneously for an organism to live or be something different from another similar species.

B. The Bible, however, reveals the origin of mankind.
   1. The testimony of the Bible regarding creation is as trustworthy as any other subject about which it records anything; it is inconsistent and illogical to believe only part of the Bible.
   2. The first two chapters of the Bible declare the origin of humanity, Genesis 1-2; Zechariah 12:1.

II. The Bible gives purpose to the lives of men and women.

A. Without the divine purpose for living, man condescends to the pursuit of his animal lusts.
   1. This is reflected in the mottos by which many liver there lives (e.g., "all the gusto one time around"; "if it feels good, do it"; "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die," 1 Corinthians 15:32; Luke 12:19).
   2. This is reflected in the moral atrocities that have become so rampant in the modern world (e.g., sexual perversions, breakdown of the home, our nation distancing itself from God), 1 John 2:15-17.

B. The purpose of man's existence on earth is to prepare for an eternity in Heaven with God.
   1. Therefore, Jesus warned those to whom He spoke to seek spiritual things first and prepare to meet God, Matthew 6:33; Amos 4:12; John 14:1-3.
   2. A day of judgment is coming during which God will determine if each of us made the appropriate preparation to live in Heaven forever, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.
   3. The divine purpose that God intends for each accountable

soul surpasses any purpose for living that can be achieved from one's vocation, wealth, pleasure, etc.

III. The Bible provides a foundation of faith by which to live.

A. One's personal faith derives from the system of faith (Gospel or New Testament), 2 Corinthians 5:7.
   1. Only such a Bible faith can guide one toward the eternal shore of Heaven.
   2. The Christian pilgrimage would be an aimless maze without the divine guidance afforded in the Bible.

B. Possessing a Bible faith is the basis of seeking God and finding Him.
   1. For instance, without faith we cannot begin to please God, Hebrews 11:6.
   2. An acceptable faith derives from the Word of God (the Bible), Romans 10:17; John 20:30-31.

IV. The Bible provides light and understanding.

A. Outside the Bible is spiritual darkness and the faulty wisdom of men, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.
   1. Spiritual darkness leads to works of darkness (sin), Romans 13:12; Ephesians 5:11.
   2. There can be no mixing of spiritual darkness and spiritual light, 2 Corinthians 6:14.

B. Contrariwise, the Bible provides spiritual light and understanding, Psalm 119:104-105, 130; 2 Timothy 1:10.
   1. Jesus is the key to spiritual light to dispel spiritual darkness, Matthew 4:16.
   2. The special mission of the apostle Paul was to turn the Gentiles from darkness to light, Acts 26:18; Ephesians 5:8.

V. The Bible identifies sin and its consequences.

A. Categorically, sin is the violation of divine law, 1 John 3:4.
   1. Sin may be acts of omission, James 4:17; Matthew 25:31-46.
   2. Sin frequently is violating divine instruction—disobedience, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8; Romans 14:23.

B. The consequences for sin are lethal, Romans 6:23.
   1. Disobedience and obedience are contrasted with opposing results, Romans 6:16-17.
   2. If found to be disobedient before the judgment bar of God, eternal death (separation from God) will be assigned, Revelation 20:14-15.

VI. The Bible provides mankind what he needs in this life to prepare for the afterlife.

A. Mankind does not need anything beyond the Bible to prepare adequately for the approaching eternity.
   1. The Bible is sufficient, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   2. The Bible is complete, 2 Peter 1:3.

B. Heaven awaits faithful Christians.
   1. We can share with the apostle Paul the certainty regarding an eternity in Heaven, 2 Timothy 4:7-8.
   2. We can rest assured that Jesus will return for us, John 14:1-3.
   3. As long as we endure whatever may buffet us, we will receive a crown of righteousness in eternity, Revelation 2:10.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible cannot be destroyed, though many have attempted to destroy it over the centuries, 1 Peter 1:25.
2. Every accountable soul today needs to study the Bible because it so greatly affects him, Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15.
3. Through study of the Bible, mankind learns how to please God, which is to obey Him, John 14:15; Hebrews 5:8-9.

Invitation:

1. The human response to the Bible will determine the eternal disposition of souls.
2. The correct human response to the Bible begins with compliance with the words of Jesus, Mark 16:16.
3. If one is an unfaithful child of God, the correct human response to the Bible for that person is repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Authority of the Word of God

2 Samuel 23:2

Thesis: To show that for mankind today, all religious authority resides in the written Word of God.

Introduction:

1. The absolute authority of God our Creator has been delegated to the apostles of Christ.
2. The apostles and other inspired persons of the first century spoke and wrote by the inspiration of God.
3. For centuries until recently, most people professing to be Christians acknowledged the Bible or Word of God as from God and authoritative.
4. Today, however, the authority of the Word of God or the Bible has been severely undercut throughout Christendom.
   a. The flood of modern speech translations of the Bible that sometimes contradict themselves and conflict with other translations has undermined the public's confidence in the Bible as the Word of God.
   b. False theories respecting "inspiration" (e.g., thought inspiration, literary inspiration) likewise have undermined confidence in the Bible as authoritative in one's life.
   c. New interpretations of the Bible to permit what former, more conservative interpretations condemned, are commonplace (e.g., homosexuality, divorce and remarriage for any cause, changing the God-appointed roles of men and women, etc.).
   d. Many religionists today have substituted completely man-made preferences for divine mandates (e.g., dead letter, authority said to reside in the church, replacement of the Bible with other documents).
5. Therefore, it is appropriate and timely that we remind ourselves of the place of the Bible in our lives.

Body:

I. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY source of divine authority available now.

A. There is no new revelation!

1. Any doctrine that differs from what was delivered in the first century is false doctrine that will condemn all who embrace it, Galatians 1:6-9.
2. The revelation that God intended man to have for all time from the first century onward has been provided already, Jude 3.
3. Jesus Christ declared that only condemnation awaits anyone who adds or subtracts from the Word of God, Revelation 22:18-19.

B. The Word of God, irrespective of whether it was spoken by the Heavenly Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, an angel or a prophet of God, endures and is authoritative.

1. God put His Word in mortals, 2 Samuel 23:2; 2 Peter 1:21.
2. Jesus delegated authority to His apostles, Matthew 16:19; 18:18.
3. The Word of God cannot be destroyed, Matthew 24:35; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25.

II. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY reliable source of information relative to salvation and impending final judgment.

A. Only the Word of God can save mankind.

1. As Peter observed, only Jesus Christ has "the words of eternal life," John 6:68.
2. Jesus remarked that the Word of God 'sanctifies,' John 17:17.
3. The Gospel, Word of God or Bible is comprised of 'words whereby we can be saved,' Acts 11:14; Romans 1:16.

B. Every accountable soul will be judged by the Word of God.

1. Jesus Himself affirmed that His words would judge humanity, John 12:48.
2. Final judgment by Jesus Christ is a subject of Old Testa-

ment prophecy, Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Acts 3:23.

3. The portrayal of the Judgment in the Book of Revelation indicates that all souls will be judged by the particular Word of God under which each respectively lived, Revelation 20:12.

III. The written Word of God (the Bible) is the ONLY VERBALLY and PLENARY INSPIRED document available to mortals today

A. The Word of God is God-breathed.
   1. The apostles and other inspired writers spoke and wrote exactly what they were given by God, Isaiah 51:16; Jeremiah 5:14; Matthew 10:19-20; John 17:8; Acts 2:6-11; 1 Corinthians 2:13.
   2. Not some supposed thought inspiration and certainly not literary inspiration, but the prophets of God have always spoken by verbal inspiration.

B. Only the Word of God is complete and sufficient instruction by which man can redeem his soul and prepare to meet God in judgment.
   1. No other source can perfect mankind before God, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   2. The Word of God is complete—nothing lacking, 2 Peter 1:3.

Conclusion:

1. Since the Word of God (the Bible) is divine in origin, authoritative, able to save souls, complete and the basis of final judgment, every accountable soul urgently needs to apply it to his life.
2. Irrespective of whether one acknowledges the impact of the Word of God (the Bible) on his life now and eternally, he is amenable to it, cannot escape it and will be judged by it.

Invitation:

1. The verbally inspired Word of God will save us or condemn us; which will it be in your case?
2. Non-Christians and erring Christians can obey the Word of God and redeem their souls from sin, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:7.

The Sword of the Spirit

Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17

Thesis: To examine the multi-faceted character of God's Word.

Introduction:

1. Mankind often overlooks the only power in the world that really matters—the Word of God, Romans 1:16.
   a. Power to us is military strength with its missiles, planes and bombs.
   b. Power is seen as political clout—who's on top, who's running things?
   c. To others, power is horsepower, big engines, fast cars and massive machinery.
   d. All these things will cease, 2 Peter 3:10.
2. God's Word is like the anvil versus hammers; it endures despite its opponents.
3. God's supreme power is demonstrated by the statements of Hebrews 4:12.
   a. God's Word is alive.
   b. God's Word is active.
   c. God's Word is sharp.
   d. God's Word pierces.
   e. God's Word discerns.
   f. God's Word is eternal.

Body:

I. God's Word is alive!
   A. It is not a dead letter!
   B. The Spirit of God, by means of the Word of God, moves the child of God like the wind moves the trees, John 3:5-8.
   C. The Sword of the Spirit in us makes us alive spiritually, Ephesians 6:17; John 6:63.

II. God's Word is active or powerful!
   A. The Gospel (Word) is the power that saves, Romans 1:16.

B. The Word activates when as the seed it is planted in honest hearts, Luke 8:11.

III. God's Word is sharp!

A. It is sharper than a two-edged sword; the Word cuts coming and going, Hebrews 4:12.

B. A sword may be used defensively or offensively (part of the Gospel armor, Ephesians 6:10-17).

IV. God's Word pierces!

A. The Word pierces or divides in areas humanly impossible, e.g., soul and spirit.

B. It penetrates to the very hearts of men, Acts 2:37; 7:54.

V. God's Word discerns!

A. Armed with the Word of God, one can discern good and evil, Hebrews 5:13-14.

B. We should, then, use the Word now for self-examination, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

C. The Word will be used, later, for our final examination, Revelation 20:11-15.

VI. God's Word is eternal!

A. One cannot escape the Word of God as described in Hebrews 4:12, because it is eternal, Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23-25.

B. Further, the Word will be present in Judgment to examine us, John 12:48.

Conclusion:

1. Is God's Word alive in us?
2. Is God's Word active in us?
3. Is the sharp, two-edged sword of God (Word) a part of our Gospel armor; do we use it for defense?
4. Does God's Word pierce or penetrate our hearts?
5. Can we with God's Word discern both good and evil?
6. Does God's eternal Word dwell in us?

God's Enduring Word

Jeremiah 36:22-32

Thesis: To show that God's Word will endure all things, even if it is neglected, misused or abused.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. Long ago, a king of Judah named Jehoiakim didn't like what God's Word said, Jeremiah 36:22-32.
   a. Consequently, he cut the scroll with a penknife and cast it into a fireplace.
   b. God, however, caused Jeremiah to reconstitute that scroll, adding to it similar words that Jehoiakim despised.
2. Like King Jehoiakim of centuries past, contemporary men often have no more regard for the authority of the Word of God.
   a. Men throughout the centuries have neglected ignored, misused and abused the Word of God.
   b. The Word of God, the Bible, though, will endure in spite of what man may try to do to it, 1 Peter 1:22-25.
3. The Word of God is the 'seed of the kingdom,' Luke 8:10-11, and the "truth," John 8:32, by which men are freed from sin and saved.
   a. However, the Word of God is ineffectual in the lives of those today who, in essence, repeat the actions of Jehoiakim.
   b. There are several varying ways in which modern man 'cuts and burns' the Bible.

Body:

I. Denominational doctrine negates many Bible truths, for which cause those offensive passages might as well be ripped out of the Bible.

A. Denominational doctrine has long overridden James 2:20-26 with faith only.

1. Martin Luther doubted the canonicity of the Book of James and referred to it as an epistle of straw.

2. He mistakenly presumed that the Book of James and the Book of Romans contradicted each other regarding faith and works.
3. If one isn't going to believe James 2:24 or the Book of James, it might as well be ripped out of the Bible and thrown away!
4. **Note:** Subpoints similar to these, though not included below, pertain to each following observation.

B. Most denominational people deny that baptism saves or is for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.

C. For those who believe faith only (or any only doctrine) or the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion, other elements to which the Bible attributes saving power are useless and their corresponding passages might as well be ripped from the Bible, Romans 10:17; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 10:9-10; Revelation 2:10.

D. Denominational people who do not believe that baptism is a burial or immersion have no need of Colossians 2:12 and Romans 6:3-5.

E. Furthermore, our denominational neighbors who use instrumental music in worship have no need of Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16.

F. Neither is there any reason not tear Acts 20:7 from the Bible for those who prefer to worship on any day other than the first day of the week or fail to observe the communion each first day.

G. For those who yet tithe instead of contributing according to their prosperity and as they purpose, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 and 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 are unnecessary verses.

H. Since the religious community uses an abundance of religious titles, Matthew 23:8 might as well be ripped from the Bible, too.

I. If miracles have not ceased, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:11-13 are meaningless.

J. If once saved always saved (perseverance of the saints) is true, numerous passages that warn about apostasy are false

and should be discarded, 1 Corinthians 9:16, 27; 2 Peter 2:20-22; James 5:19-20; Hebrews 10:26-29.

K. Many people and some churches condone homosexuality, Genesis 19; Romans 1:25, 27, 32; 1 Corinthians 6:9.

L. Those who believe predestination must believe God is a respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Romans 2:11; Galatians 2:6; Colossians 3:25; 1 Peter 1:17.

M. Universalism teaches that no one will be lost, making passages about hell and eternal punishment ineffective, Revelation 20:12-15; 21:8; Matthew 25:41, 46.

N. Premillennialists disregard passages about going to Heaven and the destruction of the earth when Jesus returns, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Peter 3:10-12.

O. Denominational church organization negates the many passages that discuss the organizational structure of the Lord's church, Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Matthew 16:18; Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

P. Etc.

II. The practices of many Christians also negate Bible truths, for which cause those offensive passages might as well be ripped out of the Bible.

A. Neglect of passages concerning evangelism, in effect, negates them, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47.

B. Forsaking appointed assembles by many Christians sets aside Hebrews 10:25 and Acts 20:7.

C. Christians sometimes also fail to give as they ought, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

D. Many brethren apparently believe that the Old Testament is meaningless to Christians today and they might as well remove the entire Old Testament from their Bibles, Romans 15:4, plus every Old Testament reference in the New Testament!

E. Most brethren seem to sense no compulsion to practice benevolence, either individually or congregationally, Matthew

25:31-46; Galatians 6:10; James 1:27.

F. Passages about immodesty are unheeded regularly by Christians, 1 Timothy 2:9.
G. Many brethren ignore verses concerning drinking alcohol, Galatians 5:21.
H. Smoking and other bad habits harm the body, 1 Corinthians 6:19.
I. Brethren have rationalized marriage, divorce and remarriage so that almost no passages on the topic remain unscathed, Matthew 5:32; 19:1-9; 1 Corinthians 7.
J. Women praying in the presence of men require the removal of 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 from the Bible.
K. Adding entertainment to the mission of the church implies that the Gospel is insufficient, Romans 1:16, and that additions may be made to the Bible, Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.
L. Clamoring for positive preaching is an affront to "the whole counsel of God," Acts 20:27 ASV, and warnings against smooth things only, Romans 16:17-18; 2 Timothy 4:3-4.
M. If the contemporary church does not believe in church discipline, it might as well direct its members to tear those passages from the Bible, too, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.
N. Several passages direct the child of God to be fruitful, but many are not, Matthew 7:19-20; John 15:1-6.
O. Other passages direct the child of God to grow spiritually and mature, but, again, many do not, Hebrews 5:11-6:2; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:24.
P. Etc.

Conclusion:

1. Everyone who believes that the Bible is a dead letter, or believes in new revelations or 'a better felt than told' religion doesn't need any of the Bible!
2. God is certainly not pleased when either sinners or saints 'cut up and burn' or otherwise ignore or abuse the Bible.

3. Jehoiakim and the non-Christian world demonstrate an acute contempt for God and His Word; what is our excuse as Christians and the churches of Christ?

Invitation:

1. The Word of God will survive whatever abuses we or others inflict upon it, 1 Peter 1:22-25, but man cannot survive without it!
2. The Bible alone is the power of God unto salvation, Romans 1:16.

Let the Bible Be Your Guide to Faith

Romans 10:17

Thesis: To define God-approved faith and to identify its source.

Introduction:

1. The word "faith" may apply to one's confidence in national leaders, one brand of automobile over others, bridges we cross, airplanes we ride, religious leaders and virtually anything or anybody.
2. "Bible faith," though, is a special, unique and unparalleled faith that exceeds in importance any other type of faith.

Body:

I. The Bible defines the faith that pertains both to our redemption and eternal salvation.

- A. No other faith deserves as much attention because no other faith can do so much for us.
- B. The verb form of "faith" is "believe."
- C. "Faith" is confidence in, reliance upon, complete trust in and persuasion or conviction based on testimony.
- D. Hence, "faith" does not exist independently.
- E. The "Bible faith" in which we are interested today relies on the testimony of the Word of God—the Bible, Romans 10:17.
  1. The word "faith" does appear in Romans 14:23 where it refers to one's conscience, but that is not the "Bible faith" in which we are interested today.
  2. In addition, Jude 3 uses the word "faith" where it refers to the system of faith—the Bible.

II. We cannot over emphasize the importance of "Bible faith."

- A. We must have Bible faith to please God, Hebrews 11:6.
- B. We are justified or saved by faith, Romans 5:1; 1 Peter 1:9.
- C. Grace and faith cooperate for one's salvation, Ephesians 2:8.
- D. Faith and baptism cooperate for one's salvation, Mark 16:16.
- E. Faith and baptism cooperate to make one a child of God and to put Christ on, Galatians 3:26-27.

III. "Bible faith" has great character.

A. First, "Bible faith" is obedient, Romans 1:5; 16:26.
   1. The Greek word translated "believeth not" or "unbelieving" is also translated "disobedient," John 3:36; Acts 14:12; Romans 10:21.
   2. God accused Moses of disbelief when he disobeyed God, Numbers 20:7-12.
   3. Scripture links Abraham's faith with his obedience, Hebrews 11:8.

B. "Bible faith" is active.
   1. It is not "Bible faith" but dead faith if it does not actively do something in service to God, James 2:14-26.
   2. The servants of God whose names appear in the Bible's Hall of Fame of Faith all did something for God as a consequence of their faith, Hebrews 11:4, 7-9, 17, 20-21, 24-25.

C. "Bible faith" operates through love.
   1. Faith works by love, Galatians 5:6.
   2. The Thessalonians were known for their growing faith and abounding love, 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

IV. "Bible faith" has an object.

A. Jesus told His audiences to "believe the gospel," Mark 1:15.

B. Jesus told the apostles to "have faith in God," Mark 11:22.

C. Mankind must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, John 8:24.

V. "Bible faith" has a purpose.

A. "Bible faith" provides the only defense against Satan, Ephesians 6:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

B. "Bible faith" is one's offensive weapon in spiritual battles, 1 Timothy 6:12; 1:18-19.

VI. It is imperative that one knows the true source of "Bible faith," Romans 10:17.

A. The source of faith is stated or implied in the Book of Acts—preaching the Word of God, 2:4, 6, 8, 11, 14, 22, 29, 37-38; 4:4; 8:12-13; 9:6; 16:14-15, 32-33; 17:11-12; 18:8; 19:5.

B. Paul wrote about "the word of faith, which we preach," Romans 10:8.

VII. There are degrees of faith, not all of which are "Bible faith."

A. There is little faith, Matthew 6:30; 8:26.
B. There is trembling faith, James 2:19.
C. There is weak faith, Romans 14:1.
D. There is great faith, Luke 7:9.
E. There is working faith, 2 Thessalonians 1:11.
F. There is dead faith, James 2:26.
G. There is unfeigned faith, 2 Timothy 1:5.

VIII. There are numerous examples in Scripture of "Bible faith":

A. Noah, Genesis 6:14-22; Hebrews 11:7.
B. Abraham, Genesis 12:14; 22:1-10; Romans 4:18-21; Hebrews 11:8-19.
C. David, 1 Samuel 17:37, 46-47.
D. Elijah, 1 Kings 18:32-38.
E. Daniel, Daniel 6.
F. Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, Daniel 3:13-27.
G. Joseph, Genesis 50:20; Hebrews 11:22.
H. Ezra, Ezra 8:22.
I. Mordecai, Esther 4:14.
J. Paul, Acts 27:25.

IX. "Bible faith" triumphs under trial.

A. The successful trying of one's "Bible faith" will result in praise and honor when Jesus returns, 1 Peter 1:7.
B. The trial of one's faith results in patience, James 1:3.
C. There is no comparison between the trials of one's faith on earth and the glory to come.
   1. The heavenly hereafter more than compensates for suffering now, if one has "Bible faith," Romans 8:18.
   2. The trial of "Bible faith" now is light affliction compared to heavenly glory, 2 Corinthians 4:8-18.
   3. One's "Bible faith" is as strong as one's trust and confidence in Jesus Christ, 2 Timothy 1:12.

Conclusion:

1. He who has "Bible faith" can through the eye of faith see Heaven to come, 2 Corinthians 4:18; Hebrews 11:1.
2. Humanity is commanded to have this faith, 1 John 3:23.
3. "Bible faith" is derived from the system of faith—the Bible, 2 Corinthians 5:7.
4. Faith toward God is the building block on which Christians grow, Hebrews 6:1.

Invitation:

1. The essentiality of "Bible faith" is apparent in Hebrews 11:6.
2. Non-Christians must develop a "Bible faith," for no other type of faith leads to salvation, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians need to reconverted so their "Bible faith" can contribute to their eternal salvation, James 5:19-20.

The Bible as Counselor, Operator's Manual and Road Map

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Thesis: To embolden Christians to place their confidence in the Bible to help them make their pilgrimage despite sorrows they may face in this life.

Introduction:

1. The Bible provides a profound look into the otherwise unknown other world beyond this life.
2. Further, the Bible is an under used but able tool for personal development and happiness.
3. The Bible is also a reliable point of reference by which one can chart a path to the eternal shores of Heaven.

Body:

I. The Bible as counselor can comfort mankind and bring him through any of his sorrows, e.g. bereavement, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

A. For instance, death is a natural, predictable and observable event that each person knows will visit him, Hebrews 9:27.
   1. However, not even death is a dreadful thing for those who have made adequate preparation to meet God, 2 Corinthians 5:1-11.
   2. Those ready for eternity can say with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," Revelation 22:20.

B. The Bible tells us that family relationships dissolve at death, which means that one's relationship with God outlasts all other relationships, Mark 12:25; Romans 7:1-3.
   1. When a person dies, though his body remains, the spirit is departed, James 2:26; Ecclesiastes 12:7.
   2. The living comfort themselves with pleasant memories of the deceased and look forward to a renewed acquaintance in Heaven, 2 Samuel 12:23.

C. The Bible assures us that there are no sorrows in Heaven,

Revelation 21:4.

1. If we miss Heaven after this life is over, our personal sorrows will displace any other sorrows, Matthew 25:30.
2. However, on the other hand, if we enter Heaven, our joy will be so complete that we cannot have any sorrows, Matthew 25:21, 23.

II. The Bible is the ultimate operator's manual for the ultimate creation—man.

A. The Bible tells of man's origin, Genesis 1:26-27.
B. The Bible states our purpose for living, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.
C. It reveals the approximate number of years we will inhabit this earth, Psalm 90:10.
D. The Bible is full of details about successful human experience, e.g. redemption, Christian worship, Christian living, Christian service, happy marriages, child rearing, etc.

III. The Bible is our road map.

A. The Bible tells us where we have been spiritually, where we are spiritually and where we are going spiritually.
B. The Bible alone can direct us through the uncharted dark ways of death, eternity and the redemption of our souls, Proverbs 3:5; Psalm 119:105.
C. Bible faith outfits man for a journey we all must eventually make, Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6.

Conclusion:

1. Life at best is brief, James 4:14; Job 14:1-2.
2. The Bible alone is the supreme counselor, operator's manual and road map.

Invitation:

1. Without the Bible, one could not know God or His desire that all be saved and none perish, 2 Peter 3:9; John 3:16.
2. Only through the Bible (for us the New Testament) can one know how to save himself from sin, Acts 2:38, 40; Philippians 2:12.
3. Only through the Bible (for us the New Testament) can one know that God also forgives penitent Christians of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Bible Is God's Treasure Map

Psalm 119:103-106

Thesis: To emphasize the critical role of the Bible in becoming Christians and readying ourselves for the eternal habitation in Heaven.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. The Bible is the most important book because it is divine in origin.
2. The Bible is the most important resource to which we ought to appeal in this life because it tells us of our origin, the purpose of our existence and the eternity that lies ahead.
3. The Bible is the most important book by which one could order his life because it provides incontrovertible instructions regarding man's life on earth, how he can prepare for eternity and about the eternal abodes of Heaven and Hell.
4. The Bible is the most important book because it, like a treasure map, leads those who follow it to incalculable happiness on earth and eternally in Heaven.

Body:

I. The Bible is God's treasure map to forgiveness of sins.

A. Mankind is incapable of saving himself from sin.
   1. Mankind is not able to direct his own steps, Jeremiah 10:23; Romans 3:23.
   2. God unfolded the plan of redemption while man was oblivious to his sinful plight and otherwise helpless to extricate himself from that sin, Romans 5:8.
   3. Until God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save humanity, sin continued to separate man from God, Isaiah 59:1-3; John 3:16; Luke 19:10.

B. The Bible is the only resource to which humanity can appeal for knowledge whereby forgiveness of sins can be sought.
   1. The Word of God contains the answer to how one can become free of sin, John 8:32; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

2. The Word of God contains the answer to how one can remain free from sin, 1 John 1:7, 9.

II. The Bible is God's treasure map to successful Christian living.

A. Left to his own devices, mankind will fail to practice successful Christian living.
   1. Through carelessness and faulty rationalization, Christians miss worship assemblies unnecessarily and many eventually are lost to the church, Hebrews 10:25.
   2. Even Christians are sometimes guilty of the most villainous sins, 1 Corinthians 5; 1 Timothy 1:19; 3 John 9-10.

B. Successful Christian living is when one's life is pleasing to God.
   1. After conversion, one must continue to refrain from sinful pursuits, 1 Thessalonians 5:22.
   2. To become spiritually stronger, one must feed on the Word of God, 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:11-14.
   3. Christians need to practice sacrificial, holy living and have their minds continually renewed by the Word of God, Romans 12:1-2.

III. The Bible is God's treasure map to Christian worship.

A. Mankind's preferences regarding worship of God leads to condemnation.
   1. Cain's offering was not of faith or according to instructions, and was rejected, Genesis 4:3-7; Hebrews 11:4.
   2. Nadab and Abihu were killed by God for not worshipping Him according to divine instruction, Leviticus 10:1-2.
   3. Anything in worship to God that is contrary to what God has prescribed for worshipping Him is vain worship and sinful, Matthew 15:9.

B. As a New Testament people, man living today must appeal exclusively to the New Testament for how God desires to be worship now.
   1. Internally or in spirit and externally in one's conduct are both required to offer acceptable worship to God, John 4:24.
   2. Giving under the New Testament is regulated according

to one's prosperity and purpose of heart, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:7.

3. Preaching and the Lord's Supper are parts of New Testament worship, the latter only being relegated to the first day of the week alone, Acts 20:7.
4. Singing and prayer are also worshipful acts, 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

IV. The Bible is God's treasure map to a happy Christian family.

A. God created the first family when He created Adam and Eve.
   1. God created mankind as male and female, Genesis 1:27; 2:21-25.
   2. Like the plant and animal kingdoms, God created mankind bearing seed to reproduce after its kind (i.e., special creation was replaced with ordinary procreation), Genesis 1:11-12, 21-22, 24-25, 26-29.

B. God also regulated (and continues to regulate) the family.
   1. God assigned complementary (not competing) roles for husbands and wives, Genesis 3:16; Ephesians 5:22-33.
   2. Parents and children, respectively, have their God-given roles, too, Ephesians 6:1-4.

C. A happy Christian family is more likely to result from following God's instructions for the home than any other course one could pursue.
   1. The husband is to rejoice with the wife of his youth, Proverbs 5:18; Song of Solomon.
   2. Children in the home bring joy to the family who delights in the ways of God, Psalm 128:3-5.

V. The Bible is God's treasure map to working for God.

A. Indifferent, apathetic and unfruitful Christianity is condemned in the Bible.
   1. Jesus Christ condemned fruitlessness among the professed children of God, John 15:1-8.
   2. There are two types of fruit—good and evil; the latter will be punished with fire, Matthew 3:10; 7:15-20.

3. Indifference and apathy among early Christians was severely condemned by Jesus Christ, Revelation 2:1-7; 3:14-22.
4. The writer of Hebrews also chastised first century Christians for inattentiveness to pursing their own spiritual growth, Hebrews 5:11-6:2.

B. The New Testament tells how Christians can and must serve God throughout their lives.
1. When Christians feast on the Word of God, they not only fortify themselves, but they can teach others as well, Hebrews 5:11-14; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; Mark 16:15-16.
2. Useful servants prospect (are zealous) for opportunities to be of greater service to God, Titus 2:14; 1 Corinthians 15:58.
3. Serving God certainly includes fulfilling the mission of the church to whatever extent we have opportunity, Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Galatians 6:10.
4. In part, we serve God by being good citizens and obeying civil law, Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:29.

VI. The Bible is God's treasure map to living forever with God in Heaven.

A. Mankind without God misses the goal of Heaven.
1. The rich man of Luke 16:19-31 only realized after he crossed the threshold of death that he had not made adequate preparation for eternity.
2. The saddest portrayal of judgment highlights faulty human wisdom respecting preparation for eternity, Matthew 7:21-23.
3. Every accountable soul who has not obeyed the Word of God upon the return of the Lord will be punished forever, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

B. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.
1. Jesus has gone to prepare mansions for the faithful children of God, John 14:1-3.
2. Jesus Christ will return to receive his faithful followers to

Himself and take them to Heaven above, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

3. Only the Bible contains the criteria by which final judgment will occur, which provides man the opportunity now to amend his conduct, Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible has no rivals; it is in a class of its own.
2. The Bible is truly God's treasure map to incomparable treasures:
   a. Forgiveness of sins.
   b. Successful Christian living.
   c. Christian worship.
   d. A happy Christian family.
   e. Working for God.
   f. Living forever with God in heaven.

Invitation:

1. The road that leads to living forever with God in Heaven begins with obedience to the Christian faith, Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 1:5; 16:26.
2. The first converts to Christianity were told by the apostle Peter to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38; the message was the same in the second recorded Gospel sermon and throughout the New Testament, Acts 3:19; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
3. The Bible also notes that erring Christians were restored to the faith upon penitence and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

It Is Written!

Matthew 4:4

Thesis: To emphasize that the written Word of God is the final authority in religion to which mankind needs to appeal (and by which Final Judgment will occur).

Introduction:

1. The phrase "It is written" appears 80 times in the English Bible.
   a. "It is written" appears 17 times in the Old Testament, Joshua 8:31; 2 Samuel 1:18; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 23:21; 2 Chronicles 23:18; 25:4; 31:3; 35:12; Ezra 3:2, 4; 6:18; Nehemiah 8:15; 10:34, 36; Psalm 40:7; Isaiah 65:6; Daniel 9:13.
   b. "It is written" appears 63 times in the New Testament, Matthew 2:5; 4:4, 6-7, 10; 11:10; 21:13; 26:24, 31; Mark 1:2; 7:6; 9:12-13; 14:21, 27; Luke 2:23; 3:4; 4:4, 8, 10; 7:27; 19:46; 24:46; John 6:31, 45; 12:14; Acts 1:20; 7:42; 15:15; 23:5; Romans 1:17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17; 8:36; 9:13, 33; 10:15; 11:8, 26; 12:19; 14:11; 15:3, 9, 21; 1 Corinthians 1:19, 31; 2:9; 3:19; 9:9; 10:7; Galatians 3:10, 13; 4:22, 27; Hebrews 10:7; 1 Peter 1:16.
2. Perhaps the most remembered occurrences of the phrase "It is written" are from the lips of Jesus Christ at His Special Temptation, Matthew 4; Luke 4.
3. J.W. McGarvey and Philip Y. Pendleton made an outstanding observation regarding our Lord's statement: "Jesus used the Scripture as final, argument-ending authority."
4. The significance of the words "It is written" is that God's Word is the final authority in religion:
   a. To which mankind needs to appeal for instruction.
   b. By which mankind will be judged at the Final Judgment.

Body:

I. God has chosen writing prophets to record His will for mankind.

A. God employed 40 human penman over a period of 1,600 years

to communicate the mind of God to mankind in written form.

B. God used the vehicle of divine inspiration to direct humans to write down the Word of God.
   1. The apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist, Timothy, that Old Testament Scripture was inspired of God, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   2. The apostle Peter wrote about the method God used to communicate His will to mankind in written form, 2 Peter 1:21.

C. The 80 occasions of the phrase "It is written" appearing in the Bible clearly emphasize that God's Word is the only authority in religion to which anyone should appeal.

II. There is no other religious authority to which mankind can turn for accurate religious instruction.

A. Anything less than, more than or purportedly equal to the Bible is either deficient or not needed.
   1. First century Christians already had everything necessary to be all God wants Christians to be, 2 Peter 1:3.
   2. The Gospel or "common faith" had already been given "once for all," Jude 3 ASV.
   3. Alteration of the Gospel was strictly forbidden, Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.

B. The Bible is full of expressions similar to the phrase "It is written" that underscore that the Bible alone is the Word of God.
   1. "Thus saith the Lord" appears 414 times in the English Bible.
   2. "The Lord said" occurs 219 times.
   3. "The word of the Lord came to me saying" occurs 7 times, plus several other instances with slightly varying order of words.

C. God, through the Bible, attests to the fact that he has provided mankind with divine revelation.
   1. Old Testament people were expected to understand that by God's revealed Word they would stand in Final Judgment, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

2. New Testament people are expected to understand that by God's Word they will stand in Final Judgment, 2 Corinthians 5:10.
3. No other source of religious instruction will prevail with God in Final Judgment, Matthew 7:21-23; 15:9.

Conclusion:

1. The final, absolute standard of authority in religion is the Word of God—nothing else!
2. The doctrines of men are an affront to God and will avail nothing in Final Judgment, Matthew 15:13.
3. We can only learn about salvation, true Christian worship, Christian doctrine, Christian living and Christian service from the Bible.

Invitation:

1. Have you turned exclusively to the Word of God respecting forgiveness from sin?
2. The words of Jesus, summarizing God's redemptive plan, appear in Mark 16:16.
3. Further divine instruction regarding the forgiveness of sins committed by Christians also appears in the New Testament, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Are We Under Divine Law Today?

Micah 4:1-2

Thesis: To ascertain if people living today in the Christian era are under divine law, or if God's grace and mercy have replaced divine law.

Introduction:

1. Admittedly, the New Testament teaches that people living today are no longer under or amenable to God's law in the Old Testament, i.e. the Law of Moses.
2. Admittedly, God's grace and mercy are operative today respecting human redemption.
   a. However, do God's grace and mercy displace or annual divine law in the New Testament era?
   b. In others words, are people living today amenable or under divine law or are we saved by grace and mercy without divine law?
3. The answer to this question of amenability to divine law today is twofold.
   a. In part, the answer lies in the examination of Old Testament prophecies respecting the establishment of Christianity, i.e. the New Testament kingdom or the church.
   b. In part, the answer lies in the examination of New Testament passages respecting law, grace and mercy.

Body:

I. Old Testament passages have something definitive to say about the New Testament kingdom or the church respecting divine law.

A. Old Testament prophecies predicted that divine law in the Christian era would proceed from Jerusalem.

1. Micah 4:1-2 and Isaiah 2:2-3 emphasize and predict that a new divine law would go forth from Jerusalem in the Christian era.
2. These prophecies identify the time period when this new law

of God would go forth from Jerusalem as the "last days."

3. The "last days" refers to the whole Christian era, which began on the first Pentecost following the death, burial, resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ, Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21.
4. Since Acts 2, a new law of God has sounded forth, especially regarding human redemption, Luke 24:47.

B. Old Testament law (including the Law of Moses) was to be replaced with New Testament law (the Gospel).

1. Moses was the great Old Testament lawgiver, e.g. "law of Moses," 1 Kings 2:3; Nehemiah 8:1; Malachi 4:4; Acts 28:23 (22 references throughout Bible).
2. A new Lawgiver or Prophet comparable to but superior to Moses was to replace Moses and his law, Deuteronomy 18:15-18; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37.

II. New Testament passages have something definitive to say about the New Testament kingdom or the church respecting divine law.

A. Since the inauguration of the New Testament, no one living today is under or amenable to the Old Testament, including the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments.

1. Specifically, the New Testament teaches that it is not possible to please God today by practicing the Law of Moses, Galatians 3:11; 5:4.
2. People living today are "justified by the faith of Christ" rather than the Law of Moses, Galatians 2:16.
3. The purpose of the Law of Moses was preparatory, paving the way for the introduction of the Gospel, Galatians 3:23-24.
4. The entire Old Testament (including the Law of Moses and the Ten Commandments) has been replaced with the New Testament, Romans 7:6-7; 1 Corinthians 6:6, 11; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-7.

B. Grace and mercy are facets of the divine law in the Christian

era and do not substitute for divine law today.

1. The "grace of God" stands apart from the Law of Moses, Galatians 2:21.
2. However, the context in which Galatians 2:21 appears makes the grace of God a component part of "the faith of Christ" (Gospel), Galatians 2:16.

C. The New Testament or Gospel is described by the New Testament itself as a law of God, just not the same as the Law of Moses.

1. The Gospel is referred to as "the law of Christ," Galatians 6:2.
2. Rather than eliminating all sense of law respecting God-given religion, "there is made of necessity a change also of the law," Hebrews 7:12.
3. Further, the Gospel is called "the perfect law of liberty" and "the royal law," James 1:25; 2:8, 12.
4. James 4:11 clearly equates the New Testament or Gospel as a law of God now in effect, though it is not the Law of Moses.

D. Sin exists in the New Testament era because of violation of the Gospel law, 1 John 3:4.

1. If there were no divine law today, then there could be no sin—since sin is the violation of law.
2. There is sin today, so there must be a divine law to which people living today are amenable.
3. That law is the New Testament or Gospel of Jesus Christ!

III. The workings of the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ work differently.

A. The Law of Moses was a works based religion.

1. The Law of Moses required good deeds or obedience, Galatians 3:10.
2. However, the Law of Moses could not save from sin based on those deeds or works, Hebrews 10:1-4.
3. Something was lacking from the Law of Moses to redeem

souls—the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb of God, John 1:29.

B. The Law of Christ is a faith (man's part) as well as a grace and mercy (God's part) based religion.
   1. The Law of Christ requires good deeds or obedience, Matthew 7:21; Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.
   2. These good deeds or obedience equate to one's faith in action, James 2:14-26.
   3. Yet, faith even demonstrated by Christian service cannot save by itself (but God will not save mankind without it).
   4. God responds to our active faith with His saving mercy and grace, Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8.

Conclusion:

1. It is obvious that no one living today is under or amenable to any part of the Old Testament, e.g. the Law of Moses, Ten Commandments.
2. However, grace and mercy neither contradict nor displace New Testament divine law, i.e. the Gospel.
3. New Testament divine law (Gospel), grace and mercy complement each other regarding human redemption.

Invitation:

1. Salvation today is only available to souls who obey the Law of Christ, the Gospel, 1 Peter 4:17.
2. Have you responded to the divine invitation appearing in the first recorded Gospel sermon, Acts 2:38?
3. If you have been immersed for the remission of sins previously, are you a faithful Christian today, Revelation 2:10; 1 John 1:9?

The Source of True Unity

Psalm 133:1

Thesis: To expose pseudo-unity for its misguided thrust and identify the source of true unity.

Introduction:

1. An ecumenical exercise among several denominations in a community resulted in the formation of a youth center.
   a. Purportedly, the youth center was organized to give youngsters something to do and a place to go after school, which might keep them from mischief.
   b. Many months later, the youth center announced that its "purpose…is to win our town for Christ."
   c. It called for unity of religious people to close the town's "numerous bars and gambling facilities."
   d. This ecumenical stepchild of local denominations, which has begun to walk and talk, announced a fundraiser for itself.
   e. Providing alternative activities for young people to steer them from trouble is a worthy goal, and so are the goals of closing local bars and gambling establishments.
   f. However, is this ecumenical unity and the trappings associated with it the religious unity indicated in the New Testament? (No it is not!)
2. Years ago, I noticed in the masthead of stationery for a ministerial alliance the telling sentence: "We have agreed to disagree."
   a. A ministerial alliance is an ecumenical meeting of denominational representatives who cannot quite bring themselves to disregard their respective denominations.
   b. Is this the type of unity about which the New Testament teaches? (No it is not!)
3. There is only one source of true religious unity!
   a. It is not the banding together of diverse religious people to address common, howbeit maybe worthy, goals.

b. It is not the ridiculous mental gymnastics of agreeing to disagree!
c. What, then, is the source of true religious unity?

Body:

I. The Bible alone, and especially the New Testament for our age, is the true source of religious unity.

A. Period!
   1. End of story!
   2. Nothing with the Bible, and nothing less than the Bible.

B. The apostle Paul by inspiration wrote about "the unity of the [Christian] faith," Ephesians 4:13-14.
   1. While the New Testament was still being written, God provided miracle-assisted church leaders, Ephesians 4:11-12.
   2. After the New Testament was complete, miracles were no longer needed, Mark 16:20; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Jude 3.
   3. The affect of completed revelation (the New Testament) was "the unity of the faith" without confusion by man-made doctrines and human schemes, Ephesians 4:14.

C. Through true, biblical unity, the Lord's church can stand as a band of religious people for truth and against evil.
   1. Nothing short of or different from the Lord's church can adequately represent godly people in opposition to sin.
   2. "Brethren" rather than denominational counterparts stand together in unity, Psalm 133:1; Matthew 23:8.
   3. The early church demonstrated Christian unity as it stood together as Christians "were of one heart and of one soul" and "had all things common," Acts 4:32.
   4. Paul wrote that early Christians had "the same mind one toward another," Romans 12:16.
   5. Consequently, "with one mind and with one mouth" they glorified God, Romans 15:6.
   6. The same apostle admonished the early church to "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions" among

them, 1 Corinthians 1:10.

7. Religious people who are truly united "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," Philippians 1:27; 2:2.

II. Ironically, were every religiously inclined person to accept the Bible alone (i.e., today the New Testament), denominationalism would not exist.

A. The only legitimate religious conviction that anyone can have is religious conviction growing out of what the Bible and especially the New Testament teaches.

B. Not only would there be no denominations were religious people to rely on the Bible for the source of religious unity, there would be no other world religions either.

1. There would be no Islam.
2. There would be no Buddhism.
3. There would be no Hinduism, etc.
4. There would be no modern Judaism either.

Conclusion:

1. If every religiously inclined person in this or any community were to accept the Bible alone as the sole source of true religious unity, there would be no denominationalism.
2. More than one of the same church, the church of the New Testament, might exist in a community, but neither denominationalism nor other world religions would exist.
   a. More than one congregation of the church for which Jesus died might exist owing to differences in culture or language, e.g. various synagogues in the same city, Acts 6:9.
   b. "…there were no fewer than 480 synagogues in Jerusalem, and all nationalities had their own, it is possible that the five different classes here named had each their own synagogue…" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).
   c. Or, more than one congregation of the Lord's church might exist in a community owing to differences of opinion on non-doc-

trine preferences (i.e., not salvation issues), Acts 15:36-41.

3. Every religious person ought to be able to rally around the Bible—the Word of God (for us today, the New Testament).
   a. This would result in true unity.
   b. This would fill the pews of the Lord's church in any community and depopulate the pews of denominationalism.
   c. True unity based on the Bible alone would provide for a strong, united church to both stand for Christ and to resist the inroads of Satan on any community.

Invitation:

1. How much does the Bible, especially the New Testament, mean to you, or does some other creed book or family tradition mean more to you than the Word of God?
2. Only within the Word of God can one find the solution to man's sin problem, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

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Where There Is No Vision, #1

Proverbs 29:18

Thesis: To emphasize the essentiality of relying on God's Word for instruction in religion.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. The word "vision" in Proverbs 29:18 refers to prophetic instruction from God.
   a. The Hebrew word for "vision" "Chazon almost always signifies a means of divine revelation" (*Vine's*).
   b. "This famous verse has often been misquoted because the word vision has taken on new meaning since A.D. 1611. The Hebrew (and originally the AV) means 'where there is no prophetic vision, the people perish'" (*Wycliffe*).
   c. Consequently, Clarke restated the meaning of Proverbs 29:18: "Where divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither reverenced nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance" (*Clarke's*).
   d. Likewise, Barnes conveys the correct understanding of the word "vision": "The word commonly used of the revelation of God's will made to prophets. Compare Isa 1:1; Nah 1:1…1 Sam. 3:1" (*Barnes'*).
2. The significance of the proverb can hardly be misunderstood when the word "vision" is properly defined.
   a. "Where there is no setting forth of the will of God, whether by special revelation, as in old times…or by the ordinary ministrations of God's ministers and God's Word, as now, 'the people perish.'" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).
   b. Matthew Henry comments on the cause and effect within Proverbs 29:18: "How bare does a place look without Bibles and ministers, and what an easy prey is it to the enemy of souls!" (*Matthew*).

c. Further causal relationship is apparent in the following statement: "When there was not prophet to reveal God's will to the people or no preacher to hinder their going into sin, people get into sin with nothing to restrain them" (Hunt 400).
d. Hugo McCord noted, "Where there is no revelation from God, the people cast off restraint. Rejecting God and His Word, the people had nothing and nobody to hold them back" (qtd. in Liddell 329-330). (cf. Prov. 29:18 ASV, NKJV.)

3. Proverbs 29:18 emphasizes the essentiality of relying on God's Word for instruction in religion.
   a. This was true under Patriarchy, as God's dealings with Adam and Eve, as well as Cain, clearly teach, Genesis 3; 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4; Romans 10:17.
   b. This was true under Judaism also, as God's dealings with Nadab and Abihu clearly teach, Leviticus 10:1-2.
   c. This is true under Christianity too, as the New Testament clearly teaches, John 12:48.

Body:

I. God has always required humanity to obey His revelation or perish through divine punishment.

A. The Bible abounds with passages that warn humanity to obey divine revelation, 2 Peter 1:21; 3:2.
   1. Routine divine warnings dot the Bible from cover to cover, Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19.
   2. A whole generation of Israelites perished in the wilderness after Judaism was inaugurated and before the nation reached Canaan, Numbers 14:29-33; Hebrews 3:17.
   3. Disobeying divine revelation cost Israel of old its home in Canaan, Joshua 23:16; 722 B.C.; 586 B.C.
   4. As a group, God turned Israel out and turned to the Gentiles, Romans 10:21-11:25.

B. There were 400 years of silence (no prophetic vision or revelation) between the testaments as well as other times when the

revelation of God was unavailable to humanity, Amos 8:11-12.

1. The Jews even lost the Word of God so that it had to be rediscovered right where they lost it—in the Temple, 2 Kings 22:8-13.
2. Most of the time it was not the case that God's revelation was not available, but that people (even God's people) simply were not interested in God's vision or revelation, Hosea 4:6.
3. The same is true, unfortunately, today as well!

C. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which people living today must turn for instruction in religion.

1. Patriarchy was replaced (for the Jews) with Judaism at Mt. Sinai with the giving of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 34:28-29; Deuteronomy 4:12-14.
2. Judaism for the Jews (and Patriarchy for the Gentiles) was replaced with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:6-7.
3. Everyone living today must turn exclusively to the New Testament for divine instruction,

II. God still demands humanity to obey His revelation or perish through divine punishment.

A. First century Christians were warned often not to deviate from divine revelation.

1. The apostle Paul warned a group of congregations in the sub Roman province of Galatia not to accept a defective Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9.
2. The apostle John warned Christians in the first century against any deviations of "the doctrine of Christ," 1 John 4:1; 2 John 9-11.
3. Jesus Christ Himself repeatedly warned people not to alter the Word of God, Revelation 22:18-19.

B. Deviations from primitive Christianity are so abundant that we hardly give them any consideration.

1. Whenever people actually practice what the New Tes-

tament teaches, the practice of primitive Christianity is what the public views with suspicion instead of the deviations from the New Testament.

2. Yet, Jesus Christ clearly disdained those those who deviate from divinely given religion, Matthew 15:9, 13.

C. Deviations from New Testament Christianity are many and include:
   1. Biblically unauthorized names and titles, Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:26; Matthew 23:8-10.
   2. Biblically unauthorized church organization and government, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28.
   3. Biblically unauthorized worship, Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19.
   4. Biblically unauthorized missions, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 14:12; Galatians 6:10.
   5. Biblically unauthorized doctrines, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Colossians 3:17.

D. Souls who do not obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ will suffer punishment from Jesus Christ
   1. Those who never obey the Gospel will meet a punishing Christ at His Second Coming, 2 Thessalonians. 1:7-9.
   2. Disobedient Christians will know the wrath of a vengeful God, Hebrews 10:26-31.
   3. Humanity living today will be judged by the Gospel, Romans 2:16.

Conclusion:

1. It is sad that deviations from primitive Christianity are so abundant that we hardly give them any consideration.
2. Isn't it simply amazing that whenever people actually practice what the New Testament teaches, primitive Christianity is what the public views with suspicion instead of the deviations from the New Testament.
3. Proverbs 29:18 compares to New Testament verses, Luke 11:28;

James 1:25.

Invitation:

1. People in any age were and are only blessed spiritually when they heed divine commandments, Revelation 22:14.
2. Will any soul be blessed spiritually for ignoring the divine plan of redemption appearing on the pages of the New Testament, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37-39?
3. Will any Christian be blessed spiritually for crucifying Christ afresh, Hebrews 6:6?

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Where There Is No Vision #2

Proverbs 29:18

Thesis: Exegesis of Proverbs 29:18 and emphasis on reliance upon divine revelation.

Song: "Wonderful Words of Life"

Introduction:

1. It is our purpose through this lesson to exegete or find the message that God intended for mankind to learn from Proverbs 29:18, "Where there is no vision, the people perish…" (KJV).
2. We hasten to mention that the biblical definition of the word "vision" in the context of Proverbs 29:18 has nothing to do with being visionary or reflective toward the future.
   a. The word "vision" in Proverbs 29:18 refers to divine revelation.
   b. Hence, any use of Proverbs 29:18 to encourage people to make plans respecting the future is an unacceptable misuse of Scripture.
   c. Planning for the future is a valid principle, but it is not taught in Proverbs 29:18.
3. The emphasis of Proverbs 29:18 is reliance upon divine revelation for ordering our lives.

Body:

I. First, let's consider the definition of "vision" in Proverbs 29:18.

A. The chief word under our consideration in Proverbs 29:18 is the word "vision."
   1. It means "a dream, revelation, or oracle" (*Biblesoft's*).
   2. The word "vision" appears in this sense in other Old Testament passages regarding revelations received by the prophets, Isaiah 1:1; Nahum 1:1.
   3. When no new revelation from God was forthcoming, it was said that there was "no open vision," 1 Samuel 3:1; cf. Ezekiel 7:26.

B. Disregard for divine revelation leads to ruin on all levels.

1. Nations ruin themselves by ignoring divine revelation, especially regarding moral living, Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 14:34.
2. Adam Clarke writes respecting Proverbs 29:18, "Where divine revelation, and the faithful preaching of the sacred testimonies, are neither reverenced nor attended, the ruin of that land is at no great distance."
3. Even if there is no new or continuing revelation from God, mankind must follow what has already been revealed.
4. "Where there is no setting forth of the will of God, whether by special revelation, as in old times (Ps 74:9; Lam 2:9; Ezek 7:26), or by the ordinary ministrations of God's ministers and God's Word, as now, 'the people perish'" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

II. Second, let's consider how other translations render Proverbs 29:18.

A. "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint…" (ASV, NKJV, NIV, NASV, RSV).

B. The *English Standard Version* (ESV) reads: "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law."

C. Young's Literal Translation reflects the undone state of affairs for those who are not abiding in divine revelation: "Without a Vision is a people made naked, And whoso is keeping the law, O his happiness!"

D. In other words, when mankind disregards divine revelation, he guides himself into spiritual, moral and often physical ruin, Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 7:13-14.

III. Third, what application ought we make of Proverbs 29:18.

A. Considering what the biblical words in Proverbs 29:18 mean, it is not difficult to see God's intended application.
   1. Mankind is only blessed spiritually by abiding in the revealed Word of God, Proverbs 29:18b; Luke 11:28; James 1:25.
   2. Mankind has never been without divine revelation from his debut on planet earth onward.

3. However, often mankind has ignored and continues to disregard divine revelation.
4. Hence, individuals, families, congregations, a brotherhood, humanity in general and nations suffer the effects of moral and spiritual depravity.
5. Look around at America from our neighborhoods throughout the land and see that it is so!

B. The biblical principle of Proverbs 29:18 appears within several other passages of Scripture.
1. Disregard for the divine visions or revelation led God to withhold the Word of God from humanity, Hosea 4:6; Amos 8:11-12.
2. At any time in the history of humanity, the only way one can know God's will is through divinely inspired instruction, Romans 10:13-15.
3. Previously, God spoke to humanity through the Old Testament prophets, but now we are to turn to Jesus Christ and His apostles, 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:3-4.

> Today, God has not left us without a guide, to grope about in darkness; rather divine light has fallen from heaven to men in the form of the Holy Scriptures. God speaks to us in this era through his Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-2). We are to "Hear Him" (Matthew 17:5)! When Christ left earth to ascend back to the Father, God sent another comforter to guide the apostles into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Paul declared that what he received he received by revelation (Ephesians 3:3, 5). The Holy Spirit reveled all the truth to the apostles and inspired men enabling them to speak that "which the Holy Spirit teaches" (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). These inspired Holy Scriptures once delivered, guide us unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3). It is the duty, therefore, of Christians to study the Sacred Writings, to

circulate them throughout the world, and to teach them to their children and to those yet in their sins. (Elliott)

4. Unfortunately, mankind is still reluctant to hearken to the Word of God, Romans 1:18-32; 10:16.

Conclusion:

1. The "vision" of Proverbs 29:18 has nothing to do with the way we prepare today for future successes here on earth, personally or in the church.
2. "Vision" in Proverbs 29:18 pertains to divine revelation and the sincerest regard we need to have for God's Word.
3. When we have the proper esteem or regard for the Word of God, we will live our lives in a godly fashion.
4. The "perish" in Proverbs 29:18 contrasts with "happy" in the same verse for those who properly regard the Word of God.

Invitation:

1. Consequently, we will become Christians and keep ourselves faithful, Acts 11:26.
2. The apostle Peter was privileged to preach the first recorded Gospel sermon where he told how to become a Christian, Acts 2:38.
3. The apostle Peter also was privileged to explain how Christians can have their sins removed when they sin after becoming Christians, Acts 8:22.

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Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

2 Timothy 2:15

Thesis: To properly discern partitions in the Bible whereby it can be correctly understood.

Introduction:

1. Before I became a Christian, the Bible was an unintelligible jumble of words that I did not even know how to approach sensibly.
   a. I was barely aware that the Bible was comprised of two divisions or testaments, and I did not know which to begin reading or why.
   b. Arriving at genealogies of unfamiliar names in Genesis 5 and Matthew 1, I simply gave up in frustration.
2. In addition to that, I had always been told that the Bible was a dead letter anyway.
3. It also appeared upon casual inspection that the Bible was self-contradictory.
4. It was little wonder, then, that it seemed that anyone could prove or disprove anything from the Bible.
5. After study, however, all of this disillusionment turned out to be self-inflicted because I did 'not rightly divide the word of truth,' 2 Timothy 2:15 KJV.
   a. The Bible is mysterious and dark as long as one does 'not rightly divide the word of truth.'
   b. The trouble, though, lies not with God or His message to mankind but with anyone who through ignorance or stubbornness does 'not handle aright the word of truth,' 2 Timothy 2:15 ASV.

Body:

I. First, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by noting the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

A. No other single observation contributes more importantly to rightly dividing the Word of Truth than noting the respective

roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

1. It is not possible to practice correctly both the Old Testament and the New Testament at the same time.
2. When people try to practice both testaments at the same time, they find the Bible contradictory.
3. Therefore, mankind often selects items from both testaments of the Bible to meld into a religion with which he is pleased—ignoring unselected things in both testaments.
4. Mankind has no valid concept of authority in religion or how God has communicated His will to humanity when anyone fails to recognize the respective roles of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

B. The Old Testament covers two periods of time—Patriarchy and Judaism.
   1. Patriarchy began in the Garden of Eden and was replaced for the Jews at the inauguration of Judaism at Mt. Sinai, Genesus-Exodus
   2. For Gentiles (non-Jews), Patriarchy may have continued to either the cross of Christ or until the Gospel was preached to Gentiles, Acts 10-11.

C. The New Testament covers one period of time from the cross of Christ through the present and until the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
   1. The New Testament replaced the Old Testament—Patriarchy and Judaism, Matthew 5:17-18; Romans 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 9:15.
   2. Anyone who looks to the Old Testament for religious instruction instead of looking to the New Testament is seriously misguided and spiritually jeopardized, Galatians 5:4.
   3. The purpose of the Law (Old Testament) was to prepare humanity for the coming of Jesus Christ, who brought the Truth (Gospel), Galatians 3:23-25; John 1:17.

D. Hence, rightly dividing the Word of Truth involves turning to the New Testament exclusively for religious instruction.

1. That means one today cannot turn to the Old Testament (Patriarchy or Judaism) for religious instruction.
2. However, the Old Testament is the foundation of the New Testament and contains numerous principles still useful today, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; 10:1-11.
3. Further, people today are not authorized to turn to man-made creeds or doctrines for religious instruction.

II. Second, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting salvation in the New Testament to all other plans of salvation.

A. One today must turn to the New Testament exclusively for information about salvation.
   1. No one today should suppose that building an ark like Noah built will save anyone, 1 Peter 3:20.
   2. Animal sacrifices characteristic of Patriarchy and Judaism cannot save anyone today, Exodus 29:36 (atonement).
   3. Manmade religion cannot save anyone either, but instead, people must obey New Testament doctrine (Gospel), Matthew 15:9; Romans 6:17.

B. Strictly speaking, there was no absolute salvation available under the Old Testament—Patriarchy or Judaism.
   1. Sins under the Old Testament were never absolutely forgiven but only overlooked annually, Hebrews 10:1-4.
   2. Had there been forgiveness of sin available under either Patriarchy or Judaism (the Old Testament), Jesus Christ would not have had to come to earth from Heaven and die sacrificially on the cross, Ephesians 2:16; Phil. 2:5-8; Colossians 1:20; John 3:17.
   3. Since sins could not be forgiven under the Old Testament, and only the sacrifice of Jesus made it possible for sins to be remitted, no plan of man can take the place of the divine plan for human redemption.

III. Third, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting New Testament worship with all other ways of worshipping God.

A. Through rightly dividing the Word of Truth, one today can know how not to worship God.
   1. Old Testament worship is not authorized for worship of God today, e.g. candles, incense, animal sacrifices, instrumental music, etc.
   2. Manmade worship is not authorized for worship of God today, e.g. deviation from New Testament worship by excluding or adding items to worship, Colossians 2:23.

B. Today, one can know how to worship God by appealing exclusively to the New Testament.
   1. Four of the five acts of New Testament worship appear in Acts 2:42, i.e. teaching or preaching, contribution, Lord's Supper and prayer, Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
   2. Singing hymns, psalms and spiritual songs is a fifth act of New Testament worship, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 14:15, 26.
   3. The New Testament authorizes nothing besides these five acts of worship for today.

IV. Fourth, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting Christian living with all other ways to live one's life.

A. The Old Testament is not a suitable source of instruction for Christian living.
   1. For instance, polygamy that God overlooked in the Old Testament is not permissible under Christianity, Genesis 4:19; 26:34; Exodus 21:10; 1 Samuel 1:2; 2 Chronicles 24:3; Matthew 19:3-6; 1 Timothy 3:2, 12; Titus 1:6.
   2. The Old Testament is not a suitable source for instruction how to deal with idolaters, Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

B. One today must turn exclusively to the New Testament for instruction in Christian living.
   1. The New Testament teaches to refuse some things in

one's life and to seek virtues, Titus 2:12; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; 2 Peter 1:5-9; Philippians 4:8.

2. In the New Testament, lists of sins to avoid also teach how to properly live the Christian life, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.
3. The best ideas of feeble humans are not worthy to substitute for what the New Testament teaches respecting Christian living, Jude 4.

V. Fifth, one must rightly divide the Word of Truth by contrasting Christian service with all other ways in which someone may attempt to serve God.

A. Service acceptable under the Old Testament does not guarantee acceptability under the New Testament.
   1. Noah was commissioned to build an ark, but no one today by turning to the Old Testament has that same commission.
   2. Moses was commissioned to build the Tabernacle, and Solomon built the Jewish Temple, but no one today by turning to the Old Testament has those responsibilities.

B. Christian service is authorized in the New Testament.
   1. The Lord's church has a three-fold mission of evangelism, edification and benevolence, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Corinthians 14:12, 26; Galatians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 9:13.
   2. Nothing less than or more than what the New Testament authorizes qualifies as Christian service, though the means of fulfilling the church mission may vary somewhat in methodology, e.g. various modes of transportation and communication.
   3. Christian service may be performed collectively as congregations and individually as Christians, James 1:27.

Conclusion:

1. Without rightly dividing the Word of Truth, the Bible is unintelligible and appears contradictory.
2. First, one must discern between the respective roles of the Old

Testament and the New Testament.

3. One must discern from the New Testament what is authorized for worship, Christian living and Christian service.

Invitation:

1. Only by rightly dividing the Word of Truth can one know assuredly how to receive the forgiveness of sins.
2. Unbaptized believers must be immersed in water for the remission of sins, Romans 6:3-5; Acts 22:16.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Buy the Truth and Sell It Not

Proverbs 23:23

Thesis: To emphasize the essentiality of embracing biblical truth at all costs.

Introduction:

1. All truth is important, but no truth is more important to one's happiness on earth as well as eternally in Heaven than biblical truth.
2. Biblical truth is divine in origin.
3. No cost or effort is too great to know biblical truth, and no cost is too extreme to retain biblical truth.
4. Hence, by inspiration, Solomon wrote the famous words of Proverbs 23:23.
   a. Divine truth is the goal.
   b. This divine truth depends upon divine wisdom gleaned from divine instruction that leads to proper understanding.

> Prov 23:23 We must not sell it. Do not part with it for pleasures, honours, riches, any things in this world. Do not neglect the study of it, nor throw off the profession of it, nor revolt from under the dominion of it, for the getting or saving of any secular interest whatsoever. (Henry)
>
> "Truth," spoken of in this verse as "wisdom, and instruction, and understanding, " is something to obtain at all costs and something not to part with regardless of what earthly or momentary gains one may get by doing so. (Hunt 308)

5. I am indebted to Winfred Clark for the three main headings of this lesson; other resources that proved helpful in assembling this material are cited accordingly.

Body:

I. Divine truth is available.

A. Divine truth is as available as copies of the Bible are available.

1. Divine truth is "the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation," Ephesians 1:13.

> Not only is the truth attainable but we must secure it and never let it go. Truth is more important in the spiritual realm than in any other because the soul and eternity are under consideration. In view of its eternal value for us and everyone we can influence, we must buy the truth and sell it not no matter what the cost. (Hall 137)

2. Nearly every motel room, every public library and most homes have copies of the Bible available.
3. Dollar stores throughout our nations often offer copies of the Bible for less than it costs to buy a soft drink.
4. Divine truth is available in our country and in many countries throughout the world in our time.

B. Divine truth is the subject matter of teaching and preaching that Christians do.

1. We are to speak "the truth in love," Ephesians 4:15.
2. The Lord's church is described in Scripture as "the pillar and ground of the truth," 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 3:10.
3. The psalmist described truth as a banner that the children of God "display," Psalm 60:4.

> The man who loves the truth, who is willing to buy it and sell it not, stands out foursquare against anything and everything that is contrary to the word of God. (Hardeman 42)

C. Truth is essential also to worship and Christian living.

1. Christians "must worship in spirit and in truth," John 4:24.
2. Truth that does not guide one to worship God in His own appointed way either is not divine truth, or if it is divine

truth, it has not been fully embraced as one's own.

3. Truth that does not lead one to live a virtuous life is not divine truth, or if it is divine truth, it has not been fully embraced as one's own.

II. Divine truth is discernible.

A. Divine truth can be understood.

1. Anyone who will handle "aright the word of truth" will understand it, 2 Timothy 2:15 ASV.
2. The apostle Paul affirmed that we can "believe and know the truth," 1 Timothy 4:3.
3. Consequently, Christians are supposed to walk "in truth," 2 John 4.

B. There is no excuse for not believing and obeying the truth.

1. The unrighteous "perish because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" and "that they all might be damned [condemned, NKJV] who believed not the truth," 2 Thessalonians 2:10, 12.
2. Many souls appear to be "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," 2 Timothy 3:7.

> Loving and respecting the truth means that we will obey it. Truth is not a mere abstract concept that one would agree with or reject at leisure, but one is to love the truth to the point that he accepts it. (Laws 30)

C. When we know truth, we can know somewhat of the Godhead.

1. God the Father is the origin of all truth, which is the reason that He must be worshiped in truth, 2 Corinthians 1:18; Romans 3:7; John 4:24.
2. The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth," John 14:17; 15:26; 16:13.
3. Jesus Christ, likewise, is all about truth, which he brought to earth, John 1:17.

III. Divine truth is powerful.

A. Embracing divine truth saves souls.

1. Divine truth makes us free from sins, John 8:32.
2. Christians are those who God "brought forth by the word of truth," James 1:18.
3. Christians "have purified" their "souls in obeying the truth" or "Word of God," which is "the Gospel," 1 Peter 1:22-23, 25.
4. Truly embracing divine truth is life changing.

   > Buying the truth means to acquire the revealed truth of God's will in such a personal way that it has life transforming consequences (Romans 12:1-2). …Doing truth must naturally follow knowing truth to be acceptable to the Godhead. …There is no substitute for truth!…It costs us our lives when we buy into following Him Who is the truth (Luke 14:16-33). The cost is great, but the reward is eternal and multiplied beyond measure (1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). (Clarke)

B. Failure to embrace divine truth or turning from it results in lost souls.
   1. The majority of men "resist the truth," 2 Timothy 3:8.
   2. Unfortunately, some Christians "turn from the truth," Titus 1:14.

C. However, acquisition of divine truth costs something.
   1. The vary idea of buying relative to truth in Proverbs 23:23 indicates there is cost involved in acquiring divine truth.
   2. The cost of acquiring divine truth is great.

      Obedience to the truth may cost us some friendships (James 4:4). Obedience to the truth may cost us our relationship with some family members (Matthew 10:33-38). Obedience to the truth may cost us our lives (2 Timothy 4:6). In fact, the minimum payment allowed is the dedication of our entire lives as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). Because of

the great cost involved, some people will not buy the truth. Others may buy the truth but later decide they cannot afford to make the payments so they will quickly sell. Solomon said, "buy the truth and sell it not." The truth is that which can sanctify us and in so doing save us (John 17:17; Romans 1:16). For this reason the truth is a bargain at any price. Study it, know it, love it, live it, teach it, and never sell it! (Rutherford 1)

"Buy the truth and sell it not." (Proverbs 23:23) Do not inquire the price. Buy truth at any price and sell it at no price. Give up house, lands, friends, parents or family, but do not give up the truth. (Brannan 277)

Everyone would do well to learn while young the inestimable value of truth. The truth, and only the truth, can make one free (John 8:32). In counseling his pupil to buy the truth, the wise man was implying cost. It will invariably cost everyone something to have the truth in their lives. It costs time and effort (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15). It may cost one the religion of his fathers (cf. Matthew 15:3-9; Galatians 1:13-16). It may even cost someone his livelihood or hobby (cf. Acts 8:9-13), but, whatever the cost, whatever the sacrifice, truth is worth the price! (Goodwin 259)

3. To the child of God, divine truth is priceless and cannot be surrendered for any reason or for any price.

   "To sell it not means never to lose the disposition of mind that causes you to value it above all else" (Brown)

Conclusion:

1. The words "the truth" appear dozens of times throughout our English translations, often referring to the Word of God or the Gospel.

2. As Christians, we "can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth," 2 Corinthians 13:8.
3. The apostle John said that Christians need to "be fellowhelpers of the truth," 3 John 8.

> Six reasons…for believing the whole truth of God is attainable: first, we are told to "buy the truth and sell it not"; second, we are able to know the truth and this truth will make us free; third, through obedience to the truth our souls are purified; fourth, acceptable worship is possible only by abiding in the truth; fifth, God, through his word, censures us when we do not walk according to the truth; and finally, the Lord's truth will continue with us forever. (Hall 138-139 emphasis added)

Invitation:

1. Remember, "…truth is not what we make it, but what God stated" (Higginbotham 4).
2. The divine truth about salvation appears exclusively in the New Testament, Mark 16:16.
3. The divine truth about how Christians remove their sins also appears in the New Testament, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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The Word that God Putteth in My Mouth

Numbers 22:38

Thesis: To emphasize the immutability of the Word of God irrespective of human preferences.

Introduction:

1. God's Word is indelible or permanent.
2. God's Word is not subject to the whims of humanity.
3. Faithful proponents of God's Word have no choice but to present God's Word to the world as God gave it.

Body:

I. The Word of God is dependable.

- A. God's Word is dependable because of "the immutability of his counsel" and because it is "impossible for God to lie," Hebrews 6:17-18.
- B. God's Word is dependable because the nature of God is changeless, Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:12; 13:8; James 1:17.
- C. God's Word is dependable because it endures forever, Psalm 119:89; Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:23, 25.

II. The Word of God is not subject to modification by humans.

- A. Humans attempt to change the Word of God, Matthew 15:9; Romans 10:1-3; Isaiah 29:13.
- B. Actually, mankind cannot prevail in it attempts to change the Word of God because Final Judgment will be according to the Word of God, Matthew 7:21-23; Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Revelation 20:12.
- C. Other gospels do not have the capacity to save men from their sins, Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:4.

III. Preachers and teachers of the Word of God must proclaim it faithfully irrespective of whether it is popular with them or with those to whom they speak.

- A. Balaam wanted desperately to preach against Israel because he was promised a handsome reward for doing that, but he

could only preach the Word of God, Numbers 22:38.

B. Likewise, preachers and teachers today are obligated to preach the Word of God only, 1 Peter 4:11.
C. God's preachers must preach the Word of God whether people like it or not, 2 Timothy 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
D. God's preachers also must preach "all the counsel of God," Acts 20:27.

Conclusion:

1. Believing a lie doesn't make it so, 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12.
2. Pretending that the Word of God on some subjects does not exist is pointless.
3. Becoming angry with anyone who preaches or teaches God's Word truthfully is really anger expressed toward God; how profitable is that?

Invitation:

1. The Word that God put in my mouth, for instance, respecting salvation from sin is the only thing that I can announce to humanity.
2. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16:16.
3. The Word of God further reads that Christians who sin must repent of those sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

God: Creator and Revelator

2 Timothy 3:16-17

Thesis: In recognition of God being the Creator of the universe and mankind within it, to acknowledge, likewise, human responsibility to recognize God as the Revelator to whom we are accountable.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. Songs reverentially sung, such as "How Great Thou Art," still sound somewhat hollow when their singers do not heed the divine instructions of the Creator, who is also our Revelator.
2. That is, the Almighty, Awesome God Who created this universe and mankind also gave mankind divine instruction that He expects us to heed.

Body:

I. The Bible portrays Almighty God as the Creator of the universe, the earth and mankind.

A. The very first verse of the Bible introduces the Great God of the universe as the Creator, Genesis 1:1.
   1. Atheists may choose to be ignorant respecting origins, but God through the Bible provided this piece of information first.
   2. The created universe itself immediately declares the Creator to anyone who will pause and reflect on the magnificent creation, Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:19-20.

B. The message is the same throughout the Bible; God is the Creator.
   1. God made the universe with its stars, planets and populated earth, Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 8:3; 33:6; 102:25; Proverbs 3:19; Hebrews 3:4; 11:3.
   2. God, the Father, made the worlds, etc. through Jesus Christ, John 1:1-3, 10; Colossains 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:2-3.

II. The Bible, likewise, portrays Almighty God as the Revelator of His divine instruction for which He holds humanity accountable.

A. Mankind has never been left without divine instruction from Almighty God.

1. At first, God spoke directly to mankind, beginning with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:15-16; 3:8; 12:1-3.
2. Much later, God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, engraved in stone by the finger of God, Exodus 31:18.
3. God inspired Moses to write the first five books of the Old Testament, Exodus 34:27; Nehemiah 8:1.
4. Other inspired men were directed by God to write the balance of the Old Testament, e.g. "Now the word of the Lord came…saying,"1 Kings 16:1; "Thus the Lord said to me…" Jeremiah 13:1; "The word of the Lord came expressly unto…" Ezekiel 1:3.
5. Inspired New Testament writers attributed the Old Testament to God-inspired prophets, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

B. The instruction from God for mankind today is the New Testament (Gospel of Jesus Christ).

1. The New Testament is God's final revelation to mankind, Jude 3; Galatians 1:6-9.
2. 2. The New Testament has replaced the Old Testament, Romans 7:6-7; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14.
3. Old Testament prophecy predicted the replacement of itself with the New Covenant or Testament, Hebrews 8:8-9, 13.
4. Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Testament, Hebrews 9:15; 12:24.

Conclusion:

1. The acknowledgement and reverence that believers have for God

as Creator is well placed and amply demonstrated in the Bible.

2. Believers ought to exhibit the same degree of acknowledgement and reverence for God as our Revelator, also amply demonstrated in the Bible.

Invitation:

1. Through proper response to the inspired Word of God, we can be our Creator's new creation in Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15.
2. Unbaptized believers need to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins to be added to the church by the Lord, Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
3. Erring children of God need to repent and pray for the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Source of True Unity

Psalm 133:1

Thesis: To expose pseudo-unity for its misguided thrust and identify the source of true unity.

Introduction:

1. An ecumenical exercise among several denominations in a community resulted in the formation of a youth center.
   a. Purportedly, the youth center was organized to give youngsters something to do and a place to go after school, which might keep them from mischief.
   b. Many months later, the youth center announced that its "purpose…is to win our town for Christ."
   c. It called for unity of religious people to close the town's "numerous bars and gambling facilities."
   d. This ecumenical stepchild of local denominations, which began to walk and to talk, announced a fundraiser for itself.
   e. Providing alternative activities for young people to steer them from trouble is a worthy goal, and so are the goals of closing local bars and gambling establishments.
   f. However, is this ecumenical unity and the trappings associated with it the religious unity indicated in the New Testament? (No it is not!)
2. Years ago, I noticed in the masthead of stationery for a ministerial alliance the telling sentence, "We have agreed to disagree."
   a. A ministerial alliance is an ecumenical meeting of denominational representatives who cannot quite bring themselves to disregard their respective denominations.
   b. Is this the type of unity about which the New Testament teaches? (No it is not!)
3. There is only one source of true religious unity!
   a. It is not the banding together of diverse religious people to address common, howbeit, maybe worthy, goals.

b. It is not the ridiculous mental gymnastics of agreeing to disagree!
c. What, then, is the source of true religious unity?

Body:

I. The Bible alone, and especially the New Testament for our age, is the true source of religious unity.

A. Period!
1. End of story!
2. Nothing with the Bible, and nothing less than the Bible.

B. The apostle Paul by inspiration wrote about "the unity of the [Christian] faith," Ephesians 4:13-14.
1. While the New Testament was still being written, God provided miracle-assisted church leaders, Ephesians 4:11-12.
2. After the New Testament was complete, miracles were no longer needed, Mark 16:20; 1 Corinthains 13:8-13; Jude 3.
3. The affect of completed revelation (the New Testament) was "the unity of the faith" without confusion by man-made doctrines and human schemes, Ephesians 4:14.

C. Through true, biblical unity, the Lord's church can stand as a band of religious people for truth and against evil.
1. Nothing short of or different from the Lord's church can adequately represent godly people in opposition to sin.
2. "Brethren" rather than denominational counterparts stand together in unity, Psalm 133:1; Matthew 23:8.
3. The early church demonstrated Christian unity as it stood together as they "were of one heart and of one soul" and "had all things common," Acts 4:32.
4. Paul wrote that the early Christians had "the same mind one toward another," Romans 12:16.
5. Consequently, "with one mind and with one mouth" they glorified God, Romans 15:6.
6. The same apostle admonished the early church to "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions" among

them, 1 Corinthians 1:10.

7. Religious people who are truly united "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel," Philippians. 1:27; 2:2.

II. Ironically, were every religiously inclined person to accept the Bible alone (i.e., today the New Testament), denominationalism would not exist.

A. The only legitimate religious conviction that anyone can have is religious conviction growing out of what the Bible and especially the New Testament teaches.

B. Not only would there be no denominations were religious people to rely on the Bible for the source of religious unity, there would be no other world religions either.

1. There would be no Islam.
2. There would be no Buddhism.
3. There would be no Hinduism, etc.
4. There would be no modern Judaism either.

Conclusion:

1. If every religiously inclined person in this or any community were to accept the Bible alone as the sole source of true religious unity, there would be no denominationalism.
2. More than one of the same church, the church of the New Testament, might exist in a community, but neither denominationalism nor other world religions would exist.
   a. More than one congregation of the church for which Jesus died might exist owing to differences in culture or language, e.g. various synagogues in the same city, Acts 6:9.
   b. "…there were no fewer than 480 synagogues in Jerusalem, and all nationalities had their own, it is possible that the five different classes here named had each their own synagogue…" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).
   c. Or, more than one congregation of the Lord's church might exist in a community owing to differences of opinion on

non-doctrine preferences (i.e., not salvation issues), Acts 15:36-41.

3. Every religious person ought to be able to rally around the Bible—the Word of God (for us today, the New Testament).
   a. This would result in true unity.
   b. This would fill the pews of the Lord's church in any community and depopulate the pews of denominationalism.
   c. True unity based on the Bible alone would provide for a strong, united church to both stand for Christ and resist the inroads of Satan on any community.

Invitation:

1. How much does the Bible, especially the New Testament, mean to you, or does some other creed book or family tradition mean more to you than the Word of God?
2. Only within the Word of God can one find the solution to man's sin problem, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

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Ye Shall Not Turn Aside

Deuteronomy 5:32

Thesis: To emphasize the importance of adhering strictly to the Word of God wherever God has specified anything.

Introduction:

1. Deviation from the expressed or revealed Word of God has never been an option for mankind with which Almighty God has been pleased.
2. Nevertheless, mankind has always deviated from the Word of God, for which Almighty God has demonstrated His grave displeasure.
3. In the past, Almighty God often immediately or directly punished deviation from His revealed will.
4. In the Final Judgment, Almighty God will demonstrate His grave displeasure toward humanity for deviation from His revealed will.
5. However, by then, it will be too late to appease an angry God.
6. We cannot emphasize too greatly the importance of adhering strictly to the Word of God wherever God has specified anything.

Body:

I. Mankind has a long history of deviating from the revealed will of God.

A. God has not left mankind without instruction.

1. God spoke through the fathers of families in the period of Patriarchy: "In common usage the title patriarch is assigned especially to those whose lives are recorded in Scripture previous to the time of Moses" (*New Unger's*), Genesis 3:9-19; 12:1-3.
2. God spoke through Moses and other inspired prophets in the period of Judaism, John 9:29; Luke 1:55, 70; 2 Samuel 23:2
3. God speaks to us today through His Son, Jesus Christ, and

inspired prophets whose words are recorded in the New Testament, John 1:17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 9:15.

B. From the dawn of humanity's presence on earth through the present, violation of God's will or sin has continued to be man's norm.
   1. Adam and Eve began the human saga of sinful rebellion against God, Genesis 3.
   2. Another notable early example of mankind's disregard for God's instructions was the building of the Tower of Babel, Genesis 9:1; 11:1-9.
   3. Because of sins, especially idolatry, God removed Old Testament Israel from Palestine, the ten northern tribes by Assyrian captivity and the southern tribes through Babylonian captivity, Deuteronomy 28:15; Joshua 23:15-16.
   4. As Jesus prophesied, Israel of the first century likewise was overcome and dispersed, Matthew 24.

II. God's Word has always been immutable.

A. Man's preferences do not override God's revealed will.
   1. A notable example under Judaism of God's unwillingness to permit man's preferences to override His instructions pertained to the acquisition of fire for use in Tabernacle worship, Leviticus 10:1-2.
   2. Later, King Saul's "better idea" cost him the kingdom because he did not follow the instructions of God, 1 Samuel 15.
   3. Mankind is misguided when he thinks he can direct his own steps religiously, Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 15:9.

B. Warnings within God's Word have always cautioned humanity from tampering with God's revealed will.
   1. Warnings that mankind must not alter the Word of God appear early and often throughout the Bible, Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Joshua 1:7; Galatians 1:6-9.
   2. These warnings are strategically positioned in our Bibles, Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19.
   3. Literally, it behooves mankind "not turn aside to the right

hand or to the left" from doing everything that God commands us, Deuteronomy 5:32.

III. God's Word will be the standard applied in the Final Judgment.

A. Deviation from God's Word often brought swift judgment in times past.
   1. Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden because of their sin, Genesis 3.
   2. In a night, the Tower of Babel was destroyed and the people's languages were confused, Genesis 11.
   3. God suddenly destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, Genesis 19.
   4. Ananias and Sapphira suddenly died because of their sin, Acts 5:1-10.

B. Deviation from God's Word will bring eternal condemnation against sinners in the Final Judgment.
   1. Mankind is bound to do whatever God through His Word has authorized, and to do it in the way He prescribed if He specified how, Colossians 3:16-17.
   2. Essentially, we, today, will be judged by the words of Christ, John 12:48.
   3. To avoid a harsh eternal judgment, souls must comply with or obey the Word of God, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10-11; 1 Peter 1:23, 25; James 1:18.
   4. Everyone whose name does not appear in the Book of Life will be cast into Hell, Revelation 20:12-15.

Conclusion:

1. We must be careful not to turn aside from the Word of God, for if we turn aside, we will not find the narrow gate, Matthew 7:13-14.
2. We can know without doubt from the New Testament what God wants us to know and do respecting salvation, worship and Christian service.

Invitation:

1. Every soul that knows the difference between right and wrong is

accountable for sin in his or her life, Romans 3:10, 23.

2. Only obeying the Gospel can remove those sins, Romans 6:17; 10:16; Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:17.
3. After being baptized for the remission of sins, a Christian must continue to practice Christianity faithfully, Acts 2:38; 8:22; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

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Ask for the Old Paths

Jeremiah 6:16

Thesis: To demonstrate that God has always desired to save mankind from his sins, but impenitent mankind has always resisted God's grace and mercy.

Song: "Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah," "Lead Me Gently Home, Father"

Introduction:

1. God has always desired to save mankind from his sins, but impenitent mankind has always resisted God's grace and mercy, Ephesians 2:8-9.
2. Since God continues to offer salvation to humanity, the only reason that souls remain lost is because of human refusal to accept salvation on God's terms.

Body:

I. Jeremiah 6:16 is one of those standout verses of Scripture, and especially worthy of our exposition and special attention.

A. "Saith" can be variously translated, including with the words "charge," "command," "demand" and "require."

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah charged, commanded, demanded and required the nation of Judah to abide in His divine instructions.
2. The phrase "thus saith the Lord" appears 414 times in the Old Testament, and numerous other times among the 1,262 times "saith" appears in both testaments of the Bible it refers to communication from God to man.
3. In addition, God obviously addressed mankind with His divine instruction with the use of other words and phrases, e.g. "the word of the LORD came," Genesis 15:1; 2 Samuel 7:4 (phrase appears 92 times in the Old Testament).
4. The apostle Peter summarized how mankind became aware of God's divine instructions, 2 Peter 1:20-21.

B. "The LORD" comes from the Hebrew word "Yehovah (yeh-ho-vaw')," which means "(the) self-Existent or Eternal; Jehovah, Jewish national name of God" (*Biblesoft's*).
   1. There are 5,000 instances in the Old Testament of the KJV where the capitalized "LORD" appears, indicating it means "Jehovah."
   2. "The divine name YHWH appears only in the Bible. … God chose it as His personal name by which He related specifically to His chosen or covenant people" (Vine).

C. "Stand ye" is sometimes translated also as "remain" and "continue."
   1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to "stand," "remain" and "continue" "in the ways."
   2. Today, mankind must "stand" in the Gospel, 1 Corinthians 15:1; Ephesians 6:14.

D. "The ways" means "a road (as trodden); figuratively, a course of life or mode of action" (*Biblesoft's*).
   1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to maintain a specified "course of life or mode of action."
   2. Isaiah called upon the people of God to opt for the highway of holiness, Isaiah 35:8.
   3. Likewise, Jesus Christ called upon humanity to be selective regarding the course chosen, which leads to eternity, Matthew 7:13-14.

E. "And see" is sometimes translated as "approve," "experience," "heed," "regard" and "respect."
   1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to approve, experience, heed, regard and respect "the ways."
   2. Men today must also heed the doctrine of Christ, 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 2:1; 2 Peter 1:19.

F. "And ask" is sometimes translated as "demand," "desire"

and "request."

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to demand, desire and request "the old paths."
2. People today need to "ask" God (through his Word, the Bible) for instruction, rather than appealing to the ideas and whims of men in religion, James 1:5.

G. The word "old" is sometimes translated "eternal," "everlasting" and "perpetual."

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to abide in the eternal, everlasting and perpetual "paths," i.e. that God had directed them through divine instruction.
2. "Ask for the old paths, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and, as you hope to inherit the promises made to them, tread in their steps" (Henry).

H. "Paths" means "to tramp; a (beaten) track" (*Biblesoft's*).

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to abide in the spiritual trail blazed by God Himself through His servants the prophets.
2. This direction in Jeremiah 6:16 to look to the past is not singular to this prophetic book, Deuteronomy 32:7; Job 8:8.

I. The word "good" is sometimes translated as "best," "pleasant" and "welfare."

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to conduct itself in the best way, which is really a pleasant way and which contributes to their physical and spiritual welfare.
2. Vine says of the Hebrew word for "good" here that it "often qualifies a common object or activity" and when "contrasted with evil has moral overtones."

J. "And walk" means "to carry (in various senses)" and is

sometimes translated as "go" (*Biblesoft's*).

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to go only in the spiritual path that He specified through divine instruction, cf. Jeremiah 7:23.
2. Likewise, Isaiah called upon the people of God to "walk" in God's specified "way," Isaiah 30:21.

K. "Therein" is sometimes translated as "within."
1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to conduct itself solely within the boundaries of divine instruction.
2. Using the illustration of a road, we might say to "keep it between the ditches."

L. The words "ye shall find" mean "to attain…or acquire" and can be translated "get" (*Biblesoft's*).
1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the nation of Judah to attain, acquire or get "rest for your souls," only attainable through the path God designated.
2. The Hebrew word for "find" here "refers to 'finding' someone or something that is lost or misplaced, or 'finding' where it is" (Vine).
3. The people of Judah of Jeremiah's day had misplaced the Word of God from their hearts and lives.

M. The word "rest" means "a resting place" (*Biblesoft's*).
1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the citizens of Judah to make acquisition of "a resting place" for their souls their primary, all-important pursuit in life, cf. Ecclesiastes 12:13.
2. Jesus Christ, likewise, offers rest for our souls, Matthew 11:28-29.
3. There remains a primary resting place toward which all faithful children of God of all ages march, Hebrews 4:9-11.

N. The words "for your souls" in this context refer to the spirit side of humanity.
1. God through the prophet Jeremiah called upon the people

of Judah to think about the spiritual welfare of their souls before indulging in either the permissible but secondary matters of life or perhaps devoting themselves to sinful pleasures, cf. Matthew 6:33; Hebrews 11:25.

2. One's soul is his prized possession in this life and for eternity, Matthew 16:26.

O. The words "but they said" come from the same Hebrew word earlier used respecting God, "saith."

1. The people of Jeremiah's day countered what God had said, charged, commanded, demanded and required.
2. The people of Jeremiah's day articulated with the same force as God's divine instructions what they perceived to be a better idea, cf. Jeremiah 18:12.

P. The nation of Judah in Jeremiah's day mimicked God in its refusal to obey Him.

1. The phrase "we will not walk therein" resorts to the same words Jehovah used in His divine instruction, only Jeremiah's generation employed those words back at God in obstinate refusal to obey God.
2. "Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright willfulness" (Henry).
3. Judah was persistent in its willful and sinful rejection of God, Jeremiah 44:16.

II. Summarized, what were the original recipients of Jeremiah 6:16 expected to understand.

A. First, God had not left mankind and especially in the time of Jeremiah, the nation of Judah, without divine instruction.

1. "The Lord has not left any lack of instruction and warning. He has marked out for them the way of salvation in the history of the ancient times" (*Keil & Delitzsch*).
2. Even a casual reading of the Bible evidences communication from God from the Garden of Eden with which the Bible commences to the final visions of the apostle John recorded in the last book of the Bible.

B. Generally, God's dealings with humanity from Creation onward evidence ample instruction from God so as to know assuredly how to please or displease God.
   1. "Thus the paths of the old time are here the ways in which Israel's godly ancestors have trod; meaning substantially, the patriarchs' manner of thinking and acting" (*Keil & Delitzsch*).
   2. The "old paths" were "[t]he ways of the patriarchs and of the fathers who experienced redemption from Egypt" (Wycliffe).
   3. "Look inquiringly backwards to ancient history (Deut 32:7), and see how success and enduring prosperity forsook your fathers when they left the way prescribed to them by God, to walk in the ways of the heathen (18:15); learn that there is but one way, the way of the fear of Jahveh, on which blessing and salvation are to be found (32:39-40)" (Graf qtd. in *Keil & Delitzsch*).

C. Every soul who has reached an age of accountability for his actions must personally choose a path in life, either one designated by God or one of his own lustful choice, 1 John 2:15-17.
   1. "Let us observe the metaphor. A traveler is going to a particular city; he comes to a place where the road divides into several paths, he is afraid of going astray; he stops short, endeavours to find out the right path: he cannot fix his choice. At last he sees another traveler; he inquires of him, gets proper directions, proceeds on his journey, arrives at the desired place and reposes after his fatigue" (Clarke).
   2. "Image from travelers who have lost their road, stopping and inquiring which is the right way on which they once had been, but from which they have wandered" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).
   3. Again, Jesus portrayed life's choices as the selection ei-

ther of the pathway of destruction or the pathway to eternal life, Matthew 7:13-14.

D. Personal sin multiplied together with the sins of many constitute national sin.
   1. Barnes pictured Judah facing "a great national calamity," physical owing to the widespread spiritual calamity of sin.
   2. "Idolatry and apostasy are the modern way; the worship of God the old way" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*).

III. What can we glean from Jeremiah 6:16 for application to our generation and to ourselves personally?

A. The "old paths" to which mankind today must direct his attention must be distinguished simply from human ways of doing things, even if they are old also.
   1. God's "old paths" are older than any of man's "paths" and divine in origin rather than of human origin.
   2. The "old paths" of sin must be noted and avoided, Job 22:15.
   3. "Old paths" are not suitable if they do not originate with God, i.e. hand-me-down religion from one's forefathers is not to be preferred over God-authored religion.

B. The precept of walking in the pathway of God is prominent also in the New Testament.
   1. We must "walk in the newness of life," Romans 6:4.
   2. We must "walk honestly," Romans 13:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:12.
   3. We must "walk by faith," 2 Corinthians 5:7.
   4. We must "walk worthy of the [Christian] vocation ["calling"]," Ephesians 4:1.
   5. We must "walk in love," Ephesians 5:2.
   6. We must "walk as children of light," Ephesians 5:8.
   7. We must "walk worthy of the Lord," Colossians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12.
   8. We must walk in Christ, Colossians 2:6.
   9. We must walk in wisdom," Colossians 4:5.

10. We must walk after the commandments of Jesus, 2 John 6.
11. We must walk in truth, 3 John 4.

Conclusion:

1. God through the prophet Jeremiah lamented that His people, Judah, had turned from Him to walk in other paths, Jeremiah 18:15.
2. Rather, God's people in every age ought to follow the praiseworthy examples of those who walk in God's paths, Hebrews 6:12; 1 Corinthians 11:1.
3. Especially in the church of our Lord, we are to "walk in the light of the LORD," Isaiah 2:5; 1 John 1:7.

Invitation:

1. The Christian walk begins with conversion, Romans 6:3-4.
2. The Christian walk continues as a walk of faith, 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 10:17; 1 John 1:9.

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The Nature of Truth

John 12:48

Thesis: To emphasize that the Bible alone is the only infallible Truth by which humanity either will be exonerated or condemned ultimately.

Introduction:

1. In a conversation with Jesus, Pilate scoffed at the idea of absolute truth, John 18:37-38.
   a. However, truth is absolute!
   b. Truth is not relative or subjective!
   c. Truth does not change with changing times or with the rise of a new generation.
2. Contemporary religions and people in general often depend on the notion that there is no absolute truth and that everything is subjective.
   a. Religious people suppose that one church is just as good as another and that one doctrine is just as good as another.
   b. Worldly people live by the motto, "If it feels good, do it!"
   c. Sometimes, even God's people act like truth is not absolute, Judges 17:6; 21:25.
3. The Bible defines itself as absolute truth.
   a. God's Truth outlives generations of men, Psalm 100:5.
   b. The Word of God—Truth—is immortal, Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23, 25.

Body:

I. The New Testament portrays eternal Truth as possessing the power of salvation.

A. The Great Commission is the vehicle by which God's Truth can save a lost world, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47.

B. God's Truth alone when applied to lost a soul can make one free from sin, John 8:31-32.

C. The apostles were equipped with God's Truth whereby souls could be saved, John 16:13; Acts 1:8.

D. God's Truth is complete and the final word on whatever it addresses, i.e. salvation, worship, Christian living, Christian service, etc., 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3.

II. It was necessary for people in the first century to obey divine Truth to be saved by it.

A. One obeys Jesus Christ when he obeys the Truth or Word of God, Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 6:46.

B. Obedience is inclusive in the following instructions relative to salvation; one must:

1. Hearken to God's Word alone, Romans 10:17.
2. Develop a Bible faith, Hebrews 11:6.
3. Repent or turn from one's sins, Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3.
4. Publicly acknowledge one's confidence that Jesus is the Christ or the Messiah, Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10.
5. Submit to immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:41; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
6. Remain faithful, Revelation 2:10.

C. In order for Truth to save anyone in the first century, people had to do something!

1. About 3,000 on the birthday of the church gladly received the Word of Truth and were baptized before they were added to the church by the Lord, Acts 2:37-41, 47.
2. The message of the second recorded Gospel sermon was the same as the message of the first recorded Gospel sermon—repent and be converted, Acts 3:19.
3. A great company of Jewish priests was "obedient to the faith" once they realized that Judaism was no longer authorized by God, Acts 6:7.
4. The Samaritans believed the Word of Truth preached to them and "were baptized, both men and women," Acts 8:5-13.
5. The Ethiopian treasurer was baptized after he was taught

the Gospel Truth, Acts 8:26-39.

6. Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul) washed away his sins in baptism, Acts 22:16.
7. Crispus, chief ruler of a synagogue, believed the Truth about Jesus and was baptized, Acts 18:8.
8. Citizens of Rome became obedient to the faith and became citizens of the church of Christ, Romans 1:5; 16:16, 26.
9. Gentiles "obeyed from the heart" the doctrine or Truth of God, Romans 6:17.
10. First century people were required to practice or to do the Word of God or the Truth, James 1:22-25.
11. First century people were exhorted to keep the Word of God and not to make any changes to it, Revelation 1:3; 22:18-19.

D. Truth does not save by faith only, James 2:24.

III. There was a worldwide departure from eternal, saving Truth.

A. The apostle Paul repeatedly warned of a great departure from Truth, Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Galatians 1:6-9.

B. Secular history chronicles the gradual departure from primitive Christianity.

C. Today, thousands of so-called Christian churches evidence a great departure from the Truth by doctrines that are contradictory with each other and contradictory to the simple Truth on the pages of the New Testament.

IV. Each generation that has access to the Bible has the power to be saved by Truth.

A. The Parable of the Sower illustrates the possibility of the Truth springing forth in any heart in any generation.

1. When the seed, which is the Word of God or the Gospel Truth, is planted in good soil, hearts of men, Christians and the Lord's church will be the sole result, Luke 8:11.
2. God preserved the Word of God—the Bible—for us,

whereby we can plant the "seed" and grow Christians and congregations of the Lord's church.

B. Therefore, we can:
   1. Preach the same Gospel Truth preached in the first century.
   2. Believe the same Gospel Truth believed in the first century.
   3. Obey the same Gospel Truth.
   4. Forasmuch as we live in the same religious time period—the Christian Age—and God is no respecter of persons, we can do what first century people did and be saved by Bible Truth, Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34.

V. We ought to pursue divine Truth today.

A. We have access to the Truth whereby we can glorify God, prepare to go to Heaven and save lost souls.

B. If we refuse or neglect to pursue divine Truth today, we might as well say with others that "God is dead," "Jesus Christ is not risen," "The Bible is a dead letter" and have no hope in this life or in eternity.

Conclusion:

1. There is a body of saving Truth—the Bible.
2. Mankind has departed from that Truth.
3. Obedience to the Truth (or disobedience to the Truth) determines where one will spend his eternity.

Invitation:

1. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8:32.
2. Have you been obedient to the Truth, culminating in baptism for the remission of your sins, Acts 2:38; Romans 6:17?
3. If so, are you still obedient to the Truth that is able to save your soul, Hebrews 5:8-9?

The Way of Man Is Not in Himself

Jeremiah 10:23

Thesis: To demonstrate the necessity of man's reliance on God to navigate this life and prepare for eternity.
Song: "The Way of the Cross Leads Home"

Introduction:

1. Man must turn to Almighty God for the appropriate roadmap through this life, Psalm 17:5; Proverbs 3:5-6.
2. Righteous souls happily turn to God for divine direction, Psalm 37:23.
3. There is a direct correlation between keeping the "statutes" or the "Word" of God and having hope in this life and toward eternity, Psalm 119:116-117.
4. Man must turn to his Maker to correctly understand his purpose in this life and in eternity, Proverbs 20:24.

Body:

I. The nation of Judah had severed itself from God by its constant and sustained rebellion.

A. Judah rejected the Word of God through its faithful prophets, but nevertheless claimed a continued association with God.
   1. Judah not only rejected God's Word spoken by the prophets of God, but mistreated and killed God's prophets, Jeremiah 20:1-2; 26:8, 20-23; 38:4-6.
   2. The people of God in the nation of Judah at every level or station corrupted themselves before God, Jeremiah 5:31; 23:11; 32:32.
   3. Adultery, lying and approving of the sins of others were commonplace, Jeremiah 23:14.
   4. Idolatry was widely practiced while still paying nominal lip service to Jehovah, Jeremiah 2:23; 9:14; 48:7.

B. Almighty God refused to be a token God to the rebellious nation of Judah.

1. Therefore, God determined to allow a foreign nation to capture Jerusalem and defeat Judah, Jeremiah 20:4-6; 21:2-10.
2. The prophet Jeremiah explicitly proclaimed that Israelites would be captives in Babylon for 70 years, Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10.
3. God spoke through the prophet about the certainty of Jerusalem's destruction as well as the specific reasons for which God determined to have the city destroyed, Jeremiah 32:28-36.
4. The captivity of which Jeremiah prophesied lasted from 606 B.C. to 536 B.C. when the Persians, new rulers of the Fertile Crescent, set captive peoples free.
5. The city of Jerusalem was thoroughly destroyed in 587 B.C.

II. God through the prophet Jeremiah called Judah to turn to God for physical and spiritual salvation.

A. The prophet Jeremiah exclaimed in Jeremiah 10:23 the hopelessness of mankind's attempt to rely solely on himself (excluding God from directing his life).
   1. "Men are always looking for shortcuts, or half-measures, for something easier or more convenient" (Bench 358).
   2. Rather than relying upon himself, to be saved, man must rely on the grace and mercy of God, Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5.
   3. We, like Saul of Tarsus, sin when we rely on our own ingenuity to serve God, Acts 26:9-10.

B. The state of the nation of Judah was that of a country in crisis from within and from without.
   1. "At the rumour of the enemy's approach Jeremiah utters in the name of the nation a supplication appropriate to men overtaken by the divine justice" (Barnes).
   2. "The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine Providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and par-

ticular persons are directed and determined, v. 23" (Henry).

3. Judah was a ruined nation morally.
4. Judah was a ruined nation religiously or spiritually.
5. Judah was a ruined nation politically with leaders who were ineffective toward the nation internally as well as externally respecting other nations.
6. God allowed the Babylonians to overrun Judah and destroy Jerusalem, taking survivors as slaves to Babylon.

III. Let's look at Jeremiah 10:23 more carefully.

A. The words "I know" of Jeremiah 10:23 come from the Hebrew word *yada*, which "[e]ssentially…means: (1) to know by observing and reflecting (thinking), and (2) to know by experiencing" (Vine).
   1. The word "know" here is sometimes translated "acknowledge" and "comprehend."
   2. Jeremiah exclaimed that it was obvious that mankind is ill-equipped to guide himself through life toward eternity, and he acknowledged or noted that he comprehended that fact.

B. The word "way" in Jeremiah 10:23 is used figuratively and means "a course of life" (*Biblesoft's*).
   1. Everyone follows "a course of life," one way or another, planned or haphazardly.
   2. If planned, on whom ought mankind to rely for charting the course of life?

C. In English, the word "man" appears twice in this verse, but from different Hebrew words.
   1. The first occurrence of the word "man" in Jeremiah 10:23 is *adam* and refers to "a human being" (Biblesoft's), i.e. mankind.
   2. The second occurrence of the word "man" is from a word meaning "a male person" (*Biblesoft's*).
   3. The instruction by which mankind ought to direct itself is not subject to determination by human, male leadership (and if not by male leadership, then not by female leader-

ship, 1 Corinthians 14:34).

4. Only divine instruction will do for directing humanity.

D. "Walketh" is used throughout the Bible to represent one's manner of life or conduct.
   1. Though man is responsible for his conduct, what is acceptable conduct is determined solely by God.
   2. Today, we must walk in the light of the New Testament, 1 John 1:7.

E. The words "to direct," of course, have to do with guiding one's conduct.
   1. Only God has the prerogative of directing mankind between right and wrong, Psalm 119:133.
   2. God alone is willing and able to instruct man in his goings, Psalm 32:8.

F. "Steps" means "a pace or regular step" (*Biblesoft's*).
   1. God looks out for the righteous, Psalm 85:13.
   2. For us, Jesus Christ, directs our steps, 1 Peter 2:21.

IV. What can we learn from Jeremiah 10:23 that we can and ought to apply to ourselves today?

A. As long as mankind fails to acknowledge or to comprehend that he is ill-equipped to direct himself through this life toward eternity, his ways will continue to be diverse and perverse.
   1. Man's ungodliness will only continue to increase, 2 Timothy 2:16; 3:13.
   2. No wonder mankind through his own genius imagines that he is a descendant of monkeys, i.e. subscribes to evolution instead of to creation.

> If a man fails to acknowledge his relationship to God, fails to submit to divine direction, he denies the fundamental reason for his existence. One who walks the path of life is not able to give moral and spiritual guidance to his own steps. He will inevitably stray from the straight and narrow (v. 23) . He therefore re-

quires divine discipline and correction. (Smith 268)

> This is one of the most profound statements in the Scriptures and one that needs continually to be heeded by sinful men. As long as men seek to be guided by their own counsels, and by what seems good to them, they are destined to frustration and defeat. (Coffman)

3. Solomon made an astute assessment of self-governance in Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.

B. Every thoughtful and wise person accepts the fact that he must appeal to a common authority above himself.
   1. "He [Jeremiah] recognized, as all thinking men eventually must, that man must be able to appeal to an authority higher than himself. He must have an absolute and objective standard. That standard is Holy Scripture!" (Shelly 33-34).
   2. There is no possibility of unity, for instance, without an across the board appeal to the higher authority of God's Word, Ephesians 4:13.
   3. If Jeremiah 10:23 is so, and it is, one cannot allow his conscience to be his guide, but the Word of God is the perfect guide through this life and toward eternity, Proverbs 28:26.
   4. Morality also must be based on an objective standard of conduct that God himself determines: "When man determines for himself (based on Satan's work) what morality is, he soon looses (sic) moral consciousness" (Box 796).

C. Calling disregard for God's Word by new names does not change the nature of rebellion against God or its consequences.
   1. "There are many problems facing the church today, but none more serious than values clarification which teaches the child to direct his own steps" (Ward 7).
   2. So-called situation ethics also denies that there is a single standard of right and wrong, and that right and wrong depends on the present circumstance and the subjective evaluation by the individual, 1 Corinthians 1:18.

3. The same attitude anciently resulted in hundreds of years of spiritual conflict with God and national crisis during the Bible period of Judges, Judges 17:6; 21:25.
4. Godless humanism, where man supposes that he is the center of his own universe, directly conflicts both with Holy Scripture and man's innate propensity to worship somebody or something higher than himself.

   Man is incurably religious. He is born with a feeling of helplessness and spends his life seeking a Helper. Jeremiah expressed the need in these words, "I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23). Sociologists at Yale University made a study of some 300 societies, primitive and highly developed, to determine common elements in all cultures. Each culture had some form of worship. When men are ignorant of God's directions for worship, they grope in darkness trying to find some way to placate the wrath of an angry God. Men in ignorance tend to worship what they fear. Instinctively, they feel the need to sacrifice their best. In many heathen cultures, parents have even sacrificed their own children. (Brannan 11)

5. Liberal theology even among members of the Lord's church that holds, for instance, that rather than being authoritative, the New Testament is a collection of love letters from God and is subjective to the point of disregarding divine instruction and man purporting to direct his own steps.
6. Denominationalism where man proposes to choose his own terms for redemption, worshipping Almighty God, Christian living and Christian service is so much like the nation of Judah that Jeremiah decried, outwardly purporting to be God's people but rejecting God in favor of their own devices, Romans 10:1-3.

> This principle [Jer. 10:23] is as true today as it was then. To contemplate that man can name his own terms of admission into the glories of heaven is incongruous (sic), yet, as we consider the religious of our days, myriads of doctrines are propagated under the umbrella of "Christendom." But Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). (Whitten 18)

> Many people have turned to their own standards, standards that will deceive and cause men to be lost. Some men rely on their own feelings as a standard. The "joy they feel in their hearts" is thought to be evidence of God's accepting them, but those persons who rely on their feelings will be sadly disappointed when they face the judgment. (Halliburton 1171)

Conclusion:

1. Had the nation of Judah truly loved God, its people would have kept God's commandments, John 14:15 ASV.
2. Especially God's people must be careful not only to avoid supposing that they are a sufficient guide to themselves for this life and toward eternity, the children of God must avoid close relationships with worldly people who are guides to themselves without consideration of God, Psalm 1:1.
3. It is not possible for mankind to direct his own steps in a way that is pleasing to God when not even our thoughts are harmonious with the thoughts of God, Isaiah 55:8-9.
4. Knowledge of the way that leads to eternal life is only discernible within God's Word, the Bible, Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22; John 14:6.
5. It is reasonable for mankind to seek reliable information as to how to arrive in heaven someday.

> Being aware of this [Jer. 10:23], he would not be ashamed to ask for help. (A man starting on a trip to

> an unknown destination does not feel ashamed to ask for aids to help him on his way.) He doesn't want to wander and waste time and energy. Surely one would not think he could make it from earth to heaven on his own. (Clark 93)

6. It is reasonable to want more than a subjective, uncertain encounter with God in this life that offers nothing but uncertainty regarding interaction with God in the next life.

Invitation:

1. The only way that a man or a woman can conduct himself or herself in such a way as to please God is to fill his or her heart with the Word of God (for us the New Testament), Psalm 119:11.
2. The New Testament or the Gospel instructs the penitent to be baptized for the remission of sins (without quibbling), Acts 2:38.
3. The Gospel also instructs the erring child of God to repent and pray for the forgiveness of sins, Acts 8:22.

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That I Might Not Sin Against Thee

Psalm 119:11

Thesis: To emphasize the importance of instilling the Word of God in the heart to avoid sin in our lives.

Introduction:

1. A computer is nothing more than a big doorstop or a boat anchor, unless it is programmed with an OS (i.e., operating system).
   a. Productive work or an error-ridden mess, computers are reliable to produce according to the input, beginning with the operating system.
   b. If the operating system is error-ridden, the output will be faulty.
   c. If the operating system and data input are reliable, the resulting computer work will be reliable, too.
2. Frankly, humans are not much different from computers respecting input and output.
   a. One's words and conduct will be praiseworthy if God's Word is thoroughly instilled in him.
   b. Contrariwise, if God's Word is not instilled in a person, one can expect his words and conduct to be faulty.
3. Just what have we instilled in our hearts, the hearts of our children and others around us?
   a. I remember a three-year-old niece of my late wife Bonnie who could cuss on par with the proverbial sailor, indicating the wrong sort of input as well as the absence of instilling the Word of God in that young mind.
   b. Maybe not so obvious, what have we instilled in our hearts, the hearts of our children and those over whom we have some influence?
   c. What we have in our hearts and minds will determine where we spend eternity!

Body:

I. The first step in refraining from sin, which will keep us out of Heaven, is to instill the Word of God in our hearts, Deuteronomy 6:6; Psalm 119:11.

A. The context of Deuteronomy 6:6 emphasizes that one's primary affection must be for serving Almighty God, Deuteronomy 6:5; Matthew 22:37-38.

1. There cannot be two or more "primary" affections in one's life, Matthew 6:24.
2. One cannot seek Jesus first and one or more other pursuits occupy a primary place in one's life, Matthew 6:33.
3. There is a sense of urgency with which one serves Jesus Christ when he realizes the true importance of spiritual matters and the relatively unimportance of physical or material matters, John 9:4; Matthew 6:34.
4. Where does the sense of urgency and importance lie in your life and in your family?

B. Further, the way that God's will is instilled within one's mind and heart is through complete saturation in one's life with the Word of God, Deuteronomy 6:7-9.

1. From childhood on, God's Word needs to saturate our lives.
2. Adults, likewise, need their lives saturated with the Word of God.
3. With what are our lives really saturated, today; is it the Word of God or other, less noble things?

C. It is not possible to fill one's heart with the Word of God and at the same time provide space within one's heart for anything antagonistic to the Word of God, Psalm 119:11.

1. It is not enough for there to be a void within one's heart of evil things, because evil will fill the void unless the void is filled with the Word of God, Matthew 12:43-45.
2. The apostle Paul taught Christians at Colosse to allow the Word of God to dwell in their hearts, Colossians 3:16.
3. We instill God's Word within our hearts by making it our

daily, day-long meditation, Psalm 119:97; 1:2.

4. What have we and our families instilled in our hearts?

II. We must consider the Word of God in our lives as more essential to our well being and survival than food, water or air itself, Job 23:12.

A. Though physical food is necessary to sustain physical life, spiritual food is much more needful for the eternal soul.

1. Job considered spiritual food (the Word of God) more essential than physical food, Job 23:12.
2. Jesus taught that (eternal) life is sustained by the Word of God, Matthew 4:4.
3. Each of us needs to ask himself, "Do I crave more for physical food or spiritual food that will save my soul eternally?"

B. Only the Word of God can guard our well being by guarding the steps we make throughout life.

1. The Word of God is a lamp to guide our steps, Psalm 119:105.
2. Our steps will not slide if they are wholly guided by the Word of God, Psalm 37:31.
3. Do we continually consult the Word of God whereby it can safeguard the steps we make throughout life?

III. We must retain the Word of God within us in order to live eternally with God in Heaven, Proverbs 4:4.

A. Eternal life is in the Word of God and implementing the Word of God in our lives.

1. Many things that clutter our lives may make their way to the yard sale, be discarded or simply heaped somewhere, but the Word of God must be retained, Proverbs 4:4.
2. The Word of God (Truth) is priceless, worth all we have to acquire it (and keep it), Proverbs 23:23; Matthew 13:46.
3. Are you and I truly implementing the Word of God in our lives?

B. God's message to humanity respecting his Word is constant.

1. Under Judaism, only by heeding the Word of God could one expect to live (spiritually), Proverbs 7:2.

2. Precursor to heeding the Word of God is intense familiarity with the Word of God, Proverbs 7:3.
3. Is the Word of God written on my heart and yours?

Conclusion:

1. Sin is the enemy of humanity, which threatens to destroy both present and eternal happiness.
   a. We must, then, earnestly try to refrain from sin.
   b. We must repent of sin when it is found in our lives.
   c. We can best distinguish between sin and righteousness by instilling the Word of God in our hearts, Psalm 119:11; Hebrews 5:14.
2. Each of us needs to answer for himself or herself whether God's Word is instilled in our hearts, 2 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 139:23-24; Lamentations 3:40.
   a. Assuredly, if we are guilty in our own hearts, God also will condemn us, 1 John 3:20-21.
   b. One's evil conduct convicts him as wicked, Titus 3:11.
3. Nothing is more important than the Word of God in our hearts, manifesting itself in our lives.
   a. We must retain the Word of God in our hearts and lives.
   b. The Word of God has always been man's best guide, and it will always be man's best guide, Jeremiah 10:23.

Invitation:

1. Allow the Word of God to guide you to become a Christian, and afterward to be and remain a faithful Christian all your life.
2. The plan of salvation in the New Testament includes hearing God's Word, believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Deity), repenting of sins, publicly affirming that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and being immersed in water in imitation of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37; Romans 6:3-5.
3. The Second Law of Pardon removes the sins of Christians who repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Doctrine of Christ

2 John 9-11

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of complying with divine instruction to garner the favor of God.

Introduction:

1. Heeding the words of Christ cannot be overemphasized, John 12:48.
2. Jesus asked a riveting question for which there can be no satisfactory answer to excuse compliance with the doctrine of Christ, Luke 6:46.
3. After all, on the basis of love alone, human obedience ought to be the natural response to Christ, John 14:15, 21.

Body:

I. The doctrine of Christ in our lives is essential to garnering divine favor in this life.

A. Without adherence to the doctrine of Christ, we cannot have a divine fellowship with God, 2 John 9-11.

B. Without adherence to the doctrine of Christ, whereby we have fellowship with God, we cannot have fellowship with those who have fellowship with God, 1 John 1:3, 6-7.

C. Our worship is vain or useless if we do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, Matthew 15:9.

D. In this life, we must follow the instructions given to the apostles and other inspired first century writers, which instruction is styled "the apostles' doctrine," Acts 2:42.

E. Everything we do in life must be authorized by Jesus Christ, Colossians 3:17.

II. The doctrine of Christ in our lives is essential to garnering divine favor for the life to come beyond our habitation of planet earth.

A. Living outside the doctrine of Christ in this life will make for a horrific and terrifying Second Coming of Christ, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.

B. Lack of compliance with the doctrine of Christ in this life will lead to the saddest of all possible eternities, Matthew 7:21-23.
C. However, obeying the doctrine of Christ (i.e., the Gospel or New Testament) will prompt Jesus to save us, Hebrews 5:8-9.
D. There is only one doctrine, which if we obey, we may have the assurance of divine favor in this life and legitimately anticipate divine favor in the life to come, Romans 6:17.
E. We cannot hope to achieve true happiness on earth and eternally without heeding the doctrine of Christ, 1 Timothy 4:16.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible (especially the New Testament, today) alone is that doctrine that can lead us throughout this life and across the threshold of eternity into Heaven, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
2. Only "sound doctrine" can afford man the real hope of spending forever in Heaven with God, 1 Timothy 1:10; 2 Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; 2:1.
3. It is the responsibility of every Gospel preacher to remind his hears of biblical doctrine, 1 Timothy 4:6.

Invitation:

1. The doctrine of Christ is not complete without reference to the primary charge Jesus gave his apostles immediately preceding his Ascension, Mark 16:15-16.
2. The doctrine of Christ also provides for the removal of sins in the lives of Christians, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7, 9.

How God Calls Men

2 Thessalonians 2:14

Thesis: To explore in the Bible how and for what reason God calls men today.

Song: God Is Calling the Prodigal; Jesus Calls Us

Introduction:

1. Indisputably, God calls humanity, but how does He call humanity?
   a. Does God whisper our names, or maybe in a booming voice call us by name?
   b. Does a shining light in an unexpected place, at an unexpected time or with an unexpected distortion represent a calling by God (that we must subjectively assess)?
   c. For what purpose or purposes does God call humanity?
   d. Further, is God's call irresistible?
2. We need to realize that personal feelings are not the standard of authority to which we ought to appeal in religious matters.
   a. Personal feelings can be wrong, Proverbs 16:25.
   b. Through personal feelings, we would be unable to ascertain to whose call we were responding for induction into what we know not.
   c. Rather than to personal feelings or human subjectivity, mankind needs to appeal exclusively to Bible authority about how and for what reason God calls men today.

Body:

I. It is a fact that God calls humanity.

A. First, God calls humanity out of the darkness of sin into the light of righteousness, 1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 13:43.

B. Secondly, God calls upon those who respond to His call to continue responding to His call, 1 Thessalonians 2:12.

C. Scripture variously describes God's calling of humanity ("His calling," Ephesians 1:8 NKJV).
   1. It is described as "your calling," Ephesians 4:4.

2. It is "the high calling of God in Jesus Christ," Philippians 3:14.
3. It is "an holy calling," 2 Timothy 1:9.
4. It is "the heavenly calling," Hebrews 3:1.

II. For what purpose does God call humanity?

A. The chief reason that God calls humanity is so humans may be saved from sin, 1 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 1:9.
B. This means that God calls humanity to "holiness," 1 Thessalonians 4:7.
C. God calls humanity into "his kingdom," 1 Thessalonians 2:12.
D. God calls humanity into "his eternal glory," 1 Peter 5:10.
E. God calls humanity into "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Corinthians 1:9.
F. God calls humanity "into the grace of Christ," Galatians 1:6.

III. How does God call humanity?

A. Must humanity guess at how God calls people living today?
   1. Does God whisper our names, or maybe in a booming voice call us by name?
   2. Does a shining light in an unexpected place, at an unexpected time or with an unexpected distortion represent a calling by God (that we must subjectively assess)?
   3. Must humanity rely on fallible, human subjectivity to ascertain if, when and into what God calls people living today?
B. God once called some people directly to be prophets or apostles, but He does not call people audibly or directly in any way today.
   1. Abraham, for instance, was called miraculously by God, Hebrews 11:8.
   2. Miracles, though, have concluded because they served the purpose for which the existed, Mark 16:20; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.
   3. Hence, God calls no one today miraculously or directly.
C. Incidentally, God has never called anyone with an irresistible calling.

1. Calvinism, popular across denominational lines of fellowship, teaches of God's irresistible grace.
2. Irresistible grace is a false, biblically unsubstantiated doctrine.
3. By and large, the Jewish nation of the first century resisted the calling of God, Acts 7:51.

D. How, then, does God call mankind today?
1. There is only one way through which God calls anyone today.
2. Only through the Gospel of Jesus Christ does God call anyone, 2 Thessalonians 2:14.
3. Anyone who is called by the Gospel is only called according to the purpose of God, Romans 8:28.

Conclusion:

1. Fact: God calls humanity.
2. Fact: God has a purpose for calling humanity.
3. Fact: God calls humanity today exclusively through the Gospel of Christ.
4. (I am indebted for points in this sermon to a fine article by Roger Campbell.)

Invitation:

1. The Gospel of Jesus Christ by which humanity is called of God is God's power for the salvation of souls, Romans 1:16.
2. Have you responded yet to the Gospel call, Acts 2:38?
3. Do you need to respond to the Gospel call once more, 1 John 1:9?

Works Cited

Campbell, Roger D. "Does the Bible Teach that God Calls Men?" *Seek the Old Paths*. 17 (2006): 86.

A New Covenant for a New Israel

Jeremiah 31:31-34

Thesis: To show that God replaced the Old Testament with the New Testament.

Introduction:

1. In 1816, Alexander Campbell stunned religious leaders in America with his famous "Sermon on the Law."
2. Still today most religious people are unaware of the distinction between the Old and New testaments.
3. Some denominations even make a special appeal to the Old Testament today.

Body:

I. God never intended the Old Testament to be permanent.

A. Jeremiah prophesied that the Old Testament would be replaced by God, Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13; Galatians 3:19.

B. Moses was the lawgiver of the Old Testament, but he prophesied that there would be another lawgiver [Jesus], Deuteronomy 18:15, 18-19; Acts 3:22-26; John 1:17.

II. God abolished the Old Testament.

A. The purpose of the Old Testament was fulfilled, Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; Galatians 3:23-25.

B. God abolished the Old Testament, Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Galatians 3:13.

C. Some denominations attempt to divide the Old Testament into "ceremonial law" and "moral law" to make some of the Old Testament apply today (e.g., Adventists, Ten Commandments), Romans 7:6-7.

III. God replaced the Old Testament with the New Testament.

A. God through Christ gave us the New Testament, John 1:17; Hebrews 8:6-7; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:14-15; 10:1-4; Acts 13:39.

B. God condemns anyone today who practices the Old Testa-

ment, Galatians 2:16; 3:10-11; 5:4; Romans 3:20.

C. Jesus died in vain for those who practice the Old Testament today, Galatians 2:21.

Conclusion:

1. People who practice the Old Testament today are 'blinded,' 2 Corinthians 3:14.
2. People who practice the Old Testament today 'trample the Son of God, profane the blood of Christ and despise the Spirit of Grace,' Hebrews 10:29.
3. Though not binding on us today, the Old Testament is filled with principles, examples and interaction between God and mankind, Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11.
4. The only hope for all people living today is in the faithful practice of the New Testament, Hebrews 7:19; Romans 11:27.

Invitation:

1. In order to receive the blessing of redemption, one must comply with God's redemptive plan found in the New Testament.
2. Non-Christians must hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, be immersed and remain faithful Romans 10:17; John 8:24; Acts 17:30; Romans 10:9-10; Colossians 2:12; Revelation 2:10.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, confessing their faults one to another, afterward remaining faithful, Acts 8:22; James 5:16.

The Covenants

2 Corinthians 3:14

Thesis: To demonstrate with biblical evidence that the Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament.

Introduction:

1. A chief contributor to doctrinal error and general religious confusion is widespread misunderstanding concerning the purpose and duration of the Old Testament, 2 Corinthians 3:14.
2. Contemporary religions professing Christianity are usually an admixture of the Old and New testament pieces, some paganism and doctrines wholly of men's design.
3. Learning about and accepting the fact that the Old Testament in its entirety has been abolished and replaced with the New Testament would go a long way to correcting these ills.

Body:

I. God never purposed the Old Testament to be his final revelation to mankind.

A. The Old Testament was purposed to enable man to distinguish between godliness and sin, until Christ came, Galatians 3:19.

B. The Old Testament also prepared man for the coming of Jesus Christ and the Gospel, Galatians 3:23-24.

C. The Old Testament was unable to justify men from their sins, Acts 13:39; Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16.

D. The Old Testament, further, was fulfilled through the coming of Christ and the Gospel, and the establishment of the church, Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:44; Ephesians 3:3-12.

II. Once fulfilled, the Old Testament was wholly replaced with the New Testament.

A. The coming of Jesus Christ and His "last will and Testament" is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, Galatians 3:13-18; Hebrews 9:15-18.

B. Whereas the Old Testament was unable to justify sinners, the New Testament (through the blood of Christ) redeems both Old Testament and New Testament peoples, Matthew 26:28; Romans 11:27; Galatians 3:8, 9; Hebrews 8:6-13; 9:15.
C. Fulfilled, the Old Testament was removed in its entirety, including the Ten Commandments, Romans 7:6-7; 10:4; 2 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 3:15; Colossians 2:14-17. (Nine of the Ten Commandments have been re-instituted in the New Testament.)
D. The New Testament is the universal religious law by which all men are bound today, Mark 16:15-16; Romans 4:16-17; Galatians 3:11; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 7:19.

III. Neither the Old Testament nor the more recent doctrines of men when practiced today are pleasing to God.

A. If the Old Testament were still in force today, men would be required to offer animal sacrifices and observe holydays, Jewish feasts and Sabbath days, Colossians 2:14-17.
B. If the Old Testament is the source of righteousness, Christ's sacrifice was useless, Galatians 2:21.
C. Those attempting to serve the Old Law (Testament) cast off Christ and His blessings, Galatians 3:10; 5:4.
D. The doctrines (teachings) of men have never been acceptable to God, Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 14:12; 30:6; Jeremiah 6:16-19; Matthew 15:9, 13; Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.

Conclusion:

1. Many people today are blinded to the New Testament's teachings because they place their confidence in the Old Testament.
2. The Old Testament was never intended to be God's final revelation to man.
3. The Old Testament did not redeem or justify men from their sins.
4. Once fulfilled, the entire Old Testament was removed, and the New Testament was installed in its place.
5. All souls living today must look exclusively to the New

Testament for redemption.

6. Anyone trying to abide by the Old Testament or the doctrines of men stands condemned before God.

Invitation:

1. Not living in accordance with the New Testament (Gospel) is pictured in Scripture as knocking Christ down, walking on Him and despising His precious sacrificial blood, Hebrews 10:29.
2. Non-Christians must hear, believe, repent, confess Christ, be immersed in water for the remission of sins and continue to live faithfully, Romans 10:9-10, 17; Acts 2:38; Revelation 2:10.
3. Christians must continue to follow Christ and repent upon occasions of sin, 1 John 1:7; Acts 8:22; Romans 12:1-2.
4. All men should regularly examine themselves to see if they abide in Christ, 2 Corinthians 13:5.

The Only Testament of Jesus Christ

Hebrews 8:6-7

Thesis: To counter a popular denominational claim that there is "another testament of Jesus Christ" (and the additional claims of others respecting new revelation today) by emphasizing the finality of the New Testament revelation from God to man.

Introduction:

1. Is there any new revelation from God available to mankind since the completion of the New Testament? Many sincere religious people answer, "Yes!"
   a. Are there modern-day prophets or apostles receiving new revelation from God in our time? Again, many people today believe God is still giving mankind new revelation.
   b. Is there "another testament of Jesus Christ"? One religious group advertises on television that they have "another testament of Jesus Christ."
2. The answers to these questions lie within the pages of the Bible.
   a. Unfortunately, most religious people today know so little of the Bible that they fail to distinguish the respective roles of the Old and New testaments.
   b. Further, many people know so little about the New Testament that they can neither implement it in their lives nor do they know if they should expect continual revelation from God, such as "another testament of Jesus Christ."
3. The Bible is not so difficult to understand or so vague that one cannot discern between genuine revelation from God and pretended revelations from God.
   a. First, it is important to know the respective roles of the Old and New testaments.
   b. Second, it is imperative that one knows whether the New Testament is God's final revelation to mankind.
   c. Fortunately, both the Old and New testaments provide defin-

itive information with which one can know the answers to these questions.

Body:

I. The Old Testament's role was preparatory to the establishment of the New Testament and the coming of the Messiah.

A. God never intended for the Old Testament to be His final revelation to mankind.

1. The Old Testament was incapable of accomplishing the actual forgiveness of sins, Hebrews 10:1-4.
2. The Old Testament prepared humanity for the establishment of the New Testament, Galatians 3:19-25.
3. The Old Testament foretold the coming of the Messiah through Whom one's sins can actually be forgiven, Isaiah 53:10-11.

B. God does intend for the New Testament to be His final revelation to mankind.

1. The New Testament reveals that one's sins actually can be forgiven, owing to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, through the shedding of His blood, Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14.
2. Neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament anticipates a future lawgiver, an additional covenant or any new revelation postdating the New Testament, i.e. Joseph Smith, the Book of the Mormon, latter-day apostles and inspired prophets or even a role beyond the forgiveness of sins available through Jesus Christ, Hebrews 10:9-10, 26.

II. The Bible only knows of two testaments, not three, i.e. "another testament of Jesus Christ."

A. The Old Testament anticipated or foretold of a second testament.

1. First, the Old Testament did not anticipate or foretell of a third testament (or any revelation from God beyond a second testament).
2. However, the Old Testament did predict a second or the

New Testament, Jeremiah 31:31-34.

3. The writer of the Book of Hebrews quoted God in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and applied it to the New Testament, Hebrews 8:5-13.

B. Furthermore, there are only two lawgivers, respectively, of the Old and New testaments.
   1. Moses **gave** the Old Testament and Jesus Christ **brought** the New Testament, John 1:17.
   2. Neither Joseph Smith nor Moroni was a lawgiver of a third testament called the Book of the Mormon.
   3. Still further, there are no contemporary, inspired prophets or apostles through whom God sends new revelation to mankind, Jude 3 ASV, NKJV; 2 Peter 1:3; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Ephesians 4:11-14.

C. The New Testament entertains but two testaments.
   1. Inspired New Testament writers acknowledged the Old Testament and the New Testament only, Hebrews 8:6-7, 13; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9.
   2. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which people living must turn for divine instruction, 2 Corinthians 3:11, 14; Hebrews 7:22; 9:15, 20; Romans 7:6-7; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:6-7.
   3. The New Testament does not anticipate or foretell of a third testament (or any revelation from God beyond itself).

III. The New Testament is God's final revelation to mankind, an "everlasting covenant," Hebrews 13:20.

A. The New Testament is God's present and final revelation of His will to mankind, Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25; Hebrews 9:15, 20.

B. No deviation from the New Testament was allowed in the first century.
   1. Congregations in the sub-Roman province of Galatia had accepted a modified Gospel, for which the apostle Paul rebuked them, Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Corinthians 11:4.

2. The apostle John cautioned Christians to compare teaching and preaching to the Gospel to discern false teachers, 1 John 4:1; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Peter 2:1-3.
3. Paul lamented that his fellow Jews had rejected the Gospel God gave in favor of adopting their own standard of righteousness, Romans 10:1-3.

C. Additions, subtractions and modifications to the New Testament are strictly forbidden.
1. God has always refused mankind the prerogative or permission to alter his divine Word, Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6.
2. Likewise, God forbids alteration of the New Testament, Revelation 22:18-19.

D. The New Testament represents itself as God's final revelation to mankind.
1. The final book of the New Testament demonstrates the victory of God, especially Jesus Christ, and the victory of those who faithfully follow the way of the Lord.
2. No additional revelation from God to mankind is anticipated within the New Testament because nothing else is needed.

Conclusion:

1. There is not "another testament of Jesus Christ."
2. There has been no new revelation from God to mankind since the close of the New Testament.
3. The New Testament is the final revelation of God to mankind.

Invitation:

1. It is to the New Testament only one living today must turn for instruction about salvation and preparation for eternity.
2. One must hear God's Word only, Romans 10:17; believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God, John 8:24; repent of sin, Luke 13:3; publicly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Romans 10:9-10; be immersed for the remission of sins, Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:38.
3. Unfaithful Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Place of the Old Testament Today

Romans 15:4

Thesis: Two-fold: to show conclusively that the Old Testament in its entirety has ceased to be the law by which men are bound and to discover the proper significance of the Old Testament to Christians.

Introduction:

1. Perhaps the thesis appears to be a riddle, a paradox or contradictory.
   a. Both observations in the thesis, however, are true and harmonize perfectly with each other.
   b. Restated, man is now amenable directly to the New Testament, which has superseded the Old Testament, while at the same time parts of the Old Testament still affect us indirectly.
2. Confusion concerning the proper roles of the Old and New testaments contributes immeasurably to the unfortunate and sinful religious division that characterizes Christianity or the religious community.
   a. Most religious people have little or no conception regarding the significance or distinction between the testaments.
   b. It, therefore, is little wonder that religious people are genuinely ignorant of how Bible doctrine affects them.
   c. Few sincere religious people know whether to turn to the Old Testament, to the New Testament or to both for passages concerning the church, salvation, worship and doctrine.
3. Unfortunately, sometimes even members of the Lord's church, who ought to know better, appear to be clueless respecting the complementary but different roles of the testaments.
   a. Probably most members of the church recognize that we appeal to the New Testament instead of to the Old Testament for our direction in religion today.
   b. Some would even discard the Old Testament from any consideration respecting our knowledge and practice of Christianity.

c. However, those individuals fail to realize the great dependence of the New Testament on the Old Testament, without which the New Testament would lack foundation and otherwise be difficult to impossible to understand.
d. Further, many Christians fail to recognize that they are bound indirectly by numerous principles contained in sundry Old Testament passages, especially those topics that are also addressed in the New Testament.
e. Additionally, the Old Testament is a vast resource of information respecting man's relationship to God and how God reacts toward human obedience and disobedience.

Body:

I. Contrary to popular opinion, the Old Testament as a unit (whole and in its entirety) has been replaced by the New Testament.

A. The Old Testament, though begun to be penned by Moses, records a religious dispensation prior to Judaism.
   1. The first divinely given religion was a family-type religion, such as practiced by righteous Abel; his brother Cain corrupted that religion as did many others after him, all of which received divine condemnation rather that commendation.
   2. Called the Patriarchal Age, others who practiced this family religion included Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.
   3. Under this system of religion, God spoke through the fathers of the families and commanded animal sacrifices, Noah's ark, etc.
   4. Patriarchy **for the descendants of Jacob** ended with the establishment of Judaism or the Mosaic Age on Mt. Sinai; Patriarchy continued for everyone outside the nation of Israel (except proselytes) possibly until the conversion of the Samaritans (Acts 8) and the Gentiles (Acts 10-11).

B. The Law of Moses that was delivered on Mt. Sinai ushered in a divinely authored national religion, Judaism.
   1. Judaism replaced and superseded Patriarchy, though it

also reflected some of the principles and laws of the former system of religion.

2. Neither Patriarchy nor Judaism, separately or combined, could save souls; each respectively saved souls of the obedient in prospect of still another dispensation in which the Messiah would come to earth, Hebrews 10:1-4.
3. Judaism was characterized by sundry laws, animal sacrifices, lamps, incense, washings, sprinkling blood, a priesthood, etc.
4. The apostle Paul portrayed Judaism as a vehicle by which humanity was transported into the Gospel Age, Galatians 3:22-29.

C. Jesus Christ personally brought the Gospel into the world, John. 1:17.

1. Jesus Christ gave all mankind Universal Religion when He gave us the Gospel.
2. The Gospel Age was predicted to begin in the days of the Romans (Daniel 2), in the generation in which Jesus lived (Mark 9:1) and after the death of the Christ, Hebrews 9:15-16. See also Isaiah 2:2-3; Joel 2:28-3:2.
3. Bible history records that Judaism was discharged at the center cross of Calvary, but was allowed to remain in affect until replaced 50 days later when the church was established, Colossians 2:14; Acts 2.
4. The New Testament abounds with testimony that the Old Testament is no longer in affect and that instead we are bound the by the New Testament, John 12:48; Matthew 17:1ff; Ephesians 2:15-16; Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11; Hebrews 7:18; 8:6; Revelation 20:12.
5. Like Judaism before it, the Gospel or Christianity supersedes previous God-given religious law, and yet, it reestablished some laws common to previous divine law, while also containing different laws respecting worship, doctrine and redemption.

II. Though the Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament, the Old Testament still plays a significant role in Christianity.

A. The Old Testament is worthy of study by Christians.
   1. Paul directed study of it, 2 Timothy 2:15.
   2. Paul also addressed the significance of the Old Testament in 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   3. The Bereans searched the Old Testament to see if the Gospel plea was true, Acts 17:11.
   4. Peter declared the holy source of the Old Testament when addressing Christians, 2 Peter 1:20-21.
   5. Paul said that the Old Testament is for the Christian's learning or instruction, Romans 15:4.

B. The Old Testament is the foundation on which the New Testament rests.
   1. The four Gospel records, especially the first three, would be virtually meaningless without the Old Testament, to which they make frequent reference and from which they quote often.
   2. The entire Book of Acts refers extensively to the Old Testament and would be meaningless without the Old Testament.
   3. The Romans epistle is based almost entirely on the Old Testament, without which the Romans letter would be useless.
   4. Galatians and Ephesians rely heavily on the Old Testament for their teaching.
   5. Several other New Testament books, including Colossians, 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation, frequently refer to or quote the Old Testament.
   6. The Book of Hebrews would be almost entirely nonexistent if every Old Testament reference were removed from it.
   7. Virtually each New Testament book contains some degree of reference to or quotes from the Old Testament; clearly, if the Old Testament were unknown, much if not essentially the entire New Testament would be worthless to us; this

factor makes the Old Testament extremely valuable to us.

C. Many Old Testament passages possess indirect authority in the lives of Christians.
   1. Again, as a unit, the Old Testament is no longer the law to which we are bound today, Colossians 2:14.
   2. However, the Old Testament contains laws that have been reestablished in the New Testament, e.g., 9 of the 10 commandments.
   3. Indirectly, then, such Old Testament passages contain insightful information to complement New Testament passages that treat the same topics.
   4. Though the Old Testament is not in force today, it still contributes to a better understanding of those topics about which both testaments say something.

D. Finally, the Old Testament provides an immeasurable wealth of lessons on moral values and interaction between God and man.
   1. Leviticus 10:1-2, among other passages, teaches the punishment of God toward presumptuous sin.
   2. The death of Korah and his band teaches about God's reaction toward rebellion.
   3. The rewarding of Enoch, Noah, etc. shows that God favorably responds toward obedient souls.
   4. Cleansing of Naaman exhibits the superiority of what appears to be the foolishness of God over the wisdom of men; it also teaches the necessity of total obedience to God to secure the blessings of God.
   5. The providential punishment of nations by God demonstrates God's powers over them.
   6. Creation, causing the sun to stand still or go backwards reflects the omnipotence of God.
   7. Virtually every chapter of the Old Testament portrays some valuable lesson that can be applied profitably to Christianity.

Conclusion:

1. The Old Testament is not the spiritual law to which we are amenable today, but it is quite pertinent to Christianity.
2. The value of the Old Testament to the Christian is obvious if we were to disregard as much of the New Testament that is affected by the Old Testament
3. Also, the value of the Old Testament should manifest itself when studying nearly every biblical subject.
4. Some portions of the Old Testament are especially useful today because of the pragmatic information contained in them, e.g., Proverbs.

Invitation:

1. Both testaments demonstrate the requirement to obey God, without which one cannot be saved.
2. People living today who are disobedient to God's Word and meet God in eternity in that condition will be lost, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
3. God requires mankind to obey to be saved, Hebrews 5:8-9.
   a. Unbaptized believer, Acts 2:38.
   b. Erring child of God, Acts 8:22.

An Overview of Biblical Canonicity

Philippians 3:16

Thesis: To demonstrate that God's Word is preserved as what we call the Bible, and that we, then, ought to have unfailing confidence in the Bible.

Song: "The Precious Book Divine"

Introduction:

1. Biblical canonicity has to do with what books belong in the Bible.
   a. Therefore, biblical canonicity is of paramount importance, though most people probably never even think about it.
   b. God's Word (the Bible) must be complete and reliable to permit mankind to confidently prepare for entering eternity.
   c. The Bible must be free from corruptions that might adversely affect one's preparation for eternity.
2. Fortunately, sufficient evidence demonstrates that man has no need to become alarmed pondering which books belong in the Bible.
   a. First, God is powerful enough to preserve His Word.
   b. Second, ample evidence overwhelmingly confirms that the Bible with which modern man is familiar is the complete and uncorrupted Word of God.
   c. It is true, though, that not all translations of the Bible are accurate, and some of them are especially defective.
3. The word "canon" (*kanon*) appears in the Greek New Testament five times, and its meaning has been applied to the inspired body of Scriptures that comprise the Bible, 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15-16; Galatians 6:16; Philippians 3:16.
   a. It is translated "line" and "rule" and means a standard of faith or practice or a boundary.
   b. Therefore, the word canon is applied to the books of the Bible to mean a collection of inspired books that have been critically tested and found to be the complete and wholly divine standard by which men must live and by which they

will be judged someday.

Body:

I. Which books belong in the Old Testament?

A. The Old Testament as we know it has never been seriously doubted.

1. The Old Testament books claim to be divinely inspired, e.g., "Thus saith the Lord."
2. The prophets quoted each other and recognized each other as inspired of God, e.g., Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 2:2-4; Daniel verified Jeremiah as a prophet of God, Daniel 9:2.
3. Joshua received Moses (who wrote the first five books of the Bible) as a prophet of God, Joshua 24:1-27.
4. The Bible lists some of the writing prophets, 1 Chronicles 29:29.
5. Historically, the Old Testament can be traced back to the time period in which it was supposed to have been written.
6. Historically, the Old Testament books agree with all known facts characteristic of the time of their purported writing; they contain no mistakes regarding historical or geographical information.
7. The Jewish people have always received the books that comprise the Old Testament; the inspiration of the Old Testament was never in doubt by God's people.

B. Confirmation of the Old Testament is found abundantly in the New Testament.

1. All of the Old Testament books are quoted in the New Testament except Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon; all that proves is these books lacked opportunity for use in the New Testament.
2. The New Testament claims that the Old Testament is inspired, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21.
3. Jesus Christ placed his stamp of approval on the Old Testament, John 10:31-36; Luke 24:44.

4. The early church, first under the leadership of the apostles, recognized the Old Testament as inspired and true, Acts 13:16-41.
5. In a single sweeping statement, Jesus endorsed the entire Old Testament, from Genesis 4:10 to 2 Chronicles 24:20-21, the last book according to the Hebrew arrangement of the Old Testament, Matthew 23:35.

II. Which books belong in the New Testament?

A. God's people never doubted the vast majority of New Testament books.
   1. Some books, though accepted by some Christians, were for a time rejected by others.
   2. Some Christians also had for a time interjected uninspired books into the collection of inspired books.

B. The determining factor as to whether a book belonged in the Bible rested with the integrity of the book, not with the integrity of the church.
   1. Hence, the uninspired church was not charged with the responsibility of officiating a list of inspired books or New Testament canon.
   2. The merit and divine qualities of the New Testament books themselves determined the New Testament canon.

C. The proof of the validity of the New Testament as we know it is abundant.
   1. The books claim inspiration for themselves.
   2. The New Testament writers believed their writings were inspired Scripture and accordingly commanded that they were to be circulated, 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4:16; Revelation 1:3.
   3. The apostle Peter recognized the writings of the apostle Paul as Scripture, 2 Peter 3:16.
   4. Warnings appear in the New Testament not to deviate from or corrupt the New Testament, which attests its divine origin, Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.

5. The basis of the New Testament is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, chief of which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ; the resurrection could not be refuted 2,000 years ago nor since.
6. The New Testament is historically correct in all its facts and geography.
7. The New Testament was accepted as Scripture from the time it was first written, at least initially by those to whom various parts of it were written.
8. Uninspired writers who knew some of the inspired writers personally verified the validity of many of the New Testament books.
9. Since miracles were slated to last until the "unity of the faith" or "perfect" revelation was received, doubtless the apostles and others upon whom the apostles had laid their hands to enable them miraculously participated in the collection of the New Testament books, Ephesians 4:11-13, 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

III. Which ancient books do not belong in the Bible?

A. First, there is a vast amount of literature that neither claimed nor was thought to be biblical.
   1. This includes poetry and other such verse.
   2. Also, there are legal documents and histories that do not claim to be inspired.

B. The apocrypha are extra-biblical books and do not belong in the Bible.
   1. No apocryphal book is quoted or cited by the biblical books.
   2. The Old Testament apocryphal books were written between the testaments during the 400 years of divine silence when there were no prophets of God.
   3. Some of the apocryphal books do not claim to be inspired.
   4. The apocryphal books contain factual errors about events and geography.

5. The oldest catalog of canonical books of the Old Testament does not include the apocryphal books.
6. The Jews never accepted the Old Testament apocryphal books as inspired.
7. The New Testament apocryphal books are biblically inaccurate and conflict with inspired books that are unquestionably inspired.

C. How many apocryphal books are there?
1. There are about 15 apocryphal books that were written between the testaments, which once even the Catholic Church did not accept.
2. There are also about 15 New Testament apocryphal books in addition to about 20 pseudepigraphal books.

D. Pseudepigraphal books do not belong in the Bible.
1. These are books that are falsely ascribed to Bible times or to inspired writers.
2. They were never accepted as inspired.
3. The apocrypha and the pseudepigrapha are spurious writings and are sometimes both are called the apocrypha.
4. The same criticisms leveled against the apocrypha largely apply to the pseudepigrapha.

IV. How can one know that the Bible text has been preserved?

A. There are sufficient copies of the original texts in their original languages to verify both the Old and New testament texts.

B. Further, a sufficient number of ancient translations of the Old and New testaments have survived to verify the Bible text.
1. Some of these versions are even older than the surviving manuscripts.
2. The Septuagint or Greek version of the Old Testament was in use in the first century and Jesus quoted from it.

Conclusion:

1. The Old Testament canon was accepted as it is at least by the second century B.C.

2. The New Testament canon was accepted within one generation after the death of the apostle John.
3. The Bible canon has stood the tests applied to it by critics throughout the centuries.
4. Counterfeit books of the Bible have been discovered to be false when compared to the genuine books of the Bible.
5. The inspiration of the Bible books is inherent and does not rest upon the verification by an outside source; i.e., the Bible books are self-evident in their divine origin and distance themselves from books of mere human ingenuity.

Invitation:

1. The Bible, then, contains reliable information respecting the peril that sin poses to our immortal souls, as well as the necessary information by which we can rescue ourselves from impending doom in a devil's Hell.
2. Jesus commanded that the message of salvation be preached in every nation, Matthew 28:18-20.
3. Our benevolent God also affords erring Christians the opportunity to save themselves from eternal doom, 1 John 1:9.

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Old Testament Apocrypha

The First Book of Esdras, The Second Book of Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to the Book of Esther, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach, Baruch, Letter of Jer-

emiah (the Letter of Jeremiah is in some editions incorporated into the last chapter of Baruch), Prayer of Azariah and Song of the Three Young Men, Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, Prayer of Manasseh, First Book of the Maccabees, Second Book of the Maccabees

New Testament Apocrypha

Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Epistle of Barnabas, First Epistle of Clement, Second Epistle of Clement, Shepherd of Hermas, Apocalypse of Peter, Acts of Paul, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, Seven Epistles of Ignatius, Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, Protevangelium of James, Gospel of the Nativity of Mary, Gospel of Nicodemus, Gospel of the Saviour's Infancy, History of Joseph the Carpenter

New Testament Pseudepigrapha

Gospel of Andrew, Gospel of Bartholomew, Gospel of Barnabas, Gospel of Matthias, Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter, Gospel of Philip, Acts of John, Acts of Paul, Acts of Peter, Acts of Andrew, Acts of Thomas, Acts of Matthias, Acts of Philip, Acts of Thaddaeus, Epistle of Paul to the Laodiceans, Apocalypse of Peter, Apocalypse of Paul, Apocalypse of Thomas, Apocalypse of John the Theologian

Lost Books of the Bible

2 Kings 22:8

Thesis: To emphasize that mankind has the written revelation from God that He wants practiced.

Introduction:

1. It is almost unbelievable, but the Old Testament Jews lost "the Book of the Law in the house of the Lord," 2 Kings 22:8.
   a. Amazingly, the Jews had become so lapsed in their religion and distanced from God that they did not even realize that "the book of the law" was missing.
   b. Still mind boggling, it was the high priest who accidentally "found the book of the law" when especially the high priest should have been conducting the rites of Judaism in accordance with "the book of the law."
   c. Little surprise, "the book of the law" was found exactly where the Jews had left it (and forgot about it) "in the house of the Lord."
2. In our time, some critics of the Bible claim that though we have the Bible, some books of the Bible have been omitted.
   a. William Hone wrote a book entitled, *Lost Books of the Bible*, and others have written similar volumes.
   b. Hone and others propose to add to the Bible ancient writings that were contemporary with or nearly contemporary with Bible books.
   c. These are generally called the Apocrypha, and those that are falsely ascribed to inspired prophets or apostles are called the Pseudepigrapha.
   d. Instead of being newly found lost books of the Bible, typically the so-called lost books of the Bible are the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha, which have already been rejected thousands of years ago as uninspired.
3. In truth, there are not any "lost books of the Bible.

a. It is true that God did not cause to have preserved every letter written by an inspired writer, 1 Corinthians 5:9; Colossians 4:16.
b. Further, the Bible sometimes refers to other writings that may or may not have been written by inspired persons, Joshua 10:13; Acts 17:28.
c. However, God has caused to be preserved everything that He wants mankind to have, 2 Peter 1:3; Jude 3.

4. There is a sense in which, though, that the books of the Bible are essentially lost today.
   a. Unfortunately, mankind today often looks at the Bible as a gigantic, mystic puzzle containing insights into UFO's or harboring some kind of code language.
   b. The bare teaching of the Bible is increasingly ignored by contemporary mankind.

Body:

I. The real lost books of the Bible are the 66 books from Genesis to Revelation.

A. The Bible is comprised of two testaments, Matthew 26:28; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 14.
B. The Old Testament is comprised of a library of 39 books that fall into various classifications.
   1. Books of Law (5): Genesis-Deuteronomy.
   2. History (12): Joshua-Esther.
   3. Poetry (5): Job-Song of Solomon.
   4. Prophecy (17): Isaiah-Malachi.
C. The New Testament is comprised of a library of 27 books that fall into various classifications.
   1. History (5): Matthew-Acts.
   2. Epistles or letters (21): Romans-Jude.
   3. Prophecy (1): Revelation.

II. Not so-called lost books of the Bible, but the Holy Bible of God will determine where each person spends eternity.

A. Books of the Bible are essentially lost when the doctrine within them is ignored or countermanded.

1. Mankind does his own thing regarding marriage, divorce and remarriage, despite what the New Testament teaches about the subject, adultery, fornication, polygamy two or more or one at a time, Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11.
2. Mankind proposes to decide for itself whether homosexuality is an alternate lifestyle or a sin, 1 Corinthians6:9-10 NKJV.
3. Mankind has chosen to erect its own churches in competition with the one church for which Jesus died and over which He is the Head, Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28.
4. Mankind has taken the ungodly prerogative of worshipping God according to his own whims instead of according to New Testament instruction, Matthew 15:9, 13; Colossians 2:23; 3:16-17.
5. Mankind has opted for a plan of salvation of his own devising, instead of what God put in the New Testament, Mark 16:16.

B. Though mankind may pretend that the books of the Bible are lost, the Word of God will judge each soul and discern his eternal home respectively.

1. There was a time when man so distanced himself from God through wickedness and violence that God destroyed humanity, except for eight souls, Genesis 6-8; 1 Peter 3:20.
2. We will be judged by the words of Jesus, John 12:48.
3. Before the Judgment throne of our Lord, we will be judged by the law of God under which we lived, the New Testament, Revelation 20:12-15.

Conclusion:

1. The result of so wide a disregard for the Bible is a society that is

becoming more and more wicked and distanced from God.

2. Modern man is doing the same thing that the Old Testament Jews did when they lost "the book of the law."
3. The only hope for our nation, its people and all of us is if we, like the ancients, can find the book of the law of the Lord and apply it to our lives.

Invitation:

1. Is the Bible important to us, or is its library of books lost on us?
2. We are lost if God's Word, the Bible, is lost to us, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
3. When Jesus gave the proverbial keys of the kingdom to the apostle Peter, our Lord charged Peter with the responsibility of telling souls how to become Christians and Christians how to be forgiven when they commit sins, Acts 2:38; 8:22.

The Transmittal of God's Word to Modern Man

2 Peter 1:20-21

Thesis: To note the means by which the Bible has been preserved until the present day.
Song: "Give Me the Bible"

Introduction:

1. The goal of this discourse is not to discuss the inspiration of or the divine source of the Bible.
   a. Other lessons could address God as the Giver of the Bible, 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Luke 1:68, 70.
   b. Still other lessons could be devoted to examining, for instance, the verbal (word for word) inspiration of the Bible, Jeremiah 11:1-3; 16:1; Matthew 10:19-20; Mark 13:11.
2. Since God, though, has given man His exact words, and He has commanded man to abide by them, it is imperative that we have access to the words of God today.
   a. If the Word of God has survived or has been preserved to the present day, mankind is responsible for complying with it, John 12:48; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
   b. If there are corrupted translations of God's Word available today, we must avoid them, 1 John 4:1; Galatians 1:6-9.
   c. If no faithful account of God's Word survived to the present, we would be hopelessly adrift and unaware of God's will—lost with no knowledge of how to please God, John 8:32; Matthew 7:21.

Body:

I. The Bible was not written originally in English, German, Latin, French, Spanish or any other contemporary language.
   A. The Old Testament was written by over 30 men during about 1,300 years, under a variety of circumstances in several different nations.

1. Therefore, the Old Testament was written in more than one language.
2. Since the Old Testament represents God's Word to the Hebrew people, much of the Old Testament was written by Hebrews in the Hebrew language.
3. Since the Hebrew or Jewish people lived in Babylonian-Chaldean captivity, some of the Old Testament was written in Chaldean or a mixture of Hebrew and Chaldean.
4. A quick glance at the Old Testament lexicon in the back of *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* reveals that Hebrew and Chaldean are the languages of the Old Testament.
5. In addition, Ezra and Daniel were written partly in yet another language, Aramaic.

B. The Septuagint is a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament.
   1. The translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was begun in the middle of the third century B.C. and completed 100 years later.
   2. It was translated by Jews in Alexandria on the northern African coast.
   3. The Septuagint also contains uninspired books in addition to the 39 inspired books of the Old Testament.
   4. Jesus Christ and some of the New Testament writers obviously quoted from the Septuagint, implying that translations of the Bible can accurately convey the very Word of God.
   5. The oldest surviving manuscript of the Septuagint is 500 years older than the oldest surviving Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament.
   6. There is little variation between the Septuagint and the Hebrew manuscripts, together confirming the Old Testament text.
   7. The Septuagint has been used often in various translations of the Old Testament into contemporary languages.
   8. The Septuagint and the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old

Testament were used in the translation of the Old Testament of the *American Standard Versio*n.

C. The New Testament was written by about seven men over the space of a century, also from various parts of the old world and also under varying circumstances.
   1. The New Testament was written mostly if not entirely in *koine* Greek, the universal language of the first century, Roman-Greco world.
   2. Some of the New Testament many have been written in Aramaic.
   3. Aramaic was the language of the Hebrews in the first century and probably the language that Jesus spoke.
   4. Greek New Testaments and lexicons represent the language of the New Testament as Greek.

D. Latin was one of the first languages into which the New Testament was translated.
   1. Latin was the official language of Romans who ruled the Mediterranean world in the first century.
   2. Greek was the predominant language of the eastern segment of the Roman Empire in the first century, owing to the former rule of the Grecian Empire.
   3. The New Testament was written in Greek since Palestine and most of the other places from which Bible books were written were in the eastern segment of the Roman Empire, which predominantly spoke Greek.
   4. The most popular Latin translation was translated from Greek to Latin from A.D. 383-405 by Jerome, and it is called the Latin Vulgate.
   5. This version became the official version of the Roman Catholic Church, from which the Catholic Church translated English versions, e.g. Douai-Rheims.

E. The Word of God has been translated into several hundred contemporary languages and dialects.
   1. At least parts of the Bible have been translated into over

1,600 different languages.

2. At least parts of the Bible have been translated into about 340 English translations.
3. There are at least 45 Old and New Testament English translations.
4. There are nine additional Old Testament English translations and 88 additional New Testament English translations.
5. There are another 197 English translations containing a portion of the Bible.

II. No autographed or original manuscripts of any Bible books are known to exist today.

A. However, there is no cause for alarm.

1. There are about 1,700 manuscripts or copies of the Old Testament and more than 4,000 manuscripts or copies of the New Testament in the original languages that remain to this day.
2. Though many of the copies are only fragments, together, all of them serve to verify the text of the Bible many times over.
3. In addition, there is an abundance of ancient translations, quotations and discourses that further verify the integrity of the Bible text.

B. It can only be attributable to the wisdom of God that the original manuscripts penned by the prophets, apostles, etc. are not available today.

1. Doubtless, mankind would worship or sinfully revere the autographed, original manuscripts and neglect worshipping the invisible God.
2. The unscriptural reverence mankind bestows on supposed splinters of our Lord's cross and on the remains of Catholic "saints" betrays mankind's susceptibility to revere religious souvenirs instead of revering God.
3. King Hezekiah destroyed the brass serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness wandering because the people of God in Hezekiah's day were worshipping it, 2 Kings 18:4.

C. The original manuscripts are unnecessary in the presence of the vast body of witnesses afforded the Bible text through the many thousands of manuscript copies.
   1. These manuscripts are reliable and have transmitted the Word of God down through the centuries to the present.
   2. The care and caution with which ancient biblical manuscripts were copied was purposely demanding as to make every effort to accurately transmit the pure Word of God from one manuscript to another (Miller 184-185).
   3. Though not inspired themselves, the sheer number of copies or manuscripts by their substantial agreement verify the inspired Word of God.
   4. Although some variations between manuscripts occur, no doctrine is compromised.

III. Some manuscripts are more prominent and impressive than others.

A. Three Old Testament manuscripts overshadow all other manuscripts.
   1. The Leningrad Codex contains the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) and the twelve Minor Prophets, is the oldest manuscript bearing a date (A.D. 916) and is housed in the Royal Library at Leningrad.
   2. The oldest manuscript containing the entire Old Testament dates to A.D. 1010 and is also in Leningrad, Russia.
   3. A manuscript of the Pentateuch (first five books of the Old Testament) called Oriental 4445 dates to about A.D. 850 and is preserved in the British Museum in London.

B. H.S. Miller lists eight New Testament manuscripts from the third through the sixth centuries that are the most noteworthy: Sinaitic (191-192), Vatican (193-195), Alexandrian (195-196), Ephraem (196-197), Beza (197-198), Claromontanus (198), Washington (198-199) and the Koridethi Gospels (200).

Conclusion:

1. The inspired Word of God has been preserved to the present day through the testimony of thousands of uninspired copies.
2. Technically, none of the modern translations made from these manuscripts is inspired.
3. However, the inspired, word for word message from God is verified and preserved through meticulous copying of the original, autographed biblical manuscripts and accurate translations into other languages, e.g. English.
4. It is our responsibility to discern between accurate and inaccurate translations of the Bible into our language, and then comply with the inspired Word of God represented therein.

Invitation:

1. The reason that God has providentially preserved His Holy Word is so that mankind can know His will and obey it, Hebrews 5:8-9.
2. Unbaptized believers need to be immersed into Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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God's Ways Versus Man's Ways

Isaiah 55:6-9

Thesis: To encourage dependence upon God and His Word for instruction and direction.

Songs: "Have Thine Own Way," "Lord or His Way with Thee"

Introduction:

1. That God's ways and man's ways are not the same is self-evident.
   a. When at his best, man is referred to as "godly"; otherwise, men are alienated from God, Genesis 6:2, 5; Ephesians 2:12-13.
   b. Transgressing God's ways makes one a sinner and separates him from God, 1 John 3:4; Isaiah 59:1-3.
   c. Separating himself from the ways of God, mankind relies on his ways and becomes guilty of sin, Romans 1:21-32.
2. God demands conformity to His divine ways rather than simply permitting mankind to do as he pleases.
   a. God declares His ways superior to the ways of humanity, Isaiah 55:8-9.
   b. Man is incapable of directing himself satisfactorily by his own devices and without God, Jeremiah 10:23.
   c. Historically, often even the people of God have refused to walk in the ways of God, Jeremiah 6:16.
3. However, men can only be saved if and as long as they walk in the ways of God.
   a. One cannot successfully claim to be a follower of Jesus and refuse to walk in our Lord's divine ways, 1 John 2:6.
   b. Jesus Christ is "the way" through which God has designed that men should be saved, which unfortunately, too few people opt to follow, John 14:6; Matthew 7:13-14.
   c. God's ways are variously represented in the New Testament: "that way," Acts 19:23; "this way," Acts 22:4; "the way of salvation," Acts 16:17; "the way of the Lord," Acts 18:25; "way of truth," 2 Peter 2:2; "the right way," 2 Peter 2:15;

"the way of righteousness," 2 Peter 2:21" and "a new and living way," Hebrews 10:20.

Body:

I. Isaiah 55:8 reads, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord."

A. It is precisely because the thoughts of God and man differ that the ways of God and man also differ.
   1. The thoughts of one's heart precede his actions, Matthew 5:28; 15:18-19.
   2. The sinful condition of humanity preceding the universal flood of Noah's day illustrates how sinful thoughts precede sinful deeds, Genesis 6:5.

B. Often, men establish their own standards of righteousness, which they prefer instead of God's standard of righteousness.
   1. Jesus Christ noted that Jewish religious leaders in His day worshipped God according to human preferences instead of the way God desired to be worshipped, Matthew 15:9.
   2. The apostle Paul lamented that his fellow Jews had established a standard of righteousness that for them had displaced God's standard of righteousness, Romans 10:3.

C. The Bible is full of examples where mankind has introduced his own innovations or where God has condemned human innovations in religion.
   1. Nadab and Abihu, priests and sons of Aaron, substituted an unauthorized fire in place of the fire source God authorized for worship, Leviticus 10:1-2.
   2. Some first century Christians altered the Gospel of Christ and interjected their own will into the worship of God, Galatians 1:6-9; Colossians 2:23.
   3. Warnings appear throughout the Bible against any alteration, subtraction from or addition to the Word of God, Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19.

II. Isaiah 55:9 reads, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

A. Pseudo-knowledge and intellectualism once pervaded the church at Corinth.
   1. The apostle Paul condemned worldly wisdom in the church at Corinth that stood in opposition to the wisdom of God, 1 Corinthians 1:18-27; 3:18-22.
   2. The man Job was compelled to acknowledge the superiority of God's knowledge and wisdom, Job 38-40:9.

B. Since God's thoughts are admittedly higher than man's thoughts, man ought to conform to God's thoughts and ways.
   1. Joshua's speech stands out as one of God's servants who called upon the people of God to remain faithful to God, Joshua 24:15.
   2. Prophecy concerning the establishment of the church anticipated God's ways being taught to the first century children of God, Isaiah 2:2-3.

III. Isaiah 55:7 reads, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

A. God is willing to pardon those who turn to Him on His terms (His higher thoughts and His higher ways).
   1. For instance, God provided a way of escape from the universal flood: a preacher of righteousness, 120 years and an ark, 2 Peter 2:5; Genesis 6:3, 14; 7:1.
   2. Likewise, God does not want anyone to perish and will save those who turn to Him on His terms (His higher ways), 2 Peter 3:9; Hebrews 5:8-9.

B. Mercy is an outstanding characteristic of God.
   1. Regarding quantity, God is a God of abundant mercy, Ephesians 2:4; 1 Peter 1:3.
   2. God's mercy contributes to human salvation, Titus 3:5.

C. God does pardon those who turn to Him on His terms.
   1. As a part of that pardon, God refuses to remember one's former transgressions once they are forgiven, Hebrews 8:12; 10:17.
   2. Since there is an actual forgiveness of sins under Christianity, there is no remembrance by God of sins for which forgiveness has been obtained, Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 10:3.

IV. Isaiah 55:6 reads, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

A. This verse implies that there will come a time when God cannot be sought.
   1. It will be too late to seek God when time comes to an end, Matthew 24:42-51; John 9:4.
   2. It will be too late to seek God after one dies, Luke 16:19-31; James 4:13-14.

B. Calling upon the name of the Lord is something that men are urged by Scripture to do today as well.
   1. Calling upon the name of the Lord is seeking salvation from God, Romans 10:13.
   2. However, calling upon the name of the Lord is not merely a mental thought or a verbal profession, but active obedience to the thoughts and ways of God, Acts 22:16.

V. Men still often reject the thoughts and ways of God.

A. Judaism, Catholicism, Protestantism and every other world religion represent a rejection of God's thoughts and ways.
   1. Every religious institution that is not the product of God's thoughts and ways will be destroyed in the last day, Matthew 15:13.
   2. Jesus died for and built one church, and every church, therefore, that is not identical to the church about which one can read in the Bible will be destroyed, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4.

B. Even Christians are still adding innovations to God's thoughts and ways.

1. The U.S. Census of 1906 recognized a split between the churches of Christ and the Christian Church, which division occurred when instrumental music was added to worship and missionary societies were adopted.
2. More recently, numerous doctrinal deviations from New Testament Christianity have plagued the churches of Christ, i.e., marriage, divorce & remarriage; women's roles, liberalism, antism, etc.

Conclusion:

1. The Lord's thoughts and ways really are higher than man's thoughts and ways.
2. It is not possible for feeble men to direct themselves apart from divine revelation and someday arrive in Heaven.
3. As long as time remains and death does not occur, souls may continue to turn from the ways of men to the ways of God.
4. There will come a time beyond which it will not be possible to change one's ways so Heaven will be his eternal home.

Invitation:

1. There are still many souls within and without of the church who need to obey the Gospel before it is everlastingly too late!
2. Erring Christians can hide a multitude of sins by being restored to the faith, James 5:19-20.
3. Unbaptized believers who follow God's thoughts and ways will follow the instruction for salvation of our Lord and his apostles, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

Seek Ye the Lord While He May be Found

Isaiah 55:6-9

Thesis: To emphasize that mankind must seek God (through His Word) while time remains to be the beneficiary of divine blessings now and forever.

Song: "Seek Ye First"

Introduction:

1. When Isaiah served as God's prophet to the nation of Judah, time was running out before God's longsuffering would be replaced with divine punishment.
2. Likewise today, mankind must seek God while opportunities to seek God abound, i.e. before it's too late to seek God.
3. Further, one must seek God where He can be found, i.e. there are some places where one cannot find God.

Body:

I. We must seek God while time remains, i.e. before it is too late.

A. Isaiah 55:6-9 is a wonderful text full of principles applicable to humanity in every age, including our own.

B. "Seek" calls upon mortals "to acquire experimental knowledge or confidential acquaintance" (*Keil & Delitzsch*) with God.

1. Adam Clarke quotes another, giving a very interesting perspective of seeking God: "Seek ye the Lord, because he may be found: call upon him, because he is near…"
2. God wants mankind to find him, Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm 14:2.
3. It is natural for mankind to seek God, Job 5:8.
4. The proper response to the benevolence of God is to seek Him (on his terms), Psalm 27:8; Matthew 6:33; Romans 10:13; Joel 2:32.

C. The phrase "while he may be found" indicates that the longsuffering of God is not inexhaustible.

1. Eventually, the longsuffering of God will cease, 2 Peter 3:9-10.
2. When either we pass from the scenes of life or when time is no more, it will be too late to seek God.
3. There is no time like the present for seeking God, Matthew 11:28

D. The phrase "while he is near" speaks to opportunity to commune with God.
   1. God communes and communicates with humanity when the Word of God is preached; "…God comes near to us in the preaching of his word…" (Barnes).
   2. God is near enough to anyone of us any place on the planet, if we will approach God.
   3. God is never nearer than when we seek Him through His Word, enact His Word in our lives and pray to Him.

E. "Let the wicked forsake his way" speaks to the necessity of repentance.
   1. One simply cannot be a child of God or a faithful child of God while living a sinful, impenitent life.

      > The first step is for the sinner to forsake his way. He must come to a solemn pause, and resolve to abandon all his transgressions. His evil course; his vices; his corrupt practices; and his dissipated companions, must be forsaken. (Barnes)

   2. Turning from sin back to God is a biblical definition of true repentance, Acts 3:19; cf. 2:38.

F. Reference to "thoughts" identifies the seat of sin lying within the very heart or imagination of mankind.
   1. Evil acted out begins by evil conceived in the heart, Genesis 6:5; Matthew 15:19.
   2. In a real sense, we are what we think, Philippians 4:8.

G. All sinners need to turn from their sins.
   1. All sins have the same capacity to condemn souls to an

eternal Hell, Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8.

2. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* distinguishes the manifestation of sinfulness between "the wicked" and "the unrighteousness": "The 'wicked' sins, more openly in 'his way:' the 'unrighteous' refers to the more subtle workings of sin in the 'thoughts.'"
3. None of us are righteous, i.e. sinless, Romans 3:10, 23.

H. The sentence "let him return unto the Lord" rightly depicts the direction of travel and the who of the travel that mankind might be forgiven of sin.

1. God did not abandon mankind, but mankind turned and left God.
2. Consequently, God does not need to come to where man is (in the depths of sin), but mankind needs to return to where God is.

> Man, in the Scriptures, is everywhere described as having wandered away from the true God. Religion consists in returning to him for pardon, for consolation, for protection, for support. The true penitent is desirous of returning to him, as the prodigal son returned to his father's house; the man who loves sin chooses to remain at a distance from God. (Barnes)

II. We must seek God where He can be found, i.e. there are some places we will not find God.

A. God cannot be found in the vain thoughts of humanity, and if man relies on his own thoughts, he will remain lost.

1. Isaiah 55:8 clearly denounces alternative plans of salvation authored by lowly humanity: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD."
2. Yet, thousands of churches or denominations exist in our world today, each with its own version of a plan of salvation, Matthew 15:9, 13.

3. Only God's thoughts and ways respecting salvation or religion have any lasting (eternal) merit.

B. God cannot be found at the local bar.
   1. God does not frequent liquor establishments as some professed Christians do.
   2. God will not be found in a bottle of booze or a can of beer, Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 6:10; Galatians 5:21.
   3. God is not nearer mortal man through any other hallucination causing drug either, 1 Timothy 3:2, 11; Titus 2:2, 6.

C. God cannot be found in any den of iniquity.
   1. Anywhere, anytime one couples himself with ungodly people, he will be soiled spiritually, 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
   2. Wherever this world's sinners congregate or participate together in sin is no place for the child of God to be, because God is not there, e.g. where things like these take place: gambling, pornography, drinking, sensuality, immodesty, etc., 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8.

D. Often, God cannot be found in otherwise harmless places.
   1. God cannot be found on the golf course, relaxing at the lake, while fishing, resting at home or in nature when one is forsaking his assembles, Hebrews 10:25.
   2. Simply, God cannot be found through vehicles or devices of man's wisdom versus through the wisdom of God, 1 Corinthians 1:18-21.

Conclusion:

1. To be the beneficiary of divine blessings, one must seek God on His terms in this life.
2. There will come a time when it will no longer be possible to seek God.
3. God can only be found in the Word of God, which Word of God then must be acted out in our lives.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth and personally invited humanity to seek God, Matthew 6:33.
2. Simply put, we truly seek God through Gospel obedience, Hebrews 5:9; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Acts 2:38.
3. The same fervency with which souls became Christians must characterize their Christian lives, Revelation 3:15-16; Acts 8:22.

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What It Means to be a Lawbreaker

James 2:8-12

Thesis: To consider what it means to be a lawbreaker
Song: "Trust and Obey"

Introduction:

1. What makes one a lawbreaker, 1 John 3:4?
   a. Every soul is a lawbreaker, even if one tries not to be a lawbreaker, Romans 3:10, 23.
   b. Jesus Christ was the only exception, who did no sin, 1 Peter 2:22.
2. How serious, then, is the circumstance of sin (i.e., being a lawbreaker), in which condition mortals find themselves, Romans 6:23; James 2:26; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9?
   a. What can one do to extricate himself from sin and its consequence, or to compensate for being a lawbreaker, Romans 5:20; Ephesians 2:8?
   b. However, will God hold Christians guiltless when they purposely commit sins (i.e., are lawbreakers), Romans 6:1-2; Hebrews 10:26-31?
3. On the other hand, Christians who obey but sometimes stumble in sin can have confidence respecting the forgiveness of their sins, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7, 9.
   a. Yet, forgiveness is not possible if one continues to be a lawbreaker, and
   b. He persists in disregarding religious authority.

Body:

I. The subject of being a lawbreaker relates to authority in religion and whether one will obey God.
   A. Jesus Christ has all authority in Heaven and on Earth, Matthew 28:18, ASV; Colossians 3:17.
      1. There are tremendous consequences for disregarding the authority of Christ, John 12:48.

2. There are also significant reasons to obey Jesus Christ, Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 25:21.

B. Jesus delegated authority to His apostles, Matthew 16:19; 18:18.
   1. The apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit to act on behalf of God in Heaven, John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 2:1-4.
   2. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles were uniquely the "ambassadors for Christ," 2 Corinthians 5:20.

C. The church and Christians who comprise it are obligated to submit to divine authority or be lawbreakers, Ephesians 5:24.

D. The home is obligated to submit to the husband and father of the family or be guilty of lawbreaking, Ephesians 5:22; 6:1-2.

E. Civil government exists by divine design (but no particular form of government), to which its citizens must submit or be lawbreakers, Romans 13:1-7.

II. The lawbreaker sets aside the affect and authority of the whole law.

A. The Law of Moses (and actually Patriarchy also) possessed no provision in itself to justify lawbreakers.
   1. Condemnation as a lawbreaker came upon everyone who sinned against any part of it, Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10-11.
   2. For first century Jews, for instance, to forsake Christianity for a return to Judaism constituted spiritual suicide, Galatians, Hebrews
   3. Fortunately, the New Testament does provide a means to offset the penalty of being a lawbreaker, Acts 2:36-38.

B. By inspiration, James also affirmed that breaking any law of God makes one a lawbreaker, James 2:8-12.
   1. It was neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament argument that, for instance, if one was guilty of murder that he also was guilty of adultery, James 2:11.
   2. However, breaking any law makes one a lawbreaker or lawless, 1 John 3:4 ASV.
   3. To illustrate, imagine the time when our nation was still be-

ing settled. A father sent his oldest son beyond the frontier to prepare for the arrival later of his father with the rest of the family and household stuff. The son observed to himself that his father had selected just the right spot on the homestead for the house and the son built the house accordingly. Likewise, the son agreed with his dad regarding where to dig the well and he dug the well in that place. However, the son concluded that his father erred regarding where the barn should be built, and the son opted for another building site for the barn. In which of these three instances did this son obey his father? The correct answer is none! In each instance, the son set aside the law of his father and did what he wanted to do. Coincidentally, two out of three times the wills of the father and the son were the same.

4. According to James 4:11-12, to violate any portion of God's law removes one from being a doer of the law and elevates him to be a judge of the law; essentially, we put ourselves in the place of God when we decide which laws we will reject and which ones we will adopt as our own.

C. When the church or the Christians who comprise it elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious authority problem.

D. Whenever family members elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious authority problem in the home.

E. Whenever citizens elect to be lawbreakers, there is a serious authority problem respecting civil government, Acts 5:29.

Conclusion:

1. Anyone who elects to disregard any part of the Gospel (i.e., be a lawbreaker) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.
2. Anyone who attempts to change the church as God designed it (e.g., female leadership, instrumental music, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.
3. Anyone who proposes to change God's pattern for the home (e.g.,

homosexual parents, daddiless homes, ruled by matriarchs, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.

4. Anyone who supposes he can exempt himself from obeying civil law (e.g., cheating on his taxes, break speed limit laws, etc.) needs an attitude adjustment respecting authority in religion.

Invitation:

1. These attitude adjustments are called repentance, Acts 17:30.
2. For the non-Christian, repentance is preceded by faith (John 8:24) and followed by professing Christ (Romans10:9-10) and baptism, Acts 2:38.
3. For erring Christians, penitence is coupled with prayer, Acts 8:22.

Because I Said So!

Hebrews 12:5-11

Thesis: To emphasize the necessity of performing the instructions of God to us that appear in the Bible.

Introduction:

1. There was a time when a parent would answer a child with the retort, "Because I said so!"
   a. That mom or dad said something was enough reason and authority for one's child to obey.
   b. Though it might have been encouraging to the child to know the reason why for certain instructions, really, the reason why was immaterial and irrelevant to the parental command.
   c. Years ago, any child foolish enough to disobey his mother or his father could expect punishment without fail.
2. Now Friends, God in Heaven is our Father.
   a. That God (through the Bible) has said something is reason enough and authority enough for one to obey Him.
   b. Though it might be encouraging to the child of God to know the reason why for certain instructions, really, the reason why is immaterial and irrelevant to the divine, parental command.
   c. Surely, any right thinking individual who is foolish enough to disobey our Heavenly Father can expect divine punishment without fail.
3. The Bible abounds with example after example of failed as well as successful interaction between mortal man and our Heavenly Father.
   a. It behooves us to learn from the mistakes of others, lest we also face the wrath of an angry God, 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.
   b. God does chastise His children, just as earthly fathers chastise their children, Hebrews 12:5-11.
   c. Surely, we prefer divine reward instead of divine punishment, James 1:12; Hebrews 5:9.

Body:

I. Consider some biblical examples of failed interaction between mortal man and God.

A. Lot's wife is a curious episode in biblical history of punishment for disobeying divine instruction, Genesis 19:17, 26; Luke 17:32.

B. Nadab and Abihu's deaths are a stunning and divine declaration by God of the awfulness of disobedience toward Him, Leviticus 10:1-2.

C. Moses striking the rock when God told him to speak to it cost Moses the prize toward which he marched a rebellious nation for 40 years, Numbers 20:7-12.

II. Consider some biblical examples of successful interaction between mortal man and God.

A. King David's life mirrors the lives of most (if not all) mortals who sometimes serve God well and sometimes commit the most shocking sins, 1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22.

B. The apostle Paul is a remarkable specimen of an enemy of Christ and His church, who when converted by the Gospel became an untiring servant of God, 1 Corinthians 15:9-10.

C. The apostle Peter became a powerful servant for Jesus Christ, though because of fear he denied our Lord three times, Matthew 26:33-35, 69-75.

Conclusion:

1. Because "God said so" is sufficient reason to do whatever it is that through the Word of God (Bible) He tells us to do.
2. Besides this, remember, that God punishes the disobedient and rewards the obedient, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 5:9.

Invitation:

1. Why do Bible students acknowledge that salvation occurs at the point of immersion in water for the remission of sins; it is because "God said so" through the Bible, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
2. Why do Bible students acknowledge that salvation from the sins of Christians occurs following repentance and prayer; it is because "God said so" through the Bible, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

No King in Israel

Judges 17:6

Thesis: To demonstrate the urgent need for divine authority in religion by which we must direct our lives.
Song: "O Worship the King"

Introduction:

1. The period of the judges spanned about 300 troubled years in Jewish history, during which time the Hebrew people often turned away from God.
   a. God did not leave the Hebrew people without religious instruction: Law of Moses, leadership of Joshua, 15 Judges.
   b. However, the Israelites frequently disregarded the servants of God and committed the vilest sins, for which God repeatedly allowed them to be oppressed by other nations.
2. Since the Jews had no king like the nations around them, they considered themselves without a sovereign to whom they owed their allegiance.
   a. Every person was his own authority without regard to any other authority.
   b. The consequences of such a ruinous attitude were chaos, confusion and unrest.
   c. This sinful attitude of the Jews is duplicated in such modern philosophies as: "If it feels good, do it!"
3. Finally, the Jews clamored for a king to be like the other nations around them, 1 Samuel 8:5-6.
   a. God permitted them to have a king, though their demand amounted to a rejection of God as King over them, 1 Samuel 8:7.
   b. However, God never desired them to have an earthly king, Hosea 13:11.
   c. Until the establishment of a monarchy among the Jews, Israel had been ruled by a theocracy.

Body:

I. To the nations of the world, 'there is no king in Israel.'

A. The nations of the world and their leaders seem completely unaware of a higher sovereign to whom they are amenable.
   1. Really, civil authority originates with God, Romans 13:1-2.
   2. God removes and establishes kings and rules in the nations of men, Daniel 2:21; 2 Chronicles 20:6.
   3. God is the only eternal King, Psalm 29:10.
   4. God is King over the whole earth, irrespective of whether mankind realizes it, Psalm 47:2.

B. The consequences have always been severe for those nations who spurn God.
   1. Whereas God blesses nations that practice righteousness, He punishes wicked peoples, Proverbs 14:34.
   2. Wicked persons and nations of persons will be sent to Hell, Psalm 9:17.
   3. God's punishment of wicked Israel occupies much of the Old Testament.
   4. God also brought judgment for evil on Egypt, nations of old Canaan, Assyria and Babylon.

C. Even our beloved nation of America seems to be ignorant of a higher sovereign to which it is amenable.
   1. For instance, our nation has legalized several sins: abortion, gambling, unscriptural divorce and remarriage, prostitution in some places, beverage alcohol, homosexuality, etc.
   2. Further, our government has made illegal some biblical behavior: prayer in many public places, references to the Bible (e.g., 10 commandments) in public buildings, publicly speaking against some sins (e.g., homosexuality), privately refusing to rent property to homosexuals and other unmarried couples, exercising church discipline.
   3. Political and other national figures, who are before the nation, are often immoral and dishonest.
   4. Evolution is required to be taught in public schools and

creation, as well as biblical morality, is disallowed in public schools.

D. America and the nations of the world must come to recognize a higher sovereign, God.
   1. Failure to attribute to God His rightful place will condemn a world of lost souls to a devil's Hell and ruin the nations.
   2. Turning America from a course of doom must begin with those who know 'there is a King in Israel'; if Christians do not endeavor to change the course of America toward God, no one else will, or can!

II. To denominationalism and world religions, 'there is no King in Israel.'

A. Remarkably, denominationalism appears to be ignorant of the Almighty Sovereign it purportedly worships and serves.
   1. Denominationalism denies the Lord preeminence and gives it to popes, modern-day apostles, councils, conventions, preachers, patriarchs, etc., Colossians 1:18.
   2. Denominationalism robs God of His kingly authority and give it to fallible men and conventions of fallible men, John 12:48.
   3. Denominationalism will perhaps be as much or more responsible for a larger number of lost souls in Hell than any other single cause; denominationalism offers enough Christianity to promise a false hope, but it is enough unlike true Christianity to be able to lead souls to Heaven, Revelation 22:18-19.

B. Other world religions oppose Christianity, and therefore, they do not serve the one, true God who authored Christianity.
   1. Buddhists, Moslems, Jews, etc. have little to nothing in common with Christians.
   2. These religions teach of other gods, different eternities, different salvations, etc., Ephesians 4:6.

III. The church of the Lord must acknowledge a 'King in Israel.'

A. There is a King in spiritual Israel, King Jesus, Isaiah 9:7;

Jeremiah 23:5.

1. He is the Prince of kings, Revelation 1:5.
2. He is King eternal, 1 Timothy 1:17; Daniel 7:14.
3. He is King of kings, 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14; 19:16.

B. As King in spiritual Israel, Jesus Christ rules.

1. He has all authority, Matthew 28:18.
2. He rules now, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.
3. He will pass final judgment on all His subjects, 2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 25:32; John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 14:10; 2 Timothy 4:1; etc.

Conclusion:

1. God is King today as much as He was when misguided Israel said "there was no king in Israel."
2. Nations, world religions, denominations, any persons and Christians who cry 'there is no king in Israel' are lost!
3. To practice, tolerate or teach doctrinal error echoes the notion that 'there is no king in Israel.'
4. Man thinks too much of himself when he supposes that he can direct himself religiously, Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 3:5-6.
5. There is a King in Israel to whom we must devote our allegiance to be saved.

Invitation:

1. Dear Friend, don't be guilty of saying or acting like you believe 'there is no King in Israel,' Judges 17:6; 21:25.
2. King Jesus wants you to be baptized for the remission of your sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16.
3. King Jesus wants you to repent if you are an erring child of God, Luke 13:3.

Growing Our Faith

Luke 17:5

Thesis: To undergird and embolden the faith of the children of God.

Introduction:

1. True religious faith is based on biblical evidence, Romans 10:17.
   a. Faith is not a blind leap in the dark as some religionists claim.
   b. If faith were merely subjective (i.e., a blind leap in the dark), we could neither be certain that faith has a part in our salvation nor confident that it can sustain us and enable us to enter Heaven someday.
2. The Bible, from which we draw our faith, is only as firm as the internal and external body of evidence that validates it.
   a. Honestly evaluated, the Bible's internal evidence shows that it is divine in origin—the very mind of God!
   b. Interpreted with neither a purposeful bias against nor a deliberate prejudice for the Bible, external evidence also concludes that the Bible is an otherworldly or a divine masterpiece.
3. The Bible mentions many degrees of faith.
   a. Some types of faith are unacceptable to God: little faith, stolen faith, misplaced faith, failing faith, hindrances to faith, useless faith, weak faith, vain faith, deficient faith, overthrown faith, dead faith, lying faith and trembling faith (among other similar references).
   b. Some types of faith represent the faith necessary for each faithful child of God to acquire and maintain: great faith, saving faith, healing faith, increasing faith, full of faith, system of faith, door of faith, steps of faith, word of faith, joy of faith, household of faith, grounded faith, stedfast faith, established faith, work of faith, spreading faith, comforting faith, growing faith, unfeigned faith, first faith, fight of faith, common faith, sound faith, assurance of faith, professed faith, unwavering faith, living and active faith, prayer of

faith, tried faith, victorious faith and holy faith (among other similar references).

c. The double impact of internal and external biblical evidence erases in the mind of the child of God the degrees of faltering faith and firmly establishes Bible faith on which he can confidently depend to guide him through this life to eternal life.

Body:

I. The Bible's Internal Evidence Is Unimpeachable!

A. Biblical prophecy and fulfillment, involving many hundreds of prophecies, proves that the Bible is the divinely inspired Word of God.

1. For example, there are 333 Messianic prophecies concerning our Savior, all of which are minutely and completely fulfilled (most of which are beyond the capability of self-fulfillment by an imposter, e.g., death of Christ: John 19:31-42; Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 53:9).
2. The historical era during which the church or Messianic kingdom was to be established was definitively predicted more than 500 years before its fulfillment, Daniel 2:31-45; 8:20-21; 10:20; 11:2; Matthew 16:18-19; Acts 2:47 (i.e., Babylonian Kingdom; Medo-Persian Kingdom, 538 B.C.; Grecian Kingdom, 333 B.C.; Roman Empire).

B. The Bible's doctrinal agreement proves that it is of divine origin rather than a mere human production.

1. Approximately 40 human penman from widely different backgrounds over 1,600 years scribed the words of God.
2. The Bible spans three God-given religious dispensations or time periods.
3. Yet, handled aright, the Bible is void of doctrinal contradiction and completely agrees with itself, 2 Timothy 2:15 ASV.

II. The Bible's External Evidence Is Unquestionable!

A. The biblical account makes no errors regarding historical

facts, despite that information being absent from the secular, historical record for many centuries.

1. For instance, an archaeological discovery validated the reference in Acts 13:7 that Cyprus was ruled by a "proconsul" at the time the apostle Paul preached there, though the secular, historical record omitted the change in governing from the jurisdiction of the Emperor to the Roman Senate.
2. Further, the home-rule afforded the Jews through Herod the Great in the first century was replaced with Roman governors following the banishment of Herod Archelaus, though the secular, historical record omits that Pilate was governor when Jesus was crucified; an archaeological find exonerates the Bible regarding the rule of Pilate.

B. The biblical account makes no errors regarding references to scientific facts, though scientists were unaware of those facts for hundreds to thousands of years after the Bible recorded them.

1. For instance, there are paths or currents in the oceans, as the Bible long ago recorded, Psalm 8:8.
2. The Bible indicated that the earth is round well before the flat-earth theory was abandoned, Isaiah 40:22.
3. The Bible recorded that the earth is suspended upon nothing when so-called enlightened humans believed that Atlas held the earth on his shoulders, Job 26:7.
4. The Bible declared nearly 2,000 years before modern science was aware of it that all races of men carry in their veins "one blood," Acts 17:26.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible is obviously from God since the prophecies it recorded hundreds or even thousands of years before their fulfillment place this book beyond the realm of human ingenuity.
2. The Bible is absolutely and completely accurate in every scientific fact or otherwise to which it makes reference.

3. The biblical record contains no errors regarding geography, topography, etc.
4. Every statement that the Bible makes regarding this material universe and the history of the planet that lends itself to evaluation and for which there is sufficient evidence to examine validates the Bible as the most remarkable and superhuman document.
5. The Bible, therefore, is equally credible regarding doctrinal matters.

Invitation:

1. The Bible alone deserves to be the source of Bible faith, Romans 10:17.
2. An obedient faith saves, Romans 1:5; 16:26; 5:1; Hebrews 5:8-9; Acts 2:38.

God Knew What He Was Doing!

Jeremiah 10:23

Thesis: To emphasize and demonstrate that God knew what He was doing when He authored the Bible.

Introduction:

1. Mankind is neither permitted nor able to prepare himself for an eternal home in Heaven aside from divine revelation, Jeremiah 10:23.
2. The Bible is essentially God's operator and service manual for human creation, without which mankind cannot know how to prepare for an eternal home in Heaven, Proverbs 20:24.
3. God will guide any soul in its preparation for an eternal home in Heaven through man's appeal exclusively to the Bible, Proverbs 3:5-7.
4. A brief sampling of Scripture will readily demonstrate that God knew what He was doing when He authored the Bible.

Body:

I. God knew what He was doing when He determined that mankind would be in need of salvation.

A. God knew what He was doing when He made provisions for human redemption before mankind needed redemption.

1. Upon glancing into the future and seeing that mankind would need redemption, our loving God devised a plan of salvation before He created either the universe or mankind, Titus 1:2 "promised before time began" NKJV.
2. Consequently, the church and our Savior Jesus Christ were a part of God's "eternal purpose," Ephesians 3:10-11.

B. God knew what He was doing when He provided for redemption for both non-Christians and erring Christians.

1. Humanity under each of the three, God-given religious dispensations has committed sin, Genesis 3; 6:5; Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 3:23.
2. In our day, God has provided the Gospel, which saves

non-Christians when it is obeyed, Romans 1:16; 6:17-18; Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38.

3. Our loving God also has provided what we might call the second law of pardon for erring Christians, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:8-9.

C. God knew what He was doing when He bolstered the plan of salvation with passages precisely in the area where His redemptive plan would meet the most resistance.

1. No one is saved by anything only, including baptism.
2. However, the New Testament clearly teaches that baptism (immersion in water) is the point at which one's sins are forgiven, Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; 1 Peter 3:20-21.
3. Presumably, God mustered so many more passages in the New Testament for baptism than the other steps of salvation because it is the step in the redemptive plan at which the world bulks the most, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16.
4. Baptism saturates the New Testament: Acts 2:41; 8:12-13, 16, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:3-5; 1 Corinthians 1:13-16; 12:13; 15:29; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5.
5. God only has to say something through the Bible once for it to be so, yet He has devoted many passages to the problem areas characteristically experienced by humans everywhere and throughout the ages, e.g. earthly wealth.

II. God knew what He was doing when He gave instructions to mankind for the home and for the church.

A. God knew what He was doing when He gave instructions for the home.

1. God knew what He was doing when He created Adam and Eve, instead of Adam and Steve, so that humanity could continue through procreation, Genesis 2:21-25; 3:20; 1 Corinthians 6:9 NKJV.
2. God knew what He was doing when He created man to head the home and woman to complement man as they begat and reared children, Genesis 2:18, 20; Ephesians 6:4; 1

Timothy 2:12-15; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-24.

3. God knew what He was doing when He determined that His divine instructions would be taught to each successive generation in the home by parents, Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.

B. God knew what He was doing when He established and gave instructions for the church.

1. God knew what He was doing when He established the church as the body of the saved over which our Saviour Jesus Christ would be the Head, Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23; Colossians 1:18.
2. God knew what He was doing when He determined that each congregation would be ruled by a plurality of elders who meet divinely given qualifications, Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5; Acts 20:17, 28; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9.
3. God knew what he was doing when He gave man inspired revelation (the Bible) whereby children of God could know how to worship God acceptably, exercise Christian living and perform Christian service, John 4:23-24; Romans 12:1-2; Titus 2:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

Conclusion:

1. Man fails in every case when he opts for his own preferences instead of faithfully following God's instructions found in the Bible, Colossians 2:23.
2. The home will never be what it could be as long as mankind disregards divine instruction, e.g., one parent and no parent homes of today.
3. The church (or congregation) will never be what it could be as long as Christians disregard divine instruction, e.g., Corinth.
4. The majority of mankind, including perhaps many Christians as well, will be lost eternally for disregarding divine instruction, Matthew 7:13-14; 13:3-23; Revelation 7:9.

Invitation:

1. God knew what He was doing when He sent His Son into the world to die for you so that your sins could be forgiven, Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:19.
2. Dear Sinner, you do not know what you are doing if you do not respond to the generous offer of God to have your sins removed, Matthew 11:28.
3. Dear Child of God whose soul is blackened with the damning darkness of sin, you do not know what you are doing if you fail to repent and seek forgiveness, 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 1:9.

Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Vote on Doctrine?

Colossians 3:17

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus authorizes, Romans 16:16; Colossians 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than the words of Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matthew 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, James 4:12; Hebrews 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with "the commandments of men," and the apostle Paul condemns false Gospels and the human will (when substituted for divine will), Matthew 15:9; Galatians 1:6-9; Colossians 2:23.
5. One must turn exclusively to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

I. Contemporary churches routinely vote on religious doctrine.

A. Catholic and Protestant doctrine has evolved over the centuries.

1. Catholic doctrine slowly developed over several hundred years, e.g., holy water, 1009; priestly celibacy, 1079; indulgences, 1190; transubstantiation and auricular confession, 1215; purgatory, 1439; Mass in Latin only, 1546; immaculate conception of the virgin Mary, 1854; papal infallibility, 1870; etc.
2. Further crafting of doctrine among Protestants has resulted in crystallizing numerous denominational churches,

i.e., hundreds of denominations and thousands of subgroups within those denominations.

B. Especially denominational doctrine continues to change in our time.
   1. Denominational doctrines have changed within our lifetimes, e.g., before 1910 Methodist babies were born in sin; meatless Fridays resulted from the Catholic doctrine of not eating meat on Fridays, though that doctrine is no longer practiced; some living today can remember when virtually no church had female preachers, elders and deacons, etc.
   2. Many contemporary denominations are troubled over and bring to a vote whether homosexuality is sinful, whether the so-called clergy can be homosexual, etc.

C. Who gave any church the right or privilege of voting on what religious doctrine should be?
   1. No one!
   2. Certainly God did not authorize mankind to craft and ratify religious doctrine, Matthew 15:9.

II. The churches of Christ are obligated to discern and practice only the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

A. The New Testament makes it clear that no doctrine other than the doctrine of Jesus Christ is acceptable, 2 John 9-11.
   1. God has never allowed mankind to craft religious doctrine, Genesis 4:1-8; Hebrews 11:4; Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19.
   2. Today, anything but the doctrine of Christ is evil, 2 John 11.

B. Neither the churches of Christ nor any man or church has been given the right or the privilege of crafting and adopting manmade doctrines.
   1. Mankind has never been permitted to walk in his own doctrines, Jeremiah 6:16; 7:23-24; Malachi 4:4; Colossians 2:6; Proverbs 14:12.
   2. In the Christian Age, everyone is obligated to abide by the authority of Jesus Christ, Colossians 3:17; John 12:48.

C. New Testament doctrine was settled in the first century when inspired men penned the New Testament books, 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 2:1.
   1. No one has to wonder about God's doctrine because it is available for inspection and study in the written Word of God, Ephesians 4:11-14.
   2. For instance, homosexuality is a sin that will keep those guilty of that sin out of Heaven, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 NKJV.
   3. No one has to wonder about divine doctrine respecting marriage-divorce and remarriage, Matthew 19:9; fornication, drunkenness, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 or even lying, Revelation 21:8; etc.

Conclusion:

1. Presuming to vote on religious doctrine is an insult to God.
2. No number of votes in favor of something that God through the Bible God has disallowed can prevail against the decision of God.
3. It behooves mankind to recognize God's Word as authoritative and abide by it, 1 Thessalonians. 2:13.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, it is the height of foolishness for mankind to presume to craft a plan of redemption and further presume that God will abide by it; mankind needs a reality check in the worst way!
2. Unbaptized believers need to follow the instruction of Jesus, Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians need to follow the instruction of the apostle Peter, Acts 8:22.

I Come in the Name of the Lord

1 Samuel 17:45

Thesis: To emphasize that the servant of God does what He does by the authority of God, and hence, the servant of the Lord comes with the power of God.

Introduction:

1. The expression "in the name of the Lord" appears 109 times in the King James Version of the Bible.
   a. The expression "in the name of the Lord" appears in both testaments of the Bible.
   b. However, one must examine the respective contexts in which the expression "in the name of the Lord" appears to ascertain its application in various passages of Scripture.
2. The context in which the expression "in the name of the Lord" appears colors its specific application in various Scripture passages.
   a. "In the name of the Lord" may refer to a servant of God enabled with the power of God, 1 Samuel 17:45.
   b. "In the name of the Lord" may refer to the authority of God with which a servant of God executes a divine assignment, Colossians 3:17.
   c. "In the name of the Lord" may refer especially to a prophet or a preacher in the employ of God who has a divinely sent message to deliver to his fellow man, Jeremiah 26:9, 16, 20; James 5:10.
3. In a sense, I am a prophet of God (a minister of the Gospel, if you will) who comes to you "in the name of the Lord" (i.e., by His authority) with a message of God for my fellow man.
   a. Every faithful preacher of the true Gospel ought to be received in that way, but sometimes auditors of the Word of God do not want to hear it, Jeremiah 11:21.
   b. However, the apostle Paul indicated that even in his day, it was the exception to the rule that the auditors of the Gospel readily acknowledged the Gospel as the Word of God, 1

Thessalonians 2:13.

c. Evidently, even God's people sometimes were reluctant to acknowledge God's preachers as bona fide messengers of God, Jeremiah 44:16.

Body:

I. Those who despise God's preacher who comes in the name of the Lord will suffer divine punishment.

A. God has always selected spokesmen for His Holy Word, 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1.

1. Moses is a case of God's selection of a man who did not want the job, Exodus 3-4.
2. Jeremiah is a case of a preacher (prophet) of God who tried to refrain from heralding God's message, Jeremiah 20:9.
3. God has selected preachers to make the Gospel known, Romans 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-12.

B. God has reacted harshly toward those who challenged His spokesmen, Numbers 16.

1. The motivation for challenging God's servants was envy or jealousy, not serving God or attending to the will of God, Psalm 106:16-18.
2. Stephen accused his countrymen of rejecting the preaching servants of God even as had their forefathers rejected God's messengers and murdered them, Acts 7:51-52.
3. There has always been trouble among God's people respecting the proclamation of God's Word and leadership, 3 John 9-10.

II. Especially hearkening to preachers who come in the name of the Lord can lead to the salvation of souls.

A. God's spokesmen throughout the ages have been required to tell the truth "in the name of the Lord," 1 Kings 22:16.

1. However, sometimes telling God's truth makes enemies even among Christians, Acts 9:29; Galatians 4:16.
2. This truth from God must be heralded with urgency (ASV)

"whether it be welcome or not" (*Vincent's*), 2 Timothy 4:2.

B. The overall purpose of God's spokesmen heralding a message from God is the salvation of souls, Romans 10:13.
   1. Hence, baptism is commanded "in the name of the Lord," Acts 10:48; 19:5; 22:16.
   2. Heeding the message of God through His preachers changes vile humanity from lost sinners to saved saints, 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Conclusion:

1. A faithful preacher of God's Word is due the respect that his role as a servant of God deserves.
2. When a faithful preacher heralds the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he comes in the name of the Lord or by the authority of the Lord.
3. Those who hear the Gospel can hearken to it and be rewarded, or they can reject it and be punished in Judgment.

Invitation:

1. The chief role of faithful preachers who come in the name of the Lord is to bring the good news of salvation to humanity, Romans 10:13-18.
2. Believers need to repent and be baptized, Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians need to repent and pray, Acts 8:22.

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I Come to Thee in the Name of the Lord #2

1 Samuel 17:45

Thesis: To emphasize the importance of relying on God throughout this life and its challenges.

Song: "A Mighty Fortress," "The Banner of the Cross," "Onward, Christian Soldiers," "Sound the Battle Cry," "Soldiers of Christ Arise," "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?"

Introduction:

1. The young man David's encounter with the Philistine giant by the name of Goliath is one of the most colorful narratives anywhere in the Bible, 1 Samuel 17:40-51.
2. The standout statement in that account is, "I come to thee in the name of the LORD" ["Jehovah" ASV], 1 Samuel 17:45.
3. As Christians, we need to essentially present ourselves to this world and its challenges as, "I come to thee in the name of the Lord."

Body:

I. Let's notice more carefully some of the details of David's encounter with the giant named Goliath.

A. Philistines and Israelites were mortal enemies.

1. There armies were in their respective lines facing each other, ready to battle over control of southern Palestine.
2. The Philistines were sea people who had landed in southern Palestine years before, and they had taken control of the southern coast of inland Palestine, to the rolling hills toward the central mountain range.
3. The Israelites had years before come from the east across the Jordan River, and they had taken control of the central mountain range and westward to the rolling hills toward the coast.
4. The Philistines were stronger along the southern coast of Palestine, and the Israelites were stronger in southern Pal-

estine in the mountains.

5. Ever who was stronger at a given time in their shared history dominated the rolling hills between the two nations.
6. Domination of the rolling hills was determined by frequent battles per the backdrop to this narration about David and Goliath.

B. David volunteered to fight the Philistine giant and champion, Goliath.
   1. Because of his youthfulness, David was not apart of the Israelite army arrayed in battle attire and in formation opposite the Philistine army.
   2. He had been left at home to tend the animals while his brothers were apart of the Israelite army.
   3. David, though, was incensed (had righteous anger) because Goliath defied or disregarded the true God by his attacks on God's people.

C. The match up between David and Goliath was unequal and unfair.
   1. Goliath was a battle-hardened and fierce warrior whose mere presence brought trembling fear to other warriors.
   2. David was a young, handsome man who had no experience as a soldier.
   3. Goliath was literally a giant of a man, heavily armored with multiple weapons and even another soldier to carry his shield for him.
   4. David came without armor, sword or spear, but simply with a shepherd's staff and a common sling (with five small stones).
   5. Doesn't seem like a fair fight does it?
   6. It wasn't fair; Goliath didn't have a chance because God was on David's side.

D. David charged ahead.
   1. Whereas the soldiers of Israel cowered at the very sight of Goliath, David ran toward Goliath and the army of the

Philistines.

2. David responded to the verbal trash talk of Goliath toward David with these words: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied," 1 Samuel 17:45.
3. Before Goliath launched his spear or drew his sword, one small, smooth stone hurled from a shepherd's sling brought the giant down.
4. David was victorious for God that day, and God had given David victory.

II. What principles can we learn from David's encounter with Goliath and apply to our own lives?

A. For me as a Gospel preacher, there are a number of principles that apply to me.

1. Everything that I do from the pulpit, classroom lectern or with an open Bible around someone's kitchen table needs to evidence that "I come to thee in the name of the LORD."
2. When I write articles and books, I need to demonstrate that "I come to thee in the name of the LORD."
3. When I live my life and interact with family members, fellow Christians, neighbors, creditors, in-laws (and outlaws) and everyone else, I need to demonstrate that "I come to thee in the name of the LORD."
4. Therefore, if I genuinely present myself to students of God's Word as one who has "come to thee in the name of the LORD," these students of God's Word need to fully embrace what I preach, teach and write as the Word of God, 1 Thessalonians 2:13.
5. Therefore, if I genuinely present myself to those with whom I interact as one who has "come to thee in the name of the LORD," my family, fellow Christians, neighbors, creditors and everyone else with whom I interact ought to investigate Christianity more carefully and favorably.

B. There are several principles from David's encounter with Goliath for all of us as Christians to apply to our lives.
   1. When we each live our lives and interact with family members, fellow Christians, neighbors, creditors, in-laws (and outlaws) and everyone else, we need to demonstrate that we "come…in the name of the LORD."
   2. Therefore, if we genuinely present ourselves to those with whom we interact as those who have "come…in the name of the LORD," family, fellow Christians, neighbors, creditors and everyone else with whom we interact ought to investigate Christianity more carefully and favorably.
   3. All of our waking moments ought to be governed by the firm knowledge that we are the children of God, in name as well as in conduct and even the very words that proceed from our mouths, Ephesians 5:8; Acts 11:26; Matthew 15:18; Ephesians 4:29.

C. There also will be Goliath-like giants in our lives that present seemingly insurmountable challenges.
   1. There are a lot of ordinary transitions in life that seem at the time to be insurmountable (life seems too complicated at times), but we manage to get through those times, e.g., adolescent years, milestone birthdays, parenting, etc.
   2. People of all ages from infants to mature adults can and often do face serious or life threatening medical problems, but we all die and go to be with the Lord sooner or later, Hebrews 9:27; John 14:1-3.
   3. Loss of jobs, intolerable working conditions, death of loved ones, ungodly family members, financial crisis and more may seem as Philistine giants in our lives against which we are unevenly matched.
   4. None of us are going to get out of this world alive, but we can persevere over all the giants this world sends against us to live forever with God in Heaven, Luke 12:4-5; Acts 20:23-24; 21:13; Romans 8:35-39.

5. Some in this world will deliberately confront us, hoping to bring a cloud of dismay over us or actually harm us, but we have legitimate hope that supersedes the worst, ugliest and most awful Philistine giant this world can pit against us, 1 Peter 3:14.

Conclusion:

1. We might say that David was more that a noted singer in Israel; when he met Goliath, he was a noted slinger in Israel.
2. David slew his giant with the help of God; David was victorious through God.
3. We can slay our giants with the help of God; we can be victorious through God.
4. Especially Christians can courageously rush into the battle of giants and win if Christians opt to rely on each other for strength to keep up the good fight, 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Hebrews 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Invitation:

1. We can claim victory for ourselves over earthly giants to live with God forever if we believe and obey God's Word.
2. Belief and obedience results in salvation, Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:9; Romans 6:17.
3. Continued belief and obedience by Christians will keep them saved, Revelation 2:10.

Peace, Peace When There Is No Peace

Jeremiah 6:14

Thesis: To emphasize that true peace only comes through one's uncompromising alignment with God.

Introduction:

1. Jeremiah summarized, verbalized and critiqued the message of the false prophets of his day in the southern kingdom of Judah, Jeremiah 6:14.
   a. False prophets essentially said "All is well" when, in fact, disaster loomed on the close horizon.
   b. "The prophets and priests assure the people that all is well, even while calamity is hovering over them" (*Wycliffe*).
   c. The moral and religious fiber of the nation of Judah was corrupted at every level from people to priests, prophets and kings, Jeremiah 5:31; 23:11, 14; 32:32.
   d. Therefore, God determined to allow a foreign nation to capture Jerusalem and defeat Judah, Jeremiah 20:4-6; 21:2-10.
   e. Jeremiah prophesied of God's coming punishment and called upon his nation to repent, while false prophets presented an alternative, more pleasing but false message.
2. Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet while he was yet a young man, Jeremiah 1:6.

> It was in the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, 629 BC, that Jeremiah was called to be a prophet. At that time the kingdom of Judah enjoyed unbroken peace. Since the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's host before the gates of Jerusalem in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign, 714 BC, Judah had no longer had much to fear from the imperial power of Assyria. (*Keil & Delitzsch*)

   a. Jeremiah, both a priest and a prophet, often was considered the suffering and weeping prophet, Jeremiah 1:1, 6; 9:1.

b. Adam Clarke thinks that Jeremiah was about 14-years-old when he was called to be a prophet whereas Albert Barnes supposes that Jeremiah was about 20-years-old when he became a prophet.
c. Clarke believes Jeremiah was a prophet for 40 years.
d. The prophetic ministry of Jeremiah spanned the reign of five kings of Judah: Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoichin, Jehoichim and Zedekiah (Clarke).

3. Jeremiah had a message from God that no one wanted to hear.
   a. Jeremiah tried unsuccessfully to restrain himself from preaching the unpopular, pending judgments of God, Jeremiah 20:9.
   b. "Jeremiah was in derision, literally a laughing stock, because he cried out. So, he thought he would stop crying out. He could not stop, because the Word of God was a fire in his bones, and he had to speak out" (Davidson 592).
   c. Jeremiah was severely mistreated and about to be murdered as had other of God's prophets been murdered due to the unpopularity of God's message through them, Jeremiah 20:1-2; 26:8, 20-23; 38:4-6.
4. There was no peace with God no matter how often the words were repeated ("peace, peace") as long as Jerusalem and Judah continued to practice moral and religious depravity.
   a. God's judgment against Jerusalem and Judah was a certainty, and ignoring divine revelation or attacking God's messenger did not change God's judgment and pending punishment.
   b. Only sincere repentance could have averted judgment and punishment against Jerusalem and Judah, Jeremiah 6:16; 26:3, 13.

Body:

I. The time period during which Jeremiah prophesied was especially turbulent with Egypt, Assyria and Babylon each attempting to control the Fertile Crescent.

A. Assyria controlled the Fertile Crescent when Jeremiah was called by God to be a prophet in the southern kingdom of Judah.

1. In 722 B.C., because of its sins, God had allowed Assyria to conquer the northern kingdom of Israel, deporting all but the poorest people to other lands controlled by Assyria
2. In 701 B.C., under the leadership of Sennacherib, Assyria also conquered several cities in Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem, but divine intervention killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers camped outside Jerusalem, 2 Kings 19:35.
3. Sennacherib's son, Esarhaddon, briefly removed and carried away King Manasseh from Judah's throne, 2 Chronicles 33:11-13.

B. Egypt reasserted itself by making an alliance with its former enemy Assyria in an effort to fight off the prospect of Babylon rising to power and controlling the Fertile Crescent.
   1. King Josiah of Judah, an ally of Babylon, died in a failed attempt to prevent the Egyptian army from uniting with the Assyrian forces to fight Babylon.
   2. Consequently, Egypt took control of Jerusalem, making Jerusalem and Judah enemies of Babylon.

C. In 612 B.C. with the fall of Assyria's capital, Nineveh, Babylon successfully defeated the combined Egyptians and the Assyrians to take control of the Fertile Crescent.
   1. Subsequently, Babylon defeated and took control of Jerusalem in 606 B.C., with captives (including the prophet Daniel) taken to Babylon on this occasion; the "first taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, is the commencement of the seventy years of Judah's Chaldean bondage, foretold by Jeremiah in Jer 25:11…"(*Keil & Delitzsch*).
   2. In 597 B.C., Judah rebelled against the Babylonians, but upon the commencement of a second siege by Babylon, led by its king, Nebuchadnezzar, Jerusalem surrendered; King Jehoiachin and other captives were taken to Babylon, among whom was the prophet Ezekiel.
   3. After Jerusalem and Judah rebelled again, Babylon re-conquered Jerusalem and destroyed it in 587 B.C.; the

prophet Jeremiah served in Jerusalem as God's spokesman to whom neither commoner nor king would hearken.

II. God's message through the prophet Jeremiah was contested and contradicted by false prophets.

A. Jeremiah prophesied that a captivity of 70 years would occur.
   1. The prophet Jeremiah explicitly proclaimed that Israelites would be captives in Babylon for 70 years, Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10.
   2. The counter message by the false prophets was that there would not be a captivity in Babylon, and if some were taken captive to Babylon that it would not be for long, Jeremiah27:9, 14; 28:11.

B. Jeremiah prophesied that the city of Jerusalem would be utterly destroyed.
   1. God spoke through the prophet about the certainty of Jerusalem's destruction as well as the specific reasons for which God determined to have the city destroyed, Jeremiah 32:28-36.
   2. False prophets denied that Judah and Jerusalem would be devastated, Jeremiah 13:14-15; 37:19.
   3. The captivity of which Jeremiah prophesied lasted from 606 B.C. to 536 B.C. when the Persians, new rulers of the Fertile Crescent, set captive peoples free.
   4. The city of Jerusalem was thoroughly destroyed in 587 B.C.

C. Judah had diminished its sinfulness and denied that God would punish it, Jeremiah 6:14.
   1. Judah viewed its sins of immorality, idolatry, lying and many other sins as relatively insignificant and of minor concern.
   2. Judah persuaded itself that going through some outward motions of practicing Judaism was sufficient remedy to its sinfulness.
   3. The very religious leaders among the prophets and priests who should have led the way in righteousness not only corrupted themselves but they concealed from the people

God's true revelation.

4. Religious and political leaders assured the population that all was well between Judah and God, plus that Judah had nothing to fear from the political upheaval on either side of them in the Fertile Crescent.

   Jer 6:14 Hurt - the spiritual wound. Slightly - as if it were but a slight wound; or, in a slight manner, pronouncing all sound where there is no soundness. Saying - namely, the prophets and priests (Jer 6:13). Whereas they ought to warn the people of impending judgments and the need of repentance, they say there is nothing to fear. Peace - including soundness. All is sound in the nation's moral state, so all will be peace as to its political state (Jer 4:10; 8:11; 14:13; 23:17; Ezek 13:5,10; 22:28). (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*)

III. Some principles respecting Jeremiah's statement in Jeremiah 6:14 apply today as well.

A. It is possible even for the children of God to practice superficial religion.

   Some members live in such a way so as to hinder the influence of the church in their community. Christians should conduct themselves in a way that would promote growth rather than hinder it (I Peter 2:12). Every member should remember the words spoken by the Lord in Matthew 5:16, Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Our actions will promote or hinder church growth. (Smith 627)

1. Superficial religion provides a false security, false hope and false peace, Matthew 15:9.

   Here is a case in which hope is held out, but it is a deceived hope. The false prophets were promis-

ing peace when all the while the judgment of God against them was in rapid preparation. …the false prophets denied the judgment of God and promised victory and prosperity when God had said they were facing war, death, and deportation! (Manasco 261).

2. Even the children of God can be in denial of sins and their consequences, Matthew 7:3.
3. "Jeremiah was dealing with God's people, who obviously did not think anything was wrong with what they were doing. …The people were led into error by those who knew better" (Stacks 778-779).

B. Usually, even the children of God when they sin view the righteous as 'troublers in Israel," 1 Kings 18:17-18.
1. To be pleasing to God, one must do things exactly as God instructs, Colossians 3:17.
2. Some Christians in the first century considered the apostle Paul to be their enemy when he preached and taught the Gospel truth, Galatians 4:16.

C. Mankind must recognize that God and not man makes the rules for morality and religion, Jeremiah 10:23.
1. Of course, this principle is applicable to modern nations as it was applicable to the southern kingdom of Judah.

The Lord is the only one, and His way is the only way in which one can turn. Judah had not totally forgotten God. They wanted God to be there when they needed Him, but they wanted to live as they pleased. Turning to the Lord can only be on His terms. We cannot tell the Lord on what conditions we will serve Him. Judah thought they could do as they pleased, and God would still be with them. I believe America today feels and acts the same way. (Stacks 783)

2. Our nation, religious people and even members of the Lord's church often want peace with God and their fellows on their

own terms, rather than on God's terms, Romans 10:1-3.

D. Sometimes it is impossible and sinful to have peace instead of division, Psalm 120:7.
   1. "There are times when God wants war, not peace—opposition, not submission—separation, not unity" (Showalter 22).
   2. Peace at any cost, especially at the cost of biblical truth, is a price too high to pay.
   3. The goal, of course, ought to be to have peace with all men, Romans 12:18.

      Faithful brethren should do all that is within their power to maintain the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). This is, of course, accomplished only when brethren walk by the same rule (Philippians 3:16). But, this unity was/is not to be purchased at the expense of either truth or righteousness. Some division is required of those who desire to follow the Lord. For instance, if men refuse either to come to the truth, or to remain in the truth, brethren must not extend fellowship to them (II Thessalonians 3:6f.; John 12:42; II John 9-11; I John 2:18f.). Such a refusal of fellowship is, in effect, a division, since they would be divided off from one another in a spiritual sense. Another example is in the area of moral living. If and when brethren refuse to practice righteous living, the church has an obligation to withdraw fellowship from the erring member. (Sztanyo 7)

   4. "…Christ was both a champion of religious division and religious unity! It is incumbent upon each of us to recognize the principles which govern each of these demands of our Lord" (Sztanyo 7).

      God's children should maintain unity and promote peace whenever possible! But, at the same time, followers of Jehovah must declare war and enforce di-

vision whenever needed!" (Sztanyo 8).

> Bible unity is not just "going along to get along." For some time, many members of the church have thought that just getting along without problems was unity. This is much like those in Jeremiah's day who cried, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11). It is truly sad to see this sort of attitude in the church. Of course this idea of unity is not a true conception of Biblical unity. (Smith 622)

E. False prophets abound today as they did in Jeremiah's day, 1 John 4:1.
   1. Some false prophets are members of the Lord's church, 2 Peter 2:1-2.
   2. Denominationalism offers the pretense of peace when there is no peace thereby; after all regarding false prophets (preachers), "[s]ome preach some truth" (Davidson 593).
   3. Like Jeremiah, God's preachers today must preach the pure Word of God irrespective of whether those who hear it like it, 2 Timothy 4:2-4.
   4. Religious leaders, inside or outside of the church, can deceive all who hear their messages, 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.
   5. It's the same today as it was in Jeremiah's day, in that "… the prophets prophesied falsely; and the people continued in sin, being deceived by the priests and the prophets" (Clarke).
   6. However, the children of God cannot have peace with a false teacher, Romans 16:17-18; Ephesians 5:11.

F. After awhile, sin causes one's senses to be desensitized.
   1. The apostle Paul referred to it as a seared conscience, 1 Timothy 4:2.
   2. "The hardened sinners of Israel had lost all sense of shame and had no feelings either of regret or remorse for their transgressions. There remained absolutely nothing else for God to do except to visit the people with divine

punishment" (Coffman).

Conclusion:

1. Christians must opt for scriptural peace.
2. Peace at any price is not the peace of God.

> Peace comes by following God's Word wholly, completely, and unashamedly. The peace that Jesus gives us and that which we must maintain cannot be compromised. Jesus at no time taught us by example, inference, or commandment that peace could be maintained at the expense of truth. Submission to that divine law is the only way of peace. …Seeking true peace does not include the support of error or the acceptance of those teaching error. (Cox 71-72)

Invitation:

1. True peace only comes through one's uncompromising alignment with God.
2. One must become a Christian on divine terms, Mark 16:16.
3. One must continue to be a faithful Christian, Revelation 2:10; Acts 8:22.

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Weak Hands and Feeble Knees

Isaiah 35:3

Thesis: Almighty God is the only resource by whom we can strengthen weak hands and feeble knees (spiritually).

Introduction:

1. Isaiah 35:3 uses the illustration of a weakened physical condition to represent the spiritual frailty of the nation of Judah.
2. As a weakened physical body may need rehabilitation and a steady diet of the right kind of food, the Israelites in Isaiah's day needed spiritual rehabilitation (rehab) and the right kind of spiritual food.
3. Of course, the same principle still applies today.
   a. Souls need spiritual rehab, 1 Timothy 4:8.
   b. Souls also need the right kind of spiritual food, 1 Peter 2:2.
   c. Only then can the child of God be spiritually strong, no longer characterized spiritually as having weak hands and feeble knees, Hebrews 5:12-14.

Body:

I. Let's look a little more closely at Isaiah 35:3.

A. Generally, through the prophet Isaiah, God called upon the nation of Judah to replace its despair with courage.

1. In the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, the Assyrian King Sennacherib conquered 46 cities, numerous smaller villages of Judah and laid siege to Jerusalem, driving out of those communities 200,150 people (Halley 286).
2. Jerusalem was spared by the divine intervention of God when He sent an angel of death into the Assyrian camp, killing 185,000 soldiers, 2 Kings 19:35-36.
3. Consequently, the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem had been in great despair, but now God through the prophet Isaiah called upon them to rebound in courage and hope.
4. Respecting Isaiah 35:3, *Keil & Delitzsch* comments:

"Those who have become weak in faith, hopeless and despairing, are to cheer up; and the stronger are to tell such of their brethren as are perplexed and timid, to be comforted now: for Jehovah is coming…"

5. Similar language appears elsewhere in both testaments of the Bible, Job 4:3-4; Hebrews 12:12; Ezekiel 7:17; 21:7.

B. God through the prophet Isaiah gave the despondent Israelites two reasons to cheer their spirits: physical release from oppression then and the promise of the coming Messiah in the future.

> The sense is, strengthen and sustain the feeble and the desponding by the promised blessings; by the assurances (Isa 34) that all the enemies of God and his people will be destroyed; and that he will manifest himself as their Protector, and send upon them the promised blessings. Or it may be regarded as addressed to the officers and ministers of religion when these blessings should have come; and as being an exhortation to them to make use of the influences, the promises, and the consolations which would attend the coming of the Messiah, to strengthen the feeble, and confirm those who were faint-hearted. (Barnes)

1. Butler comments respecting Isaiah Chapter 35, "This chapter finds its ultimate fulfillment in the messianic kingdom (the church)" (196).
2. More extensively, Butler compares Isaiah 35 with Hebrews 12.

> Verses 3-4 are apparently paraphrased in Hebrews 12:12-13. Perhaps the idea of Isaiah in this whole section (vs. 1-7) is appropriated by the Hebrews 12:12-13 passage. Hebrews 12 is the chapter in which the Mosaic dispensation is contrasted with the Christian dispensation (Zion) and the Hebrew Christians are exhorted to cling to the kingdom which cannot be shaken

(Christian) because this was God's goal in the Old Testament. This seems to indicate the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews is saying the Christian dispensation is the fulfillment of the promises made in Isaiah 35, and "therefore" the messianic age is the point upon which God's people are to focus for "strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees." (198)

3. Certainly for we who live thousands of years this side of Isaiah 35:3, our focus for strengthening weak hands and feeble knees pertains to the Messiah who came in the first century A.D. and who is coming again.

C. God conveyed through Isaiah this twofold consolation through an illustration of a weakened body.

> Strength resides mainly in the arms, and in the lower limbs, or the knees. If these are feeble, the whole frame is feeble. Fear relaxes the strength of the arms, and the firmness of the knees; and the expressions 'weak hands,' and 'feeble knees,' become synonymous with saying, of a timid, fearful, and despondding frame of mind. Such were to be strengthened by the assurance of the favor of God, and by the consolations which would flow from the reign of the Messiah. The Jews, who looked abroad upon the desolations of their country, were to be comforted by the hope of future blessings; those who lived in those future times were to be consoled by the assurances of the favor of God through the Messiah (Barnes)

II. Left to his own devices, mankind cannot spiritually strengthen weak hands and feeble knees.

A. Historically, mankind has wandered away from God, in a sense spiritually developing weak hands and feeble knees.

1. Mankind through the persons of Adam and Eve first wandered from God in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3.

2. Cain notoriously continued the family tradition of sin when he murdered his brother Abel, Genesis 4.
3. Mankind steadily steeped itself more in sin until God refused to tolerate sinful humanity any longer, hence destroying "the world that then was" in the worldwide flood of Noah's day, 2 Peter 3:5-6; 1 Peter 3:20; Genesis 6-8.
4. The Bible is filled with instances of sin, even by those who professed to be holy worshippers of God, Romans 3:23.

B. Utter futility and hopelessness results from mankind's attempt at self-reliance.
1. Mankind has always been slow to realize that he cannot save himself apart from God, Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 20:24.
2. Even God's special people often have sought to rely on themselves rather than relying on God through His divine instruction, Romans 10:1-3.
3. The end result of self-reliance is sin and its consequence, Romans 6:23; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.
4. However, our loving God has always been open to souls who come to their senses and repent of their obstinate waywardness, Job 33:27-28; Luke 15:11-32.

III. Mankind can only strengthen weak hands and feeble knees in a spiritual sense through God.

A. Historically, mankind has only strengthened weak hands and feeble knees spiritually by appealing to God.
1. The phrase "we have sinned" appears 23 times in the Bible, Daniel 9:5.
2. The phrase "I have sinned" appears 19 times in the Bible, Psalm 41:4; Luke 15:18, 21.
3. There is hope only when people return to God, Nehemiah 1:6-9.
4. For us, not without Jesus Christ, but only through Jesus Christ can we in essence strengthen weak hands and feeble knees, Philippians 4:13.

B. God, through the Bible, promises strength spiritually not

otherwise attainable.

1. Part of God's plan to strengthen His people includes stronger Christians strengthening weaker Christians, Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Galatians 6:1-2.
2. In addition, each child of God has the responsibility to participate in his own strengthening, Hebrews 12:12.
3. Christians must avail themselves of the proper spiritual diet to be strengthened, 1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14.
4. Christians must exercise themselves to have spiritually strengthened hands and knees, 1 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 5:14.

Conclusion:

1. We can rely on Jesus Christ for spiritually strong hands and knees, Philippians 4:13.
2. As Isaiah 35:3 intimates, our hope rests on our Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Invitation:

1. Only through Jesus Christ can we have boldness before the very throne of God, Hebrews 4:16.
2. However, God's grace and mercy only saves the obedient, Hebrews 5:9; Mark 16:16.
3. Further, God's grace and mercy only saves erring Christians who repent, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Companions of Thieves

Isaiah 1:23 NKJV

Thesis: To show that compromise of divine religion for any reason spells disaster, at least spiritually and usually otherwise as well.

Introduction:

1. From the time of the exodus from Egypt, Israelites had combo religious-civil leadership.
2. Successes and failures either religiously or politically affected both.
3. Hence, when Isaiah wrote Isaiah 1:23, he identified the sad state of Israelite government and their practice of Judaism.
4. We are sadly mistaken if we think that the religious morality of our nation's citizens and government does not have a direct impact on justice and fairness in our nation.

Body:

I. Consider the wickedness into which the nation of Judah had fallen.

A. Let's look more closely at some of the words that make up Isaiah 1:23.

1. The word "rebellious" means "to turn away…morally" (*Biblesoft's*).
2. The word "gifts" means "a donation" (*Biblesoft's*).
3. The phrase "followeth after" means "to run after…usually with hostile intent" (*Biblesoft's*); the phrase describes the earnestness with which rulers were willing to exchange justice for a donation.
4. The word "rewards" means "bribe" (*Biblesoft's*).
5. "They judge" means "pronounce sentence" or is sometimes translated as "defend" (Psalm 82:3).
6. The word "cause" means "contest" (*Biblesoft's*), in this case a legal contest to be decided by the appropriate officials.
7. "Cause" also means "to strive, contend" (Vine).

B. The religious-civil leadership of the nation of Judah was

morally bankrupt.

1. Isaiah spoke plainly, unequivocally without fear of contradiction that the leaders of Judah, i.e., especially judges, were wholly corrupt and devoid of concern for God or justice, Luke 18:1-8.
2. "The prophet says this [Isaiah 1:23] without a figure" (*Keil & Delitzsch*).
3. The leaders of Judah were rebellious against God, and it showed by the corrupted treatment of the defenseless poor who could not afford to pay bribes, Exododus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19.
4. Wycliffe notes that the leaders of Judah were arrayed:

   > …against the sovereignty and law of God. These princes and government officials, who were charged with the duty of upholding the law and protecting the public against crime, were covertly in league with the leaders of the underworld…

5. Barnes observes that the leaders of Judah had become "accomplices" to wicked people, and Clarke calls them "associates" of thieves, cf. Matthew 21:13.

C. Spiritual departures from divine instruction, even by the children of God, are well documented throughout Scripture.
   1. The prophet Daniel summarized the wickedness of the Jews in departing from God, which with them had almost become a family and national tradition, Daniel 9:5-6.
   2. The prophet Micah told of the same wickedness of which Isaiah wrote, Micah 3:11; 7:3.
   3. It was common for the wicked to attempt to distort justice in their favor through the use of bribes, Proverbs 17:23.

II. What can we learn from the mistakes of the nation of Judah, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11?

A. The child of God must not form partnerships with wicked people, Proverbs 29:24; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Ephesians 5:11.

B. A child of God cannot become partner with the wicked world except that he first compromise his relationship with God, Ezekiel 22:12.
C. God has a special place in His divine heart for the disadvantaged, especially poor widows and orphans, and so must we, Isaiah 10:1-2; Zechariah 7:10; Matthew 25:31-46; James 1:27.
D. Christians dare not rebel against God or approve of those who do rebel against God, 1 Samuel 15:23; Romans 1:32; 2 Timothy 2:19; Philippians 4:3.

Conclusion:

1. The nation of Judah to which Isaiah wrote was morally and politically bankrupt, and it needed to turn back to God for both its spiritual and physical welfare.
2. Our nation can only remain great if its citizens and leaders are morally upright.
3. Success spiritually for us as individuals and physically for the preservation of our country begins with the course each person pursues religiously.
4. "Neither holy cities nor royal ones, neither places where religion is professed nor places where government is administered, are faithful to their trust if religion does not dwell in them" (Henry).

Invitation:

1. Genuine Christians make the best citizens and offer the most promise for the providential preservation of our nation.
2. You can become a Christian by being baptized into Jesus Christ, Galatians 3:27.
3. Erring Christians can become better Christians by resolving to practice Christianity without compromise, Revelation 2:10.

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Are You Prepared?

Ezra 7:10

Thesis: To encourage Christians and non-Christians alike to prepare themselves of Christian service now and eternity to come.
Song: "Is Thy Heart Right With God?"

Introduction:

1. Obviously, Ezra was a prophet of God who did not take his prophetic office lightly.
   a. Ezra made a four-fold effort to serve God.
   b. He prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord.
   c. He performed the law of the Lord.
   d. He taught the law of the Lord to others.
   e. He familiarized himself with the statutes and judgments of God.
2. Likewise, all Christians should endeavor to serve God.
   a. Preachers need to make the special preparation and effort characteristic of Ezra.
   b. Elders also need to imitate Ezra.
   c. Deacons can learn how to serve well and conscientiously from the example of Ezra.
   d. All Christians should endeavor to serve God with as much fervor and enthusiasm as Ezra.

Body:

I. We need to prepare our hearts to seek the law of the Lord.

A. Preparation of the heart is precisely the place to begin serving God.
   1. Jesus taught that evil or goodness proceed from the heart, Matthew 15:18-19; 5:28.
   2. Righteous servants of God are first righteous in their hearts, Matthew 5:8.
   3. Christians should imitate the very heart of Jesus, Matthew 11:29.
   4. Whatever a soul is outwardly, he is first in his heart!

5. We are what we think in our hearts, Philippians 4:8.

B. Our hearts must not seek any law other than the law of the Lord.
   1. For instance, other gospels are not **the** Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19.
   2. Pursuing the spirit or the laws of sectarianism (within or out of the church) is not instilling in our hearts the law of the Lord, Matthew 15:9; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13.

C. We must seek **only** the law of the Lord.
   1. Jesus Christ refused to give His allegiance to Satan by resorting to the written law of the Lord, Matthew 4:10.
   2. Allegiance to other gods and embracing their laws is a grave offense to God, Exodus 20:4-5; 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:14-15.

II. We need to do the law of the Lord.

A. It is not enough to know and not do the law of the Lord.
   1. The sin of omission is as deadly as any sin one might commit, James 4:17.
   2. We kid ourselves if we think that knowing God's Word without putting it into practice will permit us to live in Heaven with God, James 1:22.

B. It is not enough to merely believe the law of the Lord.
   1. Faith without works is wholly useless, James 2:14-17, 20, 24, 26.
   2. Faith without demonstrating it in corresponding activity is no more productive than the faith of "devils," James 2:18-19.

C. A person must first practice the law of the Lord himself before he could possibly be an effective teacher of the law of the Lord.
   1. Consequently, the Pharisees of Jesus' day were poor instructors, Matthew 23:2-3.
   2. Jesus Christ is the perfect Teacher, partly because He first obeyed the law of the Lord, Hebrews 5:8-9.

III. We need to teach the law of the Lord.

A. Naturally, preachers must teach the law of the Lord.
   1. The apostle Paul commanded Timothy to preach the Word

of God, 2 Timothy 4:2.

2. Preachers are authorized by God and thereby obligated to preach the Word of God, Titus 2:15.

B. Elders must be able to teach the law of the Lord.
   1. One of the qualifications for the appointment of elders includes boldly (if necessary) teaching the law of the Lord in the face of opposition, Titus 1:9.
   2. Another qualification of elders is to be an able and willing teacher of the law of the Lord, 2 Timothy 3:2.

C. All Christians share the obligation to teach the law of the Lord.
   1. Every Christian according to ability and opportunity has the responsibility to teach the law of the Lord, 2 Timothy 2:24.
   2. Each of us is required to give answers to those who would enquire of us regarding the practice of our religion, 1 Peter 3:15.

IV. We need to ground ourselves in the statutes and judgments of God.

A. We should not seek to edify ourselves with other doctrines.
   1. Any doctrine besides the doctrine of Christ is evil, 2 John 9-11.
   2. Only the law of the Lord is approved doctrine, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

B. We should not follow false teachers.
   1. Impenitent false teachers must have a proverbial cowbell hung around their necks, Romans 16:17-18.
   2. The teaching of every teacher or preacher must be examined in light of what the law of the Lord teaches, 1 John 4:1.

C. We can only nourish our spiritual bodies by feasting on the law of the Lord.
   1. We do this through studying or meditating on the law of the Lord, 2 Timothy 2:15.
   2. A regular diet of the law of the Lord will make strong Christians, 2 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-6:2.
   3. Only then will Christians be grounded in the faith, Colos-

sians 2:6-7; 1:23.

Conclusion:

1. Each of us should imitate the worthy example of Ezra.
   a. We should prepare our hearts to seek the law of the Lord.
   b. We should do the law of the Lord, which for everyone now living is the New Testament or Gospel—the perfect law of liberty, James 1:25.
   c. We should teach the law of the Lord.
   d. We should ground ourselves in the law of the Lord.
2. If Christians everywhere imitated the noble example of Ezra, the church would grow stronger spiritually and numerically.
   a. There is widespread failure throughout the brotherhood to **prepare**, **seek**, **do** and **teach**.
   b. This failure partly hinders every congregation of the Lord's church.

Invitation:

1. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people; have you made adequate preparation to spend eternity in Heaven?
2. If not, erring Christians must repent and return to the Lord, while unbaptized believers must repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 8:22; 2:36-38.

Understanding How God Communicates with Mankind, Today!

Text: "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17 NKJV).

Thesis: God communicates with mankind today through direct statements, examples and implications recorded upon the pages of the New Testament.

Songs: "Ancient Words," "O Sacred Word," "Precious Words," "Wonderful Words of Life," "The Precious Book Divine"

Introduction:

1. God communicates with mankind today through direct statements, examples and implications recorded upon the pages of the New Testament.
   a. There are only three basic avenues of verbal communication: commands or direct statements, approved examples and implications from which one is obligated to infer precisely what is implied—no more and no less.
   b. The New Testament is the only applicable covenant today—not the Old Testament (in which are Patriarchy and Judaism) and not what might be the case in eternity (e.g., Heaven).
   c. What may be applicable eternally in Heaven is immaterial to contemporary conduct.
   d. The Old Testament has been replaced with the New Testament (Romans 7:6-7; 2 Corinthians 3:6-11; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14).
   e. For instance, the New Testament, rather than instructions to Adam and Eve or Noah or Moses, is applicable today.
   f. Without a valid biblical interpretation, there is no way to comprehend divine revelation.
2. The basic principle of interpersonal communication is innate—we are born with it!

a. The young child who pleads with a parent for or against something will often go to great lengths, including citing the example of or the implied approval of an action based on what Mommy and Daddy do.
b. "Don't do as I do, but do as I say!" simply does not work, especially in childrearing.
c. Fundamental biblical interpretation is no more difficult than conversation (communication) between children.

3. There is no essential difference between the study of the Scriptures and the study of any other subject.
   a. Basic biblical instructions in the New Testament for salvation, Christian worship and Christian service are not complicated.
   b. God chose to use the mechanism of verbal communication between humans (even between children) to communicate His will to mankind through the Bible (Romans 10:13-15).
   c. Divine instruction is not cloaked in God-words (so-called, "God-speak") and mechanisms of communication foreign to the ordinary ways people communicate and comprehend communication.
4. The Bible must be viewed as authoritative respecting whatever topic that it addresses.
   a. There would be no reason for God to provide divine revelation unless both God was able to provide discernible communication, and He designed mankind with sufficient faculties to understand it (2 Timothy 2:15; John 8:32).
   b. God gave divine revelation (the Bible) to communicate with mankind, and God intended for His revelation to be understood.
   c. Correct biblical interpretation is helped along by acknowledging that God has a right to make demands of mankind, and that He has done that through the Bible.
   d. Without correct biblical interpretation, one could not organize a local congregation, conduct its worship in an acceptable manner to God or practice anything else with regard to Christianity.

Body:

I. The Bible is of divine origin, it has been divinely transmitted, and it has been divinely preserved.

A. The Word of God is to be revered because it is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16, lit. "divinely breathed" *Biblesoft's*; *Robertson's*; *Vincent's*).

1. Therefore, the student of God's Word realizes that the Bible does not contradict itself.
2. Yet, one must distinguish between historical inclusion of information versus divine instruction in the Bible to arrive at correct biblical interpretation (e.g., King Solomon's sins versus divinely inspired instruction).

B. One must determine to understand what the Bible means and be willing to make any needed application to himself.

1. Irrespective of how inconvenient it may be, one needs to follow the evidence wherever it leads.
2. All divine instruction (e.g., salvation, worship, Christian living, Christian service, etc.) and promised blessings (e.g., eternity in Heaven) that are applicable to mankind today can only be learned from properly interpreting the New Testament.
3. Without proper biblical interpretation, one cannot have proper biblical faith.
4. Mankind is obligated to try to understand divine revelation.

C. Without proper or valid interpretation, how could one know:

1. what blessings God reserves for His creation—man,
2. what prohibitions God expects mankind to respect,
3. how God desires to be worshipped,
4. how one can become a child of God,
5. how God expects mankind to practice Christian living,
6. how God expects us to enact Christian service or
7. what God expects men to believe and do regarding other Christian doctrine?

D. "The true canon of Scripture has been established. …The

text we have is reliable. …The text of the Bible can be adequately translated and understood" (Flatt 65-66).

E. Successful interpretation of Scripture requires one to ascertain what the original audience or recipients of it were expected to understand.
   1. Learning of the historical setting of the biblical text will help one understand the correct interpretation of Scripture.
   2. Knowing something about the prevailing culture of the people involved in a passage will aid comprehension of the divine message.

II. There are helps and hindrances to correct biblical interpretation.

A. Hindrances to correct biblical interpretation include:
   1. Desiring to please others or oneself hinders correct biblical interpretation (Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).
   2. Reading the Bible without expecting to understand it also hinders interpreting the Scriptures successfully.
   3. Not having a predetermination to accept God's Word as authoritative in whatever it specifies will surely lead to a train-wreck of biblical interpretation.
   4. One must avoid backdating present circumstances to the ancient, biblical past (i.e., we must avoid overlaying the past with the template of the present).

B. Helps to correct biblical interpretation include:
   1. To comprehend the Word of God, one must bring as much objectivity as he possibly can to the process of biblical interpretation.
   2. For successful biblical interpretation, one must examine the biblical context carefully: immediate context (passage), remote context (Bible book, testament), total biblical context (entire Bible).
   3. It is important to know to whom any portion of Scripture under scrutiny is addressed.
   4. Knowing the type of biblical literature (e.g., history,

prophecy, prose, literal, figurative) being studied contributes to successful biblical interpretation.

5. Knowing when a portion of Scripture was written can help one better understand its meaning and application.
6. "Always interpret according to the known purpose of the author" (Dungan 172).
7. The Bible is its own best commentary; difficult biblical passages can be more easily understood by consulting the Bible in other passages about the same subject that are more easily understood.
8. Sound reasoning is a necessity to successful biblical interpretation

C. It is not the case that generally mankind is unable to understand divine instruction, but rather he understands it well enough to know that in many instances he does not like it.
   1. The Bible is not so vague as to be overpowered by examination by honest hearts.
   2. "If the Bible does not mean what it says, there is no way by which we can know what it does mean" (Dungan 60).

III. Commands or Direct Statements

A. Since no part of the Bible is directly addressed to any person living today, one must infer that some commands or direct statements apply to people today.
   1. The entire New Testament (Gospel) is irrelevant and non-applicable (i.e., a dead letter) unless correct biblical interpretation includes divine implication, from which mankind is obligated and capable of drawing only warranted (necessary) inferences.
   2. One must correctly infer from divine implications even from among commands or direct statements in the New Testament as to which commands or direct statements apply today (e.g., "desire spiritual gifts" 1 Corinthians 14:1; etc.).
   3. Some New Testament commands, but not all of them, are applicable today (e.g., "thy kingdom come," Matthew 6:10).

B. Some biblical commands are general in nature—the details for fulfillment of the command are not specified in Scripture.
   1. Mark 16:15 has two general commands within it—"go" and "preach."
   2. Since "how" we are to "go" into all the world with the Gospel is not specified, we must decide for ourselves which types of transportation seem expedient to us (e.g., motorcycle, car, bus, plane, boat, walking, etc.).
   3. Since "how" we are to "preach" is not specified, we must choose the means by which we will communicate God's Word (e.g., oral presentation, TV, radio, Internet, literature, etc.).

C. Other biblical commands are specific since the details of how the command must be fulfilled appear in Scripture.
   1. For instance, the direct statements or commands respecting the kind of worshipful music God requires of Christians is so specific that it rules out every other kind of music for Christian worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13).
   2. "Make music" would have been a general command had God authorized that, which could be satisfied by playing and singing, playing instead of singing or singing only.
   3. "Use vocal music" would have been somewhat of a general command as well, authorizing humming, whistling, making the sounds of instruments or singing.
   4. The biblical direction in the New Testament to "sing" is specific instruction that authorizes "singing," but it does not authorize playing mechanical instruments of music or other vocal sounds besides singing.

IV. Approved Examples

A. The apostle Paul required first century Christians to follow apostolically approved examples.
   1. "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (NKJV). "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (NIV) (1 Corinthians 11:1).

2. "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern" (Philippians 3:17 NKJV).

B. We learn from an apostolically approved example that the Lord's Supper is to be observed by Christians weekly on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7).
   1. There is no other verse of Scripture to which one can turn to learn this information.
   2. Therefore, to ignore approved examples would do away with any biblical authority regarding the day on which and the frequency with which God desires Christians to observe the Lord's Supper.

C. Approved examples, for instance concerning worshipful music, support biblical commands on the same subject.
   1. Examples of worshipful music after the establishment of the Lord's church only promote singing (Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; Hebrews 2:12).
   2. Even the example of Jesus and His disciples during our Lord's ministry and immediately before the beginning of the church was singing, rather than playing or, playing and singing (Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26).

V. Implications and Inferences

A. Consider the nature of implications and inferences.
   1. A square with a 5-inch long side obviously has a perimeter of 20 inches, and the area within the square is 25 square inches.
   2. One evaluates the available evidence or information, recognizes the implication and correctly infers the perimeter and the area.
   3. Absolute, objective truth can be known through implication and inference!
   4. The fact that a person can reason incorrectly does not mean that reason cannot be trusted.

B. "Inference may be used legitimately in the ascertaining of

facts, and also in the conclusion reached from them. …Abraham went down from Canaan into Egypt; when he came out from that country Lot returned with him. Though it is not said that Lot went into Egypt with him, we infer it" (Dungan 91).

1. "…[T]hat which is taught implicitly is just as binding as that which is taught explicitly" (Warren, "Logic" 64).
2. Careful consideration of sufficient evidence can yield definitive knowledge.

C. Only inference from biblical implications can account for the refusal of Christians in the New Testament record and in early church history to obey civil government whenever government interfered with the practice of Christianity (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17; Acts 4:17-21; 5:29).
   1. If first century Christians had not so reacted, then Christianity would have vanished from planet earth centuries ago, almost at its inception.
   2. Christians are obligated to obey the law of the land (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17), except when doing so would require disobeying God.

D. The requirement of the church to assemble implies certain responsibilities for which Christians must make inferences (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7).
   1. A place must be selected in which a local congregation can assemble (e.g., public building, rented space, an outdoor location, someone's home, church-owned property, etc.).
   2. Times to assemble must be selected and made known to the congregation in order for it to assemble together.
   3. Someone must be responsible for selecting the location and times of assembling (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

Conclusion:

1. God's Word can be known—biblical interpretation is not all that complicated.
   a. There is little difference between biblical interpretation and

the common, everyday interpretation that people, from small children to adults, exercise through ordinary communication between each other.

b. This skill is the core of all communication.
c. The difficult part is obeying the Word of God when our desires differ from divine instruction.

2. There is definitive application of God's Word that God requires of all people.
3. The Bible was never intended to be subject to different interpretation than what God expected the original recipients to understand and do (2 Peter 1:20).
   a. Correct biblical interpretation may be inconvenient, but we must be prepared to obey God in any case.
   b. Anyone preaching, teaching or otherwise affirming a doctrine is obligated biblically to defend that doctrine with a correct biblical interpretation of God's Word.
   c. To a degree, every Christian needs to be a defender of the Christian faith (Colossians 4:6; 1 Peter 3:15).
4. Successful verbal communication between persons (divine or human) derives from commands or direct statements, approved examples and implications.
5. Orderly thinking, rather than disorganized thinking, is essential to correct biblical interpretation.
6. Can we know how to become the children of God in this age?
   a. Can we know how God wants to be worshipped?
   b. Can we know how God wants us to live our lives?
   c. Can we know how God wants us to serve Him while we are on earth?
   d. Has God not left us sufficient instructions to answer these questions with certainty?
   e. Has God not made mankind sufficiently able to understand divine revelation respecting these matters just mentioned?
7. Only through proper biblical interpretation can one adequately order his life on earth and prepare for eternity.

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Fire Is Fire

Lev. 10:1-2

Thesis: To emphasize God says what He means and means what He says, and to do otherwise spells certain condemnation.
Song: *Give Me The Bible*

Introduction:

1. Nadab and Abihu were priests of God, sons of Aaron, who was God's high priest.
   a. They may have assumed that fire is fire and that the source from which it was acquired was unimportant.
   b. Nadab and Abihu carelessly handled God's instructions regarding the ceremonial fire.
   c. With God, one fire was not as good as any other fire, and God consumed the two priests with a fire from heaven, Leviticus 10:1-2.
2. Uzzah was one of the movers, who at the bidding of King David, moved the Ark of the Covenant.
   a. Apparently, Uzzah and the others that day presumed that moving is moving.
   b. Uzzah and the others with him carelessly handled God's instructions for the moving of the ark, Exodus 25:12-15; Numbers 4:15.
   c. With God, one method of moving something is not equal to all other ways of moving an item, and God struck Uzzah dead when he steadied the ark with his hand on the shaking oxcart, 1 Chronicles 13:1-14.
3. As in these two biblical incidents, contemporary men often make unwarranted assumptions about God's instructions.
   a. God has always said what He means and means what He says, Deuteronomy 4:2.
   b. To disregard, add to or take away from God's instructions on any subject will lead to certain condemnation, Revelation

22:18-19; Proverbs 30:6.

c. However, modern man often carelessly handles God's instructions on a number of subjects.

Body:

I. Church is Church

A. Most people today assume that one church is as good as another.
   1. This is evident from the popular slogan, "Worship at the church of your choice."
   2. Currently, there are hundreds of denominational churches and thousands of variations among them from which to choose.
   3. They have their distinctive names, creeds and organizational patterns.

B. Yet, Jesus Christ died to purchase one (His) church, which is His spiritual body, Acts 20:28; Colossians 1:18; 3:15.
   1. Mankind would fare better to worship with the church of Christ's choice, Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4.
   2. Our Lord's church was known by several distinctive designations, most of which glorify Deity (e.g., churches of Christ, church of God, house of God, the church, Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthinas 1:2; 1 Timothy 3:15; Acts 2:47).
   3. The church Jesus built has the New Testament alone as its all-sufficient creed, John 12:48; Matthew 15:9; Revelation 20:18-19; 2 Peter 1:3.
   4. Every congregation of our Lord's church is independent and guided by elders, served by deacons and taught by preachers and teachers, Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:8-13; 2 Timothy 4:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14.

C. To assume that one church is as good as another is to make a grave spiritual error with tragic eternal consequences.
   1. Jesus will return for His church and take it to Heaven with Him, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17.
   2. Regrettably, according to Jesus, the vast majority of religious people will be lost, Matthew 7:13-14; 21-23.

3. To avoid divine condemnation and to receive eternal blessings, one must renounce his membership in any manmade church and become a faithful member in the church that Jesus built.

II. Worship Is Worship

A. Most people today assume that it does not matter how we worship as long as we are sincere.
   1. Again, this is evident from the popular slogan "Worship at the church of your choice."
   2. There is great diversity regarding worship among the thousands of manmade churches, as well as between them and the church of the New Testament.

B. Yet, the first century church has a distinctive, God-given pattern of worship, Acts 2:42.
   1. Preaching, Acts 20:7.
   2. Praying, 1 Corinthians 14:15.
   3. Free will offering (not tithing), 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
   4. Lord's Supper (on the first day of each week), Acts 20:7.
   5. Singing hymns (not instrumental music, humming, etc.), Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 4:15.

C. It is a serious spiritual mistake to assume that it does not matter to God how we worship Him.
   1. Jesus said that true worshipper must worship in spirit and in truth, John 4:23-24.
   2. All other worship is vain and unacceptable to God, Matthew 15:9.
   3. One must worship according to the New Testament pattern to avoid condemnation and to have God favorably receive his worship, Colossians 3:17.

III. Baptism Is Baptism

A. Most people assume that it does not matter how one is baptized.
   1. Commonly, religious people are either unaware of what the Greek word translated "baptism" means or they are not concerned about it.

2. Hence, sprinkling or pouring on and immersion in water have come to mean "baptism" in our language.
3. Further, some imagined that instead of water that the Holy Spirit is the element of baptism, while still others do not believe that baptism has anything to do with salvation.

B. However, the inspired apostle Paul taught that there is only one valid baptism in the church age, Ephesians 4:5.
1. That one baptism involves water and is associated with salvation, 1 Peter 3:20-21; Acts 22:16; 2:38.
2. Further Bible baptism is immersion in water, Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; John 3:23; Acts 8:36-38.
3. Contrary to popular opinion, Bible baptism is important enough to be commanded and urgent enough to be administered in the wee hours of the night, Acts 10:48; 16:25, 33.

C. To assume that one baptism is as good as another is to make a grave spiritual error with tragic eternal consequences.
1. One's baptism can be wrong, even if it is immersion (i.e., for the wrong reasons), Acts 19:1-7.
2. Bible baptism puts one in Christ, and Christ puts that one into his church, Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:41, 47.
3. Anyone not immersed in water for the remission of his sins still bears the guilt of those sins, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.

Conclusion:

1. God says what He means and means what He says in the Bible.
2. To avoid condemnation and to receive divine commendation, each soul must obey the Word of God, for the disobedient will be severely and eternally punished, Hebrews 5:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 25:46.
3. For the past few minutes, we have emphasized the biblical principle of divine authority in religion through references to *Fire Is Fire*, *Moving Is Moving*, *Church Is Church*, *Worship Is Worship* and *Baptism Is Baptism*.

4. The same principle could be emphasized by referring to any New Testament doctrine.
5. Thereby, one can know certainly whether he is a member of Christ's church, is worshipping God in the ways He has appointed or has received the forgiveness of sins by receiving Bible baptism.

Invitation:

1. Baptism for the remission of sins is the means by which one becomes a member of the Lord's church and precedes acceptable worship.
2. Have you been baptized for the remission of your sins; if not, will you consent to be buried with your Lord in baptism this very day?
3. Erring Christians also need to know that their salvation is in jeopardy and that their worship is flawed; we invite you, also, to come forward as we stand and sing.

Three Days and Three Nights

1 Samuel 30:9-12

Thesis: To consider some common expressions in the Bible respecting correct biblical interpretation.

Introduction:

1. The phrase "three days and three nights" is familiar to Bible students respecting the burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Matthew 12:40.
   a. When speaking about His pending burial and resurrection, Jesus referred to another instance of this phrase with which Bible students are likely familiar (at least because it appears in Matthew 12:40), Jonah 1:17.
   b. However, did you know that the phrase "three days and three nights" appears in 1 Samuel 30:12 pertaining to an Egyptian slave (not Joseph)?
   c. Further, a similar statement appears in Esther 4:16: "three days, night or day."
   d. What does the expression "three days and three nights" mean?
2. Similarly, the phrase "forty days and forty nights" is familiar to Bible students respecting the duration of rain in the flood of Noah's day, Genesis 7:4, 12.
   a. The Bible student might also recall that Moses fasted for "forty days and forty nights" on two occasions atop Mt. Sinai each time he received the 10 Commandments on tables of stone, Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10.
   b. In addition, the Bible student may remember that the duration of the Special Temptation of our Lord at the commencement of His ministry was for "forty days and forty nights," Matthew 4:2.
   c. Besides these two references to "forty days and forty nights," a comparable reference occurs in 1 Kings 19:8 respecting

the fasting of the prophet Elijah.

d. What does the expression "forty days and forty nights" mean?

3. Proper understanding of the phrases "three days and three nights" and "forty days and forty nights" is one of several important principles of biblical interpretation.

Body:

I. Let's look at the phrase "three days and three nights" more closely.

A. In each of the three instances where the phrase "three days and three nights" appears in Scripture, are 72 hours (no more and no less) meant?

B. Regarding the badly dehydrated and hungry Egyptian slave in 1 Samuel 30:9-12, the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* observes: "According to the Oriental mode of reckoning, three consecutive parts of days were counted three days (Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40; 27:63; Mark 8:31)."

1. We call this type of an expression or figure of speech an "idiom."
2. One dictionary definition for "idiom" is "having a meaning that cannot be derived from the conjoined meanings of its elements (as Monday week for "the Monday a week after next Monday") (*Merriam Webster's*).
3. It is not necessary doctrinally and unlikely that the unfortunate Egyptian of 1 Samuel 30:12 was without food and water exactly 72 hours, neither a moment less nor a moment more.

C. Jonah's overboard adventure is the next occasion of the expression "three days and three nights," Jonah 1:17.

1. The occasions of Jonah's ordeal and the ordeal of our Lord in His Special Temptation can hardly be separated since Jesus joined them together, Matthew 12:40.

   This need not mean seventy-two hours, since any

part of a day or night can be considered a whole according to OT reckoning. A total of forty-nine hours would be adequate to meet a literal interpretation of the expression. …If Christ was buried before sundown on Friday (as is traditionally held) and arose before sunup Sunday morning, then a literal rendering of the "three days and three nights" (i.e., seventy-two hours) was not intended. (*Wycliffe*)

2. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* likewise notes the figure of language of the "three days and three nights" for both Jonah and Jesus Christ: "Probably, like the antitype Christ, Jonah was cast forth on the land on the third day (Matt 12:40); the Hebrew counting the first and third parts of days as whole 24 hour days."

D. The third occurrence of the phrase "three days and three nights" comes from the lips of our Lord, Matthew 12:40.

1. Most commentators agree that Jesus Christ was not in the tomb literally for 72 hours: "It will be seen in the account of the resurrection of Christ that he was in the grave but two nights and a part of three days" (*Barnes*).

   Jesus arose early on the first day of the week; he was buried shortly before sunset on Friday, and at sunset the Sabbath began. His body lay in the tomb a small part of Friday, all day Saturday, and about ten or eleven hours on Sunday. This corresponds with the seven times' repeated statement that he would or did rise "on the third day," which could not possibly mean after seventy-two hours. The phrase, "after three days," naturally denoted for Jews, Greeks, and Romans a whole day and any part of a first and third, thus agreeing with the phrase, "on the third day." The "three days and three nights" (Matt. 12:40) need not, according to Jewish usage, mean more than what is

here designated. All these expressions can be reconciled with the phrase "on the third day," and with all the facts as recorded, but the phrase "on the third day" cannot mean after seventy-two hours. (Boles)

2. Some commentators argue for a strictly literal interpretation of our Lord's reference to and enactment of His burial for 72 hours.

   Those holding to the traditional Friday crucifixion explain the time here as idiomatic for parts of three days (Friday, Saturday, Sunday). Those holding to Wednesday crucifixion explain the reference literally as denoting seventy-two hours, from sundown Wednesday to sundown Saturday (e.g., W. G. Scroggie, *Guide to the Gospels*, pp. 569-577). (*Wycliffe*)

3. James Burton Coffman quotes from scholarly Bible students who attempt to make opposing cases from Scripture as to whether Jesus were crucified on Friday (making the three days and three nights an idiom) or whether Jesus Christ were crucified on Wednesday/Thursday (making the three days and three nights in the tomb literal).

E. An occurrence of a similar expression occurs in Esther 4:16: "three days, night or day."
   1. Two verses after Esther 4:16 in Esther 5:1, it is apparent that Esther concluded her fast on the third day, which was a part of the "three days, night or day" of 4:16.
   2. Regarding the statement of Jesus in Matthew 12:40 about "three days and three nights," the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* connects all of the expressions we have entertained thus far.

      The period during which He was to lie in the grave is here expressed in round numbers, according to the Jewish way of speaking, which was to regard any part of a day, however small, included within a pe-

riod of days, as a full day. (See 1 Sam 30:12-13; Est 4:16; 5:1; Matt 27:63-64; etc.)

F. The conclusion, then, is that the phrase "three days and three nights" is a figure of speech, an idiom.
   1. The reference depicts a specified period of time.
   2. However, a literal 72 hours is neither required nor meant.
   3. To be dogmatic about 72 hours respecting the "three days and three nights" is a symptom of deficient biblical interpretation.
   4. On the other hand, parts of three days are definitely conveyed by the expression.

II. Let's look at the phrase "forty days and forty nights" more closely.

A. In each of the instances where the phrase "forty days and forty nights" appears in Scripture, are 960 hours (no more and no less) meant?

B. There are five occasions in several passages where the phrase "forty days and forty nights" appears.
   1. Did the rain fall for exactly 960 hours in the flood of Noah's day (neither a moment more or less), Genesis 7:4, 12?
   2. Each of the two occasions on which Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments, did Moses fast exactly 960 hours (neither a moment more or less), Exodus 24:18; 34:28; Deuteronomy 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10?
   3. Did Elijah fast exactly 960 hours (neither a moment more or less), 1 Kings 19:8?
   4. Was our Lord subject to His Special Temptation (versus ongoing temptation, Luke 4:13) exactly 960 hours (neither a moment more or less), Matthew 12:40?

C. Notice these interesting comparisons between Moses, Elijah and Jesus Christ respecting the "forty days and forty nights" of fasting.

It is remarkable that Moses, the great lawgiver of

the Jews, previously to his receiving the law from God, fasted forty days in the mount; that Elijah, the chief of the prophets, fasted also forty days; and that Christ, the giver of the New Covenant, should act in the same way. (Clarke)

"A forty days" fast was accomplished by Moses (Ex 34:28; Deut 9:18), and by Elijah (I Kings 19:8), and it is a significant fact in this connection that these two men appeared with Christ at his transfiguration (Matt 17:3). (McGarvey and Pendleton)

D. There is no reason to dogmatically suppose that the "forty days and forty nights" was any more literal that the "three days and three nights."
   1. The reference depicts a specified period of time.
   2. However, a literal 960 hours is neither required nor meant.
   3. The conclusion, then, is that the phrase "forty days and forty nights" is a figure of speech, an idiom.

Conclusion:

1. Proper understanding of the phrases "three days and three nights" and "forty days and forty nights" is one of several important principles of biblical interpretation.
2. It is important in biblical interpretation not to either make too much of or too little of biblical language.
3. We must endeavor to understand precisely the message that the Bible conveys.
4. Part of understanding the Bible correctly is correctly handling figures of speech like idioms.

Invitation:

1. Of course, it is important to understand the Bible properly, since the Bible is God's communication to mankind, a part of which message is the divine plan of salvation.
2. Jesus' words about salvation are recorded in Mark 16:16.

3. When Christians sin (and they do), they also need forgiveness of their sins, and the apostles Peter and John addressed this sin problem, too, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Wresting the Scriptures

2 Peter 3:15-16

Thesis: To declare and warn against the ways in which Scripture is often abused today.

Introduction:

1. Holy Scripture is divine in origin and content, 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
   a. New Testament Scripture came to mankind in the same way in which man received Old Testament Scripture, 2 Peter 1:20-21.
   b. New Testament Scripture is the result of words taught by the Holy Spirit, 1 Corinthians 2:12-13.
2. The apostles were promised inspiration by which they were to speak and write.
   a. Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His apostles whereby they would know all things, John 16:13.
   b. The apostles were enabled by the Holy Spirit on the Pentecost following the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:4.
   c. The apostle Paul wrote "the commandments of the Lord," 1 Corinthians 14:37.
   d. New Testament Scripture is not attributable to human ingenuity, but to Jesus Christ, Galatians 1:11-12.
3. The Bible contains several warnings about perversions of Scripture.
   a. The text with which we began this lesson is one such passage, 2 Pet. 3:15-16, about "wresting" or to "twist" NKJV.
   b. Sometimes people prefer alternatives to Gospel truth, 2 Timothy 4:3-4.
   c. Sometimes people alter the Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9.
   d. Therefore, faithful Christians must scrutinize teachers and preachers to discern between false teachers and proclaimers of the Truth, 1 John 4:1.
4. "Wresting the Scriptures" means:
   a. To wrestle with, fight against, twist or pervert.

b. Contemporaries have been heard to say, "You can prove anything by the Bible"; this statement could only be true through perversion of Scripture.
c. People often teach things today that the Bible was never intended to teach.
d. "Proof texts" out of their "biblical contexts" are "pretexts" for teaching error.

Body:

I. Scriptures pertaining to "faith" are often "wrested" or 'twisted.'
   A. Many today affirm "faith only."
      1. They attempt to appeal to Scripture to prove that doctrine, Romans 3:28; 5:1.
      2. Yet, the type of faith addressed in Romans is obviously an obedient faith, Romans 1:5; 16:26.
   B. However, neither Paul nor any other inspired writer teaches "faith only."
      1. The apostle Paul contrasted the Old Covenant and its meritorious works with the New Covenant and its active or obedient faith, Ephesians 2:8-9.
      2. James also taught faith and obedience or faith in action, James 2:24.
   C. The doctrine of "faith only" is wresting or twisting Scripture to one's destruction.
      1. "Faith only" is not substantiated by any passage of Scripture.
      2. The doctrine of "faith only" contradicts other elements to which is attributed a part in salvation: hearing, repenting, confessing Jesus Christ, baptism, faithfulness.

II. Scriptures pertaining to "grace" are often "wrested" or 'twisted.'
   A. Clearly, the apostle Paul taught salvation by grace, Ephesians 2:8-9.
      1. Many today, however, teach salvation by "grace only."
      2. This makes salvation unconditional, excluding even faith!

3. Common sense dictates that if the saved are unconditionally saved by God, then God must be responsible for the equally unconditional loss of the lost; yet God is not a respecter of persons, Romans 2:11; Acts 10:34-35.

B. "Grace only" turns God's grace into a license to sin, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, Jude 4.
   1. If men are unconditionally saved by grace, there are no sins which if committed would adversely affect salvation.
   2. By inspiration, the apostle Paul anticipated the error of grace only with its built in license to sin, Romans 6:1-2.

III. Scriptures pertaining to "baptism" are often "wrested" or 'twisted.'

A. Various errors are taught regarding baptism.
   1. Error: Baptism does not pertain to salvation.
   2. Error: Baptism is Holy Spirit baptism.
   3. Error: Baptism puts one into a denominational body after salvation.

B. Scripture portrays a different role for baptism than conveyed by the errors just mentioned.
   1. There is only one baptism valid today, Ephesians 4:5.
   2. That baptism is water baptism, 1 Peter 3:20-21.
   3. That baptism is immersion in water, Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.
   4. That baptism is the point at which one's sins are removed, Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
   5. Bible baptism puts one into Jesus Christ and into the church of the Lord, Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:41, 47.

IV. Scriptures are often "wrested" or 'twisted' to teach that man cannot fall from grace so as to be lost.

A. The Bible is said to contain over 2,500 warnings against falling from grace.
   1. Warnings about being "stedfast" or being careful not to fall would be meaningless were it impossible to fall, 1 Corinthians 15:58; 2 Peter 2:20-22.

2. The crown of life is only promised to the faithful, implying that the unfaithful will not receive it, Revelation 2:10.

B. Scripture is twisted to teach the "impossibility of apostasy" and make Scriptures seem to contradict each other.
   1. Paul affirmed it was indeed possible to fall from grace, Galatians 5:4.
   2. Even Christians can be overcome, Galatians 6:1.
   3. Even faithful Christians need to be careful lest they fall, 1 Corinthians 10:12.
   4. The apostle Peter wrote that a child of God can 'fall from his stedfastness,' 2 Peter 3:17.
   5. One can sin so as to be irrecoverable (on his part—not on God's part), Hebrews 6:4-6.

Conclusion:

1. Several other Scriptures are twisted to teach false doctrines.
   a. Matthew 16:18: "One church is as good as another."
   b. Matthew 28:19: "There is only one person in the Godhead."
   c. Matthew 16:18-19: "The kingdom has not come yet."
   d. Revelation 1:7: "The Second Coming is already passed."
2. Wresting the Scriptures will bring destruction upon those who twist it, 2 Pet. 3:15-16.
   a. False teachers wrest Scripture, 2 Pet. 2:1.
   b. Unstable, inexperienced, unlearned children of God sometimes wrest Scripture as well, Eph. 4:14.
3. Scripture will endure despite of the efforts to ruin or distort them.
   a. The words of Jesus Christ are immortal, Matthew 24:35.
   b. The Word of God is eternal, 1 Peter 1:23, 25.

Invitation:

1. The immutable Scriptures will save or condemn each soul.
2. Mankind must take Scripture at face value, allowing it to mean what it meant when it was first penned, and to act accordingly.
3. The lost are those who pervert Scripture or fail to act according to its instruction (i.e., erring Christians, nonChristians).

Be Ye Perfect

Matthew 5:48

Thesis: To ascertain if it is possible and in what way a child of God can practice Matthew 5:48 and be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

Introduction:

1. On the surface, reading Matthew 5:48 appears to require an impossibility from humanity: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."
2. The consequences of misunderstanding Matthew 5:48 are several and suspicious.
   a. One might erroneously conclude the God requires people in the Christian Age to do something that is impossible for them to do.
   b. If one concludes that no one is able to obey Matthew 5:48, God is viewed as unreasonable, while humanity is excusable for not complying with the will of God—a dangerous and perilous principle to embrace.
   c. Perceiving that one cannot be perfect as God is perfect may lead to either a lifelong guilt trip and frustration or a lifelong flippant regard for all divine instruction.
3. What did Jesus mean when He uttered the words of Matthew 5:48?

Body:

I. The key to understanding Matthew 5:48 is the proper and biblical definition of the word "perfect" appearing in the verse.

A. The word "perfect" in Matthew 5:48 does not mean sinless perfection.

1. Humans excepting for Jesus Christ are not sinless, Romans 3:10, 23; Hebrews 4:15.
2. If the word "perfect" in Matthew 5:48 meant sinnlessly

perfect, every person would be resigned to a life of hopeless frustration and guilt.

3. If we excused ourselves from obeying God's instruction in Matthew 5:48 because we thought it was an impossible command, what other divine instructions might we also disregard?

B. However, the word "perfect" (teleios) in Matthew 5:48 means:
   1. "complete…completeness" (*Biblesoft's*).
   2. "fully developed in a moral sense" (Bauer).
   3. "not lacking any moral quality…mature" (Louw and Nida).
   4. "full-growth, maturity, workability, soundness, and completeness" (Wuest).
   5. "brought to its end, finished; lacking nothing necessary to completeness" (Thayer).
   6. Teleios appears 19 times in the New Testament, which when we read them knowing what "perfect" from teleios means, we can better appreciate Matthew 5:48: Matthew 5:48 (twice); 19:21; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 2:6; 13:10; 14:20 "men"; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:15; Colossians 1:28; 4:12; Hebrews 5:14 "full age"; 9:11; James 1:4 (twice); 1:17, 25; 3:2; 1 John 4:18.

C. The word "perfect" in Matthew 5:48 can better be thought of as quality rather than quantity.
   1. 1. Brother T. Pierce Brown illustrates:

      > Suppose one has a circle with a radius of one inch. We do not need to say, "a perfect circle," for by definition every circle is perfect—a closed plain curve, every point of which is equidistant from a point in the center. A circle with a two-inch radius is not more perfect, but simply has a different measure. Being bigger does not make it more perfect. When the Bi-

ble says, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church" (Ephesians 5:25), it does not mean, "Love them as much as Christ loved the church." That would be an impossible command to keep! But when a husband loves his wife as Christ loved the church, that is perfect obedience to the command. A circle with an infinite radius (whatever that is) is no more perfect than a circle with a one inch radius. And what we call the infinite love of God for our enemies is no more perfect than the kind of love we can have for our enemies—which is what God commands. He did not say, "Love your enemy as much as God loves you."

2. The context of Matthew 5:43-48 concerns exhibiting love toward our enemies, imitating the love of God toward wayward humanity.
3. We can exhibit that quality (and must), but we cannot exhibit the quantity of love exhibited by God.

II. Not only does Jesus expect Christians to be perfect as God is perfect, but at least some first century Christians were perfect in the sense of the word perfect in Matthew 5:48.

A. Some of the Corinthian Christians were perfect in the sense of the divine instruction of Matthew 5:48.
   1. Notably, being "perfect" or complete was not according to the wisdom of the world.
   2. Through divine wisdom one can be complete or learn the qualities God desires of Christians.

B. The apostle Paul and at least some of the Philippian Christians were "perfect" in the sense of being everything they could be in Jesus Christ, Philippians 3:15.
   1. They strove to have the mind of Christ, Philippians 3:14.
   2. The "perfect" or mature in Jesus Christ maintained themselves by obeying or marching to the rule of Christ, Phi-

lippians 3:16.

3. As such, their maturity in Christ served as an example to others, Philippians 3:17.

Conclusion:

1. Though we cannot live sinlessly perfect lives, we can develop maturity in Jesus Christ.
2. We can possess the qualities (though not the quantity) of God respecting moral deportment.
3. Matthew 5:43-48 would have us demonstrate that quality of love, which God extended toward all the world (including toward us), toward our enemies.
4. There are numerous others venues for demonstrating Christian maturity as we imitate divine qualities possessed by God.

Invitation:

1. Before we can develop maturity as Christians, we, of course, must become Christians.
2. The invitation of the first recorded Gospel sermon (doubly inspired by presentation and preservation) appears in Acts 2:38.
3. A secondary invitation toward erring Christians appears by the same presenter of the first Gospel sermon (also recorded by the same historian, Luke) in Acts 8:22.
4. The road to being perfect, complete or mature as Christians begins with becoming Christians and remaining faithful Christians.

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Soul and Spirit

Hebrews 4:12

Thesis: To briefly explain the meanings of the biblical words "soul" and "spirit."
Song: "Where the Soul Never Dies"

Introduction:

1. Many years ago, I heard a Gospel preacher announce his intention to make a Bible translation where each Hebrew or Greek word would be translated into English consistently by a single corresponding word.
   a. For instance, an original language word that can mean "bread" always would be translated "bread" and would not be translated at any time as "loaf."
   b. On the surface, this sounds like an excellent way to more clearly understand God's Word translated from Hebrew and Greek to another language, e.g. "English."
   c. However, the brother's statement was both naïve and impractical, not to mention counterproductive to understanding the Bible text.
2. Presumably in every language, the meanings of words often depend as much on the context in which they occur as they do on the root or elementary meaning of those words.
   a. This is true respecting the Hebrew and Greek.
   b. It is no less true respecting the English language, e.g. "love," which meaning, depending upon its context, might be clarified by substituting such words as "like" (ice cream), "passion" (romantically inclined), "ardor" (devoted to a cause, zeal or enthusiasm), "affection" (mild appreciation), "adoration" (worship), "erotic," etc.
3. Therefore, it takes the etymology (the history of a word's meaning) and context (how a word is being used presently in a certain frame of reference) to determine what any word under consideration means.

a. This is true regarding the words "soul" and "spirit."
b. Consequently, it is appropriate to use a variety of words in the language to which the Bible is being translated to accurately represent what a given word means in its context.

4. The words "soul" and "spirit" in the Bible can be especially problematic even for serious students of the Bible.
   a. Hugo McCord remarked, "Many of us have read enough to be resigned to the fact that we shall leave this life with unanswered questions about the soul and spirit."
   b. T. Pierce Brown quotes David Lipscomb: "You have a pretty tough and gristly piece of meat for a babe to masticate and digest if you undertake to define the difference between soul and spirit."
   c. All agree, though, that we can and should understand some things about the words "soul" and "spirit."

Body:

I. Let's consider the word "soul."

A. The Old Testament word for "soul" is nephesh (neh'-fesh).

> The Hebrew word nephesh admits of a variety of translation, and one must be extremely careful not to give a specific meaning to a word which has such a wide scope of meanings and apply it in every instance where the term is used. …In over 400 of its approximately 700 appearances in the Old Testament, nephesh is translated "soul" by the King James Version. (Pryor 33)

1. "…the word 'nephesh' is translated about thirty-three different ways… Thus it depends on where and how a word is used to determine its meaning" (Hearn 63).
2. "The elemental meaning of the word 'soul' (nephesh) is that which breathes…" (McCord).

B. The New Testament word for "soul" is psuche (psoo-khay').
   1. Commenting on Hebrews 4:12, Albert Barnes says the word "soul" means "[t]he animal life from [or contrasted

with] the immortal soul."

2. Guy N. Woods writes of the ordinary and usual meaning of the word "soul": "What is the soul? Literally, it is life…Essentially, and in unfigurative usage, it is the 'vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing' (Thayer), and is always to be distinguished from the spirit, when so used."
3. Summarized, "[a] consideration of every passage in which these terms are used leads us to the conclusion that the term "soul" is a term that was applied in the Bible to every being that normally has sensory capacities (life)… (Brown).

C. There are notable exceptions in both testaments to the use of the word "soul" to represent the life-force that makes breathing creatures of either animals or humans.
   1. Leviticus 17:11 uses "soul" respecting the "spirit" for which atonement was made; see also Ezekiel 18:20.
   2. Hebrews 13:17 is a case in point where the use of "soul" (psuche) refers not to the breathing life of either an animal or a human, but to the immortal spirit of humans; see also Matthew 16:26.

> Though sometimes the word "soul" biblically means a breathing creature, yet when one converts a sinner from the error of his way, and saves "a soul from death" (Jas. 5:20), it cannot be fairly said that he saves the sinner's breath. Likewise, any interpretation of (I Peter 1: 9, 22) making the word "soul" anything less than man's eternal nature has to be false. (McCord, *Spiritual Sword* 18)

II. Let's consider the word "spirit."

A. The Old Testament word for "spirit" is ruwach (roo'-akh).
   1. W.E. Vine says of ruwach: "First, this word means 'breath,' air for breathing, air that is being breathed."
   2. However, ruwakh, in context, also represents the immortal spirit of either God of mankind, Genesis 1:2; Ecclesi-

astes 12:7.

B. The New Testament word for "spirit" is pneuma (pnyoo'-mah).
   1. Vine says of pneuma that it "primarily denotes 'the wind' (akin to pneo, 'to breathe, blow'); also 'breath'; then, especially 'the spirit,' which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful."
   2. Depending upon the context, pneuma may refer to "the Spirit of God" or the immortal spiritual side of mankind, Matthew 3:16; 4:1; 26:41; Acts 7:59.

III. Summarized, how shall we distinguish between "soul" and "spirit"?

A. Sometimes the words "soul" and "spirit" are used interchangeably to refer to spiritual nature, not the material body or the germ of life (breathing).

> Clearly the words "soul" and "spirit" are sometimes used interchangeably, referring to man's non-material and immortal nature. But Hebrews 4:12 shows that the words "soul" and "spirit" are not always synonyms. The word "spirit" is never used to refer to a whole person… (McCord, *Gospel Gazette*)

B. Typically, though, in either testament, the word "soul" refers to the alive, breathing being rather than to spiritual nature.
   1. Consequently, "…the context of nephesh in Genesis 2:7 (including Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 26, 30) shows that Moses was saying that man, like the fishes, the birds, the beasts, and creeping things, is a living breather. …the NASB has 'man became a living being.'" (McCord, *Gospel Gazette*).
   2. However, "soul" in the Old Testament can refer to either the alive, breathing being or spiritual nature, depending upon the context.
   3. "Three times in Leviticus 17:11 the Lord used the word nephesh with two different meanings; twice nephesh means 'life' and once nephesh (plural) means 'souls,' our

immortal nature" (McCord, *Gospel Gazette*).

C. The word "spirit" in either testament universally refers to spiritual nature rather than either the material part of humanity or the alive, breathing part of humanity.
   1. That is, unless in the context the word usually translated spirit refers instead to the wind or one's breath.
   2. However, in a context where either the reference pertains to the life-force or the immortal, spiritual side, "soul" refers to the life-force and "spirit" refers to the immortal, spiritual side.

> The soul, as it relates to man is a generic term; the spirit, a specific one. In such a frame of reference it is easy to define the spirit. It is the immortal nature infused directly from God (Hebrews 12:8-9). The soul, being generic, relies on the context to indicate its meaning… (Guy N. Woods in *Gospel Advocate*, June 14, 1979 qtd. in Brown emphasis added)

Conclusion:

1. The word "soul" (whether translated from Hebrew or Greek) may refer to the life aspect of an animal or a human, or it may refer to the spiritual side of a person's existence, depending upon the context in which it occurs.
2. Consequently, the Hebrew or the Greek that is sometimes translated "soul" is often translated by other English words: "living creature," Genesis 1:20"; "life," Genesis 19:17; "mind," Genesis 23:8; "persons," Genesis 36:6; "life," Matthew 2:20; "minds," Acts 14:2; "heart," Ephesians 6:6, etc.
3. The word "spirit" (whether translated from the Hebrew or the Greek) never refers to the life aspect of an animal or a human, but it always refers to the spiritual side of a human or God, unless in the Old Testament the context refers to neither life-force or the spiritual side, "wind," Genesis 8:1.
4. Finally, it is sufficient to remember that living humans are body (material), life (breathing) and spirit (spiritual), Hebrews 4:12.

5. Brother McCord writes, "One gets his body from his parents, but it is 'the Father of spirits' (Hebrews 12:9) who 'forms the spirit of man within him' (Zechariah 12:1). When death comes to man's physical body, then his 'spirit will return to God who gave it' (Ecclesiastes 12:7)" (*Gospel Gazette*).

Invitation:

1. Have you committed your living, spirit-filled body to the service of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 6:20?
2. Baptizing the body in obedience to Christ's command washes the spirit within that body, Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21.
3. If you are out of Christian service, you can return your body to the service of Jesus Christ by repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Antichrist

1 John 2:18

Thesis: To discern the biblical meaning of the word "antichrist."
Song: "Nothing but the Blood"

Introduction:

1. It is important for Christians to know what the Bible teaches in every area, especially regarding portions of the Bible that even the religious community typically misrepresents.
2. Many misguided religious people believe things about the Bible's mention of "antichrist" that are not substantiated by the Bible.
3. Typically, most people associate the word "antichrist" with premillennialism.

> Most people assume that the Bible teaches that an end-time Hitler-like super dictator—"the antichrist"—in league with the devil will one day arise to rule the world. …Yet nowhere in Scripture does the Bible refer to THE antichrist. Most people don't realize this—including most professing Christians! ("Antichrist").

   a. Regarding Premillennialism, "antichrist" is viewed as "the world-ruler of the tribulation period" (Karleen).
   b. Quite typically, the popular *Nelson's Bible Dictionary* says the Antichrist is "[a] false prophet and evil being who will set himself up against Christ and the people of God in the last days before the SECOND COMING."

4. A common dictionary definition provides the basic, true meaning of "antichrist," as well as comments on the popular but biblically unsubstantiated thoughts respecting its application.
   a. "1: one who denies or opposes Christ; specifically : a great antagonist expected to fill the world with wickedness but to be conquered forever by Christ at his second coming 2 : a false Christ" (*Merriam Webster's*).
   b. "…*Webster's New World Dictionary* defines 'antichrist' as

'the great antagonist of Christ, expected to spread universal evil before the end of the world, but finally to be conquered at Christ's second coming'" (qtd. in "Antichrist").

c. The truth is that "antichrist" means against Christ (or his teachings), and ideas about an antichrist associated with Premillennialism are false.

5. It shouldn't be too difficult to ascertain, though, from the Bible what the word "antichrist" really means, since "[t]he word is used only by the apostle John" (Easton).
   a. "This term is employed by the apostle John alone, and is defined by him in a manner which leaves no doubt as to its intrinsic meaning" (Smith).
   b. "The term 'antichrist' is found in only four scriptures, all written by the Apostle John: I John 2:18, 22, 4:3 and II John 7. Originally written in Greek, it means 'an opponent of the Messiah'—in other words, against Christ" ("Antichrist").
   c. "Antichrist" differs from "false Christs": "The distinction, then, is plain. The antichristos denies that there is a Christ; the pseudochristos affirms himself to be the Christ" (Wuest).

> "Note: The term a false Christ, is to be distinguished from the above; it is found in Matt. 24:24 and Mark 13:22. The false Christ does not deny the existence of Christ, he trades upon the expectation of His appearance, affirming that he is the Christ. The Antichrist denies the existence of the true God. (Vine)

Body:

I. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John 2:18-19.

A. "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come."

1. "The apostle's readers were already in possession of information regarding 'antichrist'; they had heard it through the preaching of the writer and others" (Woods).
2. References to antichrist were not new to the Christian recipients of the apostle John's letters, but only in his letters do we have specific references to antichrist preserved until our time.

B. "It is the last time."

1. Contrary to assigning John's meaning to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, "the last time" is comparable to "the last days" of Isaiah 2:2, Micah 4:1, Acts 2:17, Hebrews 1:2 and 2 Peter 3:3, all of which refer to the Christian Age—versus the pre-Christian age.
2. Coffman pens:

   > The Jews divided all time into two ages. The present age, which preceded the coming of the Messiah, and the "last time" or "Day of the Lord," which would be ushered in with the coming of the Messiah. John here contends that the fact of the last hour is proven by the presence of antichrists. (Coffman).

3. A writer from the Christian Church writes:

   > The terms "last hour" [ASV & NKJV] and "last days" seem to be closely related, sometimes interchangeable, throughout the Bible. …the presence of antichrist indicates the Christian Era itself is a last hour. It is the end toward which God's providence in human history has moved. (Gill)

4. Albert Barnes, Presbyterian commentator, notes of "last hour":

   > The closing period or dispensation; that dispensation in which the affairs of the world are ultimately to be wound up. The apostle does not, however, say that the end of the world would soon occur, nor does he

intimate how long this dispensation would be. That period might continue through many ages or centuries, and still be the last dispensation, or that in which the affairs of the world would be finally closed.

C. "Even now are there many antichrists."
   1. "Notice that it says, 'MANY antichrists'—plural, more than one. The term is not limited to just one person" ("Antichrist").
   2. Further, antichrists populate the entire period of the last days or Christianity: "These antichrists existed not only during John's time, but throughout the 2,000-year history of the Church—even to our time" ("Antichrist").

D. "They went out from us" (v. 19).
   1. "…[T]hese were, therefore, formerly among the disciples, and members of the church. They became apostates from the fold by going out" (Woods).
   2. "From this verse it is plain that the 'antichrists' were Christians who had defected from the truth. Their departure from the apostles and from the church indicated their hostility to the truth" (Coffman).

II. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son," 1 John 2:22.

A. "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ."
   1. "He is antichrist who denies the supernatural and miraculous birth of Jesus Christ, who denies Jesus to be the Son of God, and who denies God to be the Father of the Lord Jesus; thus he denies the Father and the Son" (Clarke).

      Many false theories regarding the nature and the attributes of the Savior were afloat when John wrote this Epistle. The Gnostics alleged that Jesus and Christ were two different persons; that Christ merely appeared to have flesh, but in reality did not; and that the one designated as Jesus was without divine origin. The effect of this heresy was, in the case of Christ, to deny his human-

ity; and in the case of Jesus, to deny his deity. (Woods)

2. Wycliffe recorded, "Gnosticism considered Christ and Jesus as two distinct entities. Thus, to deny that Jesus is the Christ is to deny the Son, the God-man."
3. *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* aptly identifies the point of contention regarding antichrists as "the central truth" of Christianity.

   > Certain Gnostics and Docetists theorized that Jesus was only a man, the natural son of Joseph, and that "Christ" descended upon him and inhabited his body at the time of his baptism, deserted him for the crucifixion, etc. …No distinction between the Christ and Jesus is of the truth (Coffman).

B. "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son."
   1. The proper regard for either the Heavenly Father or the Son of God or the absence of the same affected both personages, John 5:23.
   2. "…[T]o reject the Son is to repudiate the only method by which it is possible to reach the Father" (Woods), John 14:6.
   3. Compare Matthew 10:32-33.
   4. The conjunction "and" inseparably ties, in this case, the Father and the Son, together; you cannot have either one without the other.
   5. Barnes concluded:

      > No man can have just views of God the Father who has not right apprehensions of the Son. As a matter of fact in the world, people have right apprehensions of God only when they have correct views of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-

christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world," 1 John 4:3.

A. "Confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh…is that spirit of antichrist."

1. Coffman writes, "…any and every religion or philosophy that is not anchored in both the eternal deity of Jesus Christ and in his historical humanity is false, having its origin in Satan, not in God."
2. It is not enough to acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth lived, that he was a prophet of God, that he was the Messiah or Anointed of God, that he died upon a Roman cross, but we must acknowledge the Deity, i.e. the eternality of Jesus Christ the Son of God.
3. This we do in the confessing Jesus Christ, Matthew 16:16; John 11:27; 20:31; Acts 8:37; 9:20; 1 John 5:5.
4. "That is, this doctrine is essential to the Christian system…" (Barnes).

B. "Even now already is it in the world."

1. Coffman further relegates "antichrist" to a doctrinal behavior and not to any specific person.

> There is no need whatever to capitalize Antichrist. As Macknight said, "From this, as well as from 1 John 2:18, it appears that Antichrist is not any particular person, nor any particular succession of persons in the church." It is thus clearly a mistake to identify this with Paul's "man of sin" in 2 Thess. 2, as so many have done.

2. "John here refers not to an individual who should be known as antichrist, but to a class of persons" (Barnes).

IV. "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist," 2 John 7.

A. "Who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh."

1. Coffman penned, "The heresy of the false deceivers was

that of denying the Incarnation."

2. Without the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, we do not have a Sacrifice and Ransom for our sins who died upon the cross, who resurrected permanently from the grave to break the stranglehold of death on our mortal bodies.

B. "This is a deceiver and an antichrist."

1. "Of particular interest is this term, occurring here in the singular; however, it is quite clear that no single person is meant, from John's identification of 'antichrist' with 'many deceivers'" (Coffman).
2. We need to realize the significance of the error John addresses and calls "antichrist."

> The Gnostics taught that matter (flesh) is entirely evil and spirit is entirely good. Led by Cerinthus, a false teacher in Ephesus, this cult denied that God, who is Spirit, literally became flesh. Instead, some believed that when Christ lived on the earth, He did not have a real body—it only "seemed" real. They believed Christ was a kind of "phantom." Others believed that the divine Christ (spirit) joined with the human Jesus (flesh) at baptism, and left Him just before He died. Since Christ did not die, they reasoned, He did not need to be resurrected from the dead. Both ideas are false. They deny that Jesus Christ was once a flesh-and-blood human being, tempted like all men and capable of sinning, but did not (Hebrews 4:14-15). Here is the problem with their reasoning: If Christ was not flesh, then He was never tempted to sin. If He was never tempted, He was never capable of sinning. If He was incapable of sinning, then He did not OVERCOME sin and could not set an example for us to do the same (Rev. 3:21; I Peter 2:21). ("Antichrist")

Conclusion:

1. So, what have we learned from the Bible about "antichrist"?
2. Summarized, "[t]he word [antichrist] appears only in the writings of John; here [1 John 2:18], and in 2:22; 4:3 ; and 2 John 7. His characteristics, as indicated in those verses, are, (1) he is a liar; (2) a deceiver; (3) a denier that Jesus is the Christ; and (4) he refuses to acknowledge that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (Woods).
3. The Methodist commentator Adam Clarke remarks, correctly so:

> Any person, thing, doctrine, system of religion, polity, etc., which is opposed to Christ, and to the spirit and spread of his Gospel, is antichrist. …Every man who opposes the spirit of the Gospel, and every teacher and writer who endeavours to lower the Gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is a genuine anti-christ, no matter where or among whom he is found.

4. Incidentally, Guy N. Woods and others believe that "[t]o the candid mind the conclusion is irresistible that the 'man of sin,' whom Paul describes [2 Thess. 2:3-4], as identical with the 'anti-christ,' to which John refers."
   a. That, however, is neither a universally adopted view nor one we care to explore presently.
   b. Burton Coffman writes, "Despite the fact of 'antichrist' being popularly understood as 'a personal opponent of Christ at the end of time,' and also being identified with Paul's 'lawless one' (2 Thess. 2:8), there is absolutely no authority for such views."

Invitation:

1. In some sense, anyone who is not a Christian might as well be styled an antichrist, Matthew 12:30.
2. Be a Christian today by obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ through repentance and baptism, Acts 2:38, 41, 47.
3. Be a faithful Christian today through repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Fear

Matthew 10:28

Thesis: To examine various Greek words used for "fear" and see how the topic should affect Christians.
Song: "Fear Not, Little Flock"

Introduction:

1. There is a type of fear that must not characterize Christians.
2. Yet, there is a type of fear that must characterize us.
3. A cursory review of Greek words from which the English word "fear" is translated in our Bible will be helpful.

Body:

I. Phobos [Noun].

A. Like the words "love," "friend" and "neighbor," the definition of PHOBOS (fear) depends on the context in which it is found.
B. Some form of PHOBOS is used in the following passages.
C. FIRST DEFINITION: Fear, dread, terror, affright—sufficient to cause one to flee; phobia, Hebrews 2:15; 1 Peter 3:14; Matthew 10:28; 1 John 4:18; John 7:13; 19:38; 20:19; Matthew 14:26.
D. SECOND DEFINITION: Fear reverence, respect, 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 3:15; 2:17, 18; 3:2; Acts 9:31; Pilippians 2:12.

II. Deilia [Noun]; Deilos [Adj.]

A. DEFINITION: Fearfulness, cowardice, timidity, 2 Timothy 1:7; John 14:27; Revelation 21:8; Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:40.
B. It is never used in a good sense and is not approved for Christians.

III. Eulabeia [Noun].

A. DEFINITION: Caution, reverence, Godly fear; greater expression of reverence than PHOBOS; almost always used in a good sense, Hebrews 12:28.

B. This type of fear should characterize Christians in their relationships with both man and God.

IV. Entromos [Adj.].

A. DEFINITION: Trembling with fear; intense fear; terrified, Acts 7:30-32; Acts 16:29; Hebrews 12:21.

B. This type of fear should never characterize faithful Christians with respect to God in Heaven.

V. Examples of the usage of different Greek words for fear.

A. Hebrews 12:21, "And so terrible (PHOBERON, fearful) was the sight, that Moses said I exceedingly fear (EKPHOBOS, am greatly afraid), and quake (ENTROMOS, trembling)."

B. The first use of a form of PHOBOS, as it is used in this context refers to terror rather than reverence.

C. The second PHOBOS is preceded with the Greek prefix EK, meaning out; Moses was frightened out, or outright frightened.

D. The third Greek word for fear, ENTROMOS, quakes to trembling fear.

Conclusion:

1. Word studies can help one more clearly understand God's Word.
2. In some instances the context in which a word appears is essential to properly understanding its definition.
3. Those who sustain a fellowship with God have no cause to live in dreadful fear of either man or of God.
4. The children of God should respect both men and God.

Invitation:

1. 1 Corinthians 5:10-11 (PHOBON); 1 John 4:18.
2. Dread of hell and reverence for God ought to combine in each person to prompt him to accept God's scheme of redemption.
3. Erring Christians: Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-2:2.
4. Non-Christians: Acts 2:38; 22:16.

How Obedience Saves

Hebrews 5:8-9

Thesis: To show conclusively from the Bible that obedience is essential to salvation.

Introduction:

1. Many religious people outside and within the Lord's church despise the thought of associating obedience with salvation.
2. Many would defend with their lives some manmade doctrine, but they refuse to obey God's Word, and they would not die for it, Revelation 2:10.
3. It is no secret that we live in a disobedient society where disobedience manifests itself variously: failure to obey speed limits, disobedience to parents and teachers, cheating on taxes, widespread immorality, stealing, robbery, assault, murder, etc.
4. At the risk of being viewed as unpatriotic, I remind you that this nation was conceived in disobedience to the government of England.
5. Mankind in general has a long history of disobedience toward God.
6. However, man can obey God, and he must obey God to receive God's grace and mercy, resulting in salvation.
7. Obedience has always been essential to be saved.

Body:

I. Obedience to God was essential under Patriarchy.

A. Cain was disobedient whereas Abel was obedient to God, Genesis 4:3-5; Hebrews 11:4.

1. Faith results from the Word of God, Romans 10:17.
2. Therefore, Scripture implies that Cain was disobedient to God's instructions pertaining to worship, but Abel was obedient to the same instruction from God.

B. The wicked world was disobedient whereas Noah and his family were obedient to God, Genesis 6-9.

1. God chose a righteous man named Noah to build the ark to save his family and him from the universal flood.

2. Noah obeyed God regarding the construction of the ark and was saved from the impending disaster that enveloped the rest of the world and all of humanity not on the ark with Noah.
3. It is evident that had Noah disobeyed God respecting the building of the ark that he, too, would have perished with the wicked world.

C. Enoch, Abraham and Moses also demonstrated obedient faith in God under Patriarchy, Hebrews 11.

II. Obedience to God was essential under Judaism.

A. The Old Testament is replete with instances of human disobedience to God, which God severely punished.
1. Fortunately for fallible man, God provided for the forgiveness of ignorant sin, but God severely condemned willful disobedience, Numbers 15:27-31.
2. A man violated the Sabbath Day by gathering sticks, for which God commanded that he be stoned to death, Exodus 20:8-11; Numbers 15:32-36.
3. Korah and 250 leaders among the Israelites challenged God's choice of Aaron's family to be the priestly family, for which God burnt the disobedient with fire and caused the earth to swallow their families and personal property, Numbers 16.
4. Moses and Aaron were accused by God of disbelief or disobedience for striking a rock to provide water for Israel, which prevented them from entering Canaan, Numbers 20:7-12; 22-29; Deuteronomy 34:1-6; Romans 11:30-31, cf. KJV & ASV.
5. King Saul disobeyed God and was rejected by God from continuing as king, 1 Samuel 15:3-4, 7-28.

B. God also rewarded obedience under Judaism.
1. Joshua and Caleb obeyed God and alone among the adults who left Egypt were permitted by God to enter Canaan, Numbers 14:22-24, 29-38; 32:11-13; Joshua 14:6-14.

2. David obeyed God for which God raised up our Savior through his descendant, Jesus of Nazareth, 1 Kings 15:5; Acts 13:22-23.
3. King Hezekiah obeyed God for which God added 15 years to his life and spared Jerusalem from the Assyrians, Isaiah 38:3-6.

III. Obedience to God is essential under Christianity.

A. It is abundantly clear from the New Testament that disobedience to God results in condemnation.
   1. Every accountable soul who refuses or neglects to obey the Gospel will be lost, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
   2. The disobedient will be barred from Heaven, Matthew 7:21-23.
   3. Jesus will reject everyone who does not obey His words, John 12:48.

B. Obedience is a requisite to receive salvation.
   1. The faith that saves is an obedient faith, Romans 5:1; 1:5; 16:26; Acts 6:7.
   2. Not only our actions, but also every thought must be brought to "the obedience of Christ," 2 Corinthians 10:5.

C. Jesus Christ saves those who obey him, Hebrews 5:8-9.
   1. Obedience is not perfection, but it is the attempt to do what Jesus says, Luke 6:46.
   2. Only when we obey Christ by obeying the Gospel does God's mercy and grace make up what lacks between our obedience and our sinlessly holy God, Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5.

Conclusion:

1. Each period of religious history (i.e., Patriarchy, Judaism and Christianity) demonstrates the role of obedience in human salvation and that disobedience toward God results in severe condemnation, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
2. Especially Judaism proved that mankind is incapable of

achieving sinless perfection, even by those who otherwise are considered obedient to God, Hebrews 10:1-4.

3. Yet, human obedience to the laws of God prompts Him to extend His grace and mercy toward us, Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5.
4. The human ideas of "If it feels good, do it" or "situation ethics" or "the ends justifies the means" or "a new morality" or "relative truth" or human creeds, etc. are mottos of disobedience and will not prompt God to save us with His grace and mercy.

Invitation:

1. Obedience on our parts whereby God will save us with His grace and mercy includes our response to His redemptive plan.
2. Unbaptized believers must be immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Romans 10:17; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:10; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.
4. Finally, we must obey the faith even if it kills us, Matthew 10:28; Revelation 2:10.

The Necessity of Faith and The Importance of Obedience

Numbers 20:7-12

Thesis: To demonstrate from Scripture that faith and obedience are inseparable aspects of Christianity.

Introduction:

1. Who could blame Moses for being distraught as he attempted to lead rebellious Israel through the wilderness of Sinai toward Canaan, Numbers 20:10?
   a. Moses didn't want the job and tried to avoid the mission on which God sent him, Exodus 3-4.
   b. Israel fought the lead of God through Moses all along the way, Exodus 15:23-25 (waters of Marah); Exodus 16:2-3 (complained for food); Exodus 17:2-7 (complained of thirst at Rephidim); Exodus 32 (golden calf); Numbers 14:1-5 (murmuring over report of the 10 spies); Numbers 16:1-40 (rebellion of Korah and 250 other princes); Numbers 16:41-50 (murmuring because former complainers died).
   c. Israel was murmuring against Moses and Aaron once more in Numbers 20:1-13.
2. God, though, did not chastise Moses for exhibiting frustration, but God punished him for disobeying him, Numbers 20:7-12; Psalm 106:32-33.

> The command (Num 20:8) was "Speak ye unto the rock." The act of smiting, and especially with two strokes, indicates violent irritation on the part of Moses; as does also his unseemly mode of addressing the people: "Hear now, ye rebels." The form too of the question, "must we, etc.," directs the people not, as ought to have been the case, to God as their deliverer, but to Moses and Aaron personally. In fact the faithful servant of God, worn out by the reiterated

perversities of the people, breaks down; and in the actual discharge of his duty as God's representative before Israel, acts unworthily of the great function entrusted to him. Thus, Moses did not "sanctify God in the eyes of the children of Israel." Aaron might have checked the intemperate words and acts of Moses, and did not. Hence, God punishes both by withdrawing them from their work for Him, and handing over its accomplishment to another. (*Barnes'*)

a. Aaron and Moses experienced "momentary wavering" (*Keil & Delitzsch*).

> Instead of speaking to the rock with the rod of God in his hand, as God directed him, he spoke to the congregation, and in…inconsiderate words…In the ill-will expressed in these words the weakness of faith was manifested, by which the faithful servant of God, worn out with the numerous temptations, allowed himself to be overcome, so that he stumbled, and did not sanctify the Lord before the eyes of the people, as he ought to have done. Aaron also wavered along with Moses, inasmuch as he did nothing to prevent Moses' fall. But their sin became a grievous one, from the fact that they acted unworthily of their office. God punished them, therefore, by withdrawing their office from them before they had finished the work entrusted to them. They were not to conduct the congregation into the promised land, and therefore were not to enter in themselves (cf. Num 27:12-13; Deut 32:48 ff.). (*Keil & Delitzsch*).

b. "…they were doomed not to cross the Jordan or to enter the land of promise" (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*); see also Numbers 20:22-29 (Aaron) and Deuteronomy 34:1-6.
c. Imagine reluctantly taking a job you did not want (at the

age of 80), being verbally abused constantly by the people you're leading, putting up with the inconveniences of wandering in a desert wilderness for 40 years, and then upon arriving at an Eden-like land not allowed to enter. That's the retirement years of the man we know as Moses.

Body:

I. The relationship between faith and obedience is so close that the two concepts cannot be separated within Christianity.

A. Romans 11:30-32 illustrates the essential sameness of faith and obedience.

B. The Greek words for "unbelief" and "not believed" in these three verses are translated as "unbelief" (Romans 11:30, 32; Hebrews 4:6, 11) and "disobedience" (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6; Colossians 3:6), "believeth not" (John 3:36; Acts 17:5; 19:9; Hebrews 3:18; 11:31), "unbelieving" (Acts 14:2), "not obey" (Romans 2:8; 1 Peter 3:1; 4:17) and "disobedient" (Romans 10:21; 1 Peter 2:7-8; 3:20).

C. That is 13 times 'unbelief' and 10 times 'disobedient' of 23 occurrences in the Greek New Testament.

D. The ASV translates Romans 11:30-32 with the word "disobedience" in each instance the KJV in this passage uses the word "unbelief" or "not believed."

II. Obedience is a key element of God-given religion, including Christianity.

A. Jesus saves the obedient, Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 6:17; 2 Corinthians 10:5.

B. Jesus will punish the disobedient upon His Second Coming, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 4:17.

C. The result of the proper kind of love for God is obedience, John 14:15 ASV, 21.

D. Obedience (works) is the natural result of the right kind of faith, James 2:14-26.

E. God rebuked Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20:12 for not sanc-

tifying God before the people by obeying Him, cf. 1 Peter 3:15.

Conclusion:

1. Noting the near sameness of faith and obedience, it is no wonder then that God rebuked Moses and Aaron for their unbelief when they disobeyed God, Hebrews 3:16-19.
2. The incident in Numbers 20:1-13 illustrates the seriousness of disobeying God even in matters that through human judgment we might view as insignificant.
3. Leviticus 10:1-2 is another example of what might appear to us as a little thing (of disobedience) that had serious consequences.

Invitation:

1. Jesus remarked during His ministry that He is the Lord of those who obey Him, Luke 6:46.
2. Jesus Christ is not your Lord if you have not obeyed Him, Mark 16:16.
3. Jesus Christ is not your Lord if after being baptized for the remission of your sins you are not faithfully worshipping God, practicing godly living and serving God as He has directed, 1 John 1:9.

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The Grace of God Demands the Obedience of Faith

Ephesians 2:8-9

Thesis: To show the biblical relationship of God's grace to man's obedience.
Song: Trust and Obey

Introduction:

1. Among the things that the New Testament ascribes with saving power is the grace of God, Titus 2:11; 3:7.
2. Yet, among the things the New Testament ascribes with saving power is man's obedience, Hebrews 5:9.
3. However, mankind is neither saved by God's grace only nor by man's obedience only, Ephesians 2:8-9.
4. What, then, is the relationship of God's grace to man's obedience?

Body:

I. God's grace saves, but not alone, Ephesians 2:5.
   A. In the New Testament, "grace" means God's unmerited favor extended toward humanity for the purpose of salvation.
   B. Grace is the act of giving undeserved gifts to men (Bauer, Gingrich and Danker), namely salvation.
   C. Yet, God's grace is not unconditional since any of a number of human actions are required: repentance, Luke 13:3; faith (belief), John 8:24; baptism, Mark 16:16, etc.
   D. God's grace is tied to faith and to obedience.
   E. Faith arises from the inspired Word of God, Romans 10:17, and Bible faith is obedient faith, Romans 1:5; 16:26.

II. Man's Obedience saves, but not alone.
   A. Jesus saves the obedient, Hebrews 5:9.
   B. Disobedient souls will be eternally lost, 2 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; 1 Peter 3:1; 4:17.
   C. However, neither works of merit such as was required under the Law of Moses or works of obedience alone can save

souls, Galatians 3:11.

III. Faith welds God's grace and man's obedience together for human salvation.

A. Mankind's faith provides access to God's grace, Romans 5:2.
   1. The inspired Word of God is the source of the faith that provides access to God's grace and subsequent salvation, Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:15.
   2. The faith that comes from the inspired Word of God is obedient faith, Romans 1:5; 16:26.

B. This Bible faith involves obedience of the Word of God, permitting God's grace to be operative.
   1. One cannot earn his salvation, which is evident from the inability of one to be saved through his efforts to comply, for instance, with the Law of Moses, Galatians 2:16.
   2. Yet in a different context, works are equated with faith and subsequent obedience, 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:11.
   3. Faith must be active; it must obey, James 2:17, 20.
   4. The faith under consideration that precedes obedience that prompts God's saving grace is "the faith of the gospel," Philippians 1:27.

Conclusion:

1. Mankind is saved by grace.
2. Mankind is saved by obedience.
3. Mankind is saved by faith, Galatians 3:26.
4. There are a number of things to which the New Testament ascribes saving power besides these.
5. Yet, every thing that affects human salvation relates to the revealed, inspired Word of God.
6. Regarding the emphasis of this lesson, the order is faith, obedience and grace.

Invitation:

1. Allow God's grace to be operative in your life by consulting the

Gospel, which produces faith in honest hearts, which leads to obedience.

2. Lost souls need to obey the Gospel, Romans 6:17.
3. Erring Christians need to obey the Gospel as well, Revelation 2:5.

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The Young Prophet

1 Kings 13:1-6

Thesis: To learn from the Old Testament a valuable lesson respecting obedience to God, which principle is equally applicable today.
Song: "Trust and Obey"

Introduction:

1. The Old Testament is no longer the law of God to which mankind is to turn for divine direction in religion, Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14; Romans 7:6-7; Hebrews 8:6-13.
   a. All people living in this final dispensation are to turn to Jesus Christ (rather than to Moses) for religious leadership, Matthew 17:1-8; John 12:48.
   b. Every person will be judged in the last day by the law of God under which he lived, Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Revelation 20:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10.
2. Yet, the Old Testament is the basis on which the New Testament rests, besides containing biblical principles that remain valid today, Romans 15:4.
   a. Much of the New Testament would be unintelligible without knowledge of the Old Testament, e.g., Book of Hebrews.
   b. The Old Testament is essential to the confirmation of Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillment, especially in the Gospel records, Acts 2:16-21; 3:13; 7:1-53; 8:26-35; 9:22; 13:16-41.
3. The lesson at hand provides several lessons that contemporary man can use.
   a. There are consequences for sinning, Romans 6:23.
   b. Sin must be condemned and repentance required.
   c. Faithful servants may resist temptation and yet fall prey to another onslaught by Satan.
   d. Sincerity alone is not enough, John 4:24.
4. Background to 1 Kings 13:1-32 includes:

a. The Jewish nations of Israel (or Samaria) and Judah resulted from division of the nation of the Jews after the death of Solomon.
b. Jeroboam became king over the northern kingdom of Israel and established calf worship with golden calves in Dan and Bethel to prevent the people from returning to Jerusalem to worship.

Body:

I. A young prophet from Judah announced God's judgment against Israel because of her idolatry, 1 Kings 13:1-10.

A. God's judgment of condemnation was proclaimed, vss. 1-2.
1. Jeroboam was in the very act of idolatrous worship when the prophet arrived and spoke.
2. The prophet uttered a stunning prophecy that a man not yet born named Josiah would destroy idolatry in Israel. "This is one of the most remarkable and most singular prophecies in the Old Testament. It here most circumstantially foretells a fact which took place 340 years after the prediction..." (Clarke)
3. The prophecy was fulfilled, 2 Kings 23:15-25.

B. A miraculous sign was immediately delivered to validate or confirm the prophecy, vss. 3-5.
1. The purpose of miracles has always been to confirm the Word, Mark 16:20.
2. Not even a powerful king was able to thwart the pronouncement of God.
3. The sign was a sample of the later destruction of idolatry announced by the prophet of God.
4. Imagine the great courage needed by the young prophet to challenge a powerful king who certainly desired to kill him, Matthew 10:28.

C. King Jeroboam addressed the prophet again, meekly this time, seeking the restoration of his withered hand, vs. 6.
1. Jeroboam remained unchanged in his heart and afterward

continued to do evil, vs. 33.

2. The young prophet humanely petitioned God to restore Jeroboam's hand, which he did.

D. The young prophet rejected Jeroboam's offer of a reward and hospitality, vss. 7-10.

1. This prophet determined to leave that place according to God's instruction, without even pausing to eat anything, vs. 9.
2. Likewise, Christians today are called upon to reprove rather than fellowship the ungodly world, Ephesians 5:11.

II. The young prophet succumbed to a second, more subtle temptation, vss. 11-19.

A. There was an old prophet of God in town who heard about the young prophet.

1. If this prophet of God had been doing his job, perhaps there may have been no need for the young prophet to journey from Judah to Israel.
2. The old prophet identified with the young prophet and doubtless desired some social interaction.
3. We, like the old prophet, ought to reprove the wicked world in which we live rather than silently meld into it.

B. The old prophet searched for and found the young prophet, vss. 12-14.

1. Apparently of his own accord and not at the direction of Jeroboam, but nevertheless in the employ of Satan, he found the young man of God.
2. Non-idolatrous people in Israel were scarce and one might appreciate the old prophet's desire to fellowship another prophet of God.

C. The old prophet told a lie, which the young prophet believed, vss. 15-18.

1. The old prophet offered hospitality to the young prophet, of itself a noble gesture, vs. 15.
2. The young prophet kindly declined the overture, vs. 16.

3. He explained the instructions of God that he must obey, vs. 17.
4. The old prophet lied, saying God sent an angel to advise him to bring the young prophet home with him, vs. 18.

D. Deceived, the young prophet violated God's instructions, vs. 19.
1. The old prophet had proved his inefficiency as a messenger of God, which explains why the young prophet rather than the old prophet was sent to king Jeroboam in the first place.
2. Irrespective of whether the young prophet was sincerely deluded, anyone who violates the Word of God is guilty of sin, Matthew 7:21-23.
3. Historically, even the simplest of infractions have catastrophic consequences, e.g., eating forbidden fruit, Genesis 3; using unauthorized fire, Leviticus 10; striking a rock instead of merely speaking to it, Numbers 20:1-12.

III. A second judgment by God was rendered, this time against the young prophet.

A. God's judgment was pronounced against the young prophet in the very act of disobedience, vs. 20.
1. The young prophet was eating and drinking while still in Bethel, contrary to what God had commanded him.
2. God used the old prophet as His spokesman of doom.

B. The young prophet was condemned to death for his disobedience, vss. 21-22.
1. Sincerity alone is insufficient to please God, Luke 6:46.
2. Disobedience to God will be punished, Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
3. Even useful servants of God must continue to serve God faithfully and obediently, e.g., Aaron and Moses, Numbers 20:7-12, 23-24; Deuteronomy 32:48-52; 34:4; 1 Corinthians 15:58.

IV. God executed the young prophet through the agency of a wild beast, vss. 23-32.

A. The young prophet prepared a second time to leave Bethel and return to Judah, vs. 23.
   1. The parting of the old and new prophets must have been awkward at best, the older prophet being responsible for tempting the younger prophet to disobey God.
   2. The young prophet doubtless could hardly believe that he had accomplished the difficult part of his mission to confront Jeroboam and failed in the simple instruction to return home.
   3. Both prophets knew that there was no escape from the judgment of God.

B. God's judgment came to pass, vss. 24-28.
   1. A lion attacked and killed the young prophet, vs. 24.
   2. His death was not happenchance as the lion killed the prophet but did not eat him and did not attach the donkey, vss. 24-28.
   3. The old prophet confirmed that the young prophet's death was the judgment of God due to the young prophet's disobedience, vs. 26.

C. The old prophet recovered the body of the young prophet and buried it, vss. 29-32.
   1. The old prophet's sorrow and remorse was evident by his actions and attitude, vss. 29-30.
   2. Burying the young prophet's body in his own tomb, the old prophet expressed deep affection toward the fallen prophet.
   3. The old prophet made affectionate lamentation over the young, slain prophet: "Alas, my brother!" vs. 30.
   4. The old prophet instructed his sons to bury him with the young prophet when he died because the old prophet knew the young prophet's prophecy against Bethel would be fulfilled, as it later was, 2 Kings 23.

Conclusion:

1. Sincerity alone is insufficient before God, John 4:24.
2. Disobedience will be punished, Leviticus 10:1-2.
3. Obedience will be rewarded with salvation, Hebrews 5:8-9.
4. The Word of God and what someone says is the Word of God may not be equal, Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1.
5. Little sins are weighty, Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8.
6. Satan uses several devices to allure souls into sin; if one attempt fails, he tries something else, 1 Peter 5:8.
7. Even the most useful servants are capable of falling, Galatians 2:11-21; 1 Corinthians 9:27.
8. Satan will use even the children of God for his evil purposes if he can.
9. The judgments of God are certain, 2 Peter 3:7, 9-12.
10. False prophets or teachers present a real threat to the children of God, Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2; Romans 16:17-18; 1 John 4:1.

Invitation:

1. We must exercise obedient faith to be saved, Romans 1:5; 16:26; 5:1.
2. A great company of priests obeyed the faith, Acts 6:7.
3. Erring Christians must repent, Acts 8:22.

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For We Walk by Faith, Not by Sight

2 Corinthians 5:7

Thesis: True Christianity is based on obedience rather than what one perceives himself to be satisfactory.

Introduction:

1. Mankind has often thought he knew better than God how he ought to conduct himself, Proverbs 14:12; 16:25.
2. In the Old Testament, for example, Almighty God took the kingdom from King Saul and gave it to King David and his descendants, all because King Saul did not obey God, 1 Samuel 15-16.
3. Today, Jesus Christ is the Savior of those who will obey Him, Hebrews 5:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
4. As the apostle Paul wrote, we are obligated to walk by faith and not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7.

Body:

I. To be pleasing to God, people today must walk by faith and not by sight when they worship God.

A. God expects mankind today to worship Him according to His instructions in the New Testament.

1. God requires that mankind worship him "in spirit and in truth," John 4:23-24.
2. That worship is composed of five acts: prayer, preaching or teaching, the Lord's Supper, the contribution and singing, Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.
3. Anything more or less is unacceptable to God because it does not conform to divine instruction, Colossians 3:17.

B. God has never been pleased with worship according to man's will instead of according to God's will.

1. God rejected the worship of Cain because he did not worship God according to instruction, Genesis 4:3-7; Hebrews 11:4.

2. God sent fire down to devour two priests, sons of Aaron, who ignored God's worship instructions, Leviticus 10:1-2.
3. Jesus Christ in His day condemned deviations in worship from divine instructions, Matthew 15:9.
4. The apostle Paul condemned deviations from New Testament worship, Colossians 2:23.

II. To be pleasing to God, people today must walk by faith and not by sight while by practicing New Testament doctrine (teaching).

A. Divine doctrine or teaching has often appeared to be illogical to mankind.
   1. There are many things that God has required of or now requires of mankind that do not appear to be logical to us, i.e. they do not compute, 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; 3:18-20.
   2. From a practical consideration, what difference should it have made whether Adam and Eve ate the fruit from a certain tree in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:1-13? Doctrinally, it involved obedience versus disobedience.
   3. From a practical consideration, what difference should it have made whether Nadab and Abihu got their fire from a campfire or from the altar of burnt offering? Doctrinally, it involved obedience versus disobedience.
   4. The whole point of divine doctrine or teaching is obedience versus disobedience, whether man will obey God.

B. New Testament doctrine may not be logical to mankind, but doing what God says to do in the way God says to do it is a matter of obedience versus disobedience.
   1. We have no right to call Jesus Christ Lord if we will not do what he says, Luke 6:46.
   2. Doctrine was intended to be passed on, 2 Timothy 2:2.

C. Consider some of the doctrines that may not make sense to us, but are surely taught in the New Testament.
   1. Baptism may seem illogical to us (it does not compute), but the New Testament definitely teaches that it is immer-

sion and associates it with salvation, Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21.

2. Weekly observance of the Lord's Supper may seem illogical to us, but the New Testament teaches weekly observance of the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7.
3. Independent local congregations served by its own elders or bishops may seem inefficient to us, but God through the inspired New Testament writers taught that we should have independent local congregations served by its own elders, Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5.
4. We could make a long list of New Testament doctrines, many of which man has altered, but these suffice to demonstrate that God has not left mankind without doctrinal instruction.

III. Mankind's every refusal to walk by faith and not by sight has been met with rejection by and condemnation from God.

A. God through the apostle Paul calls changing the doctrine of Jesus Christ another gospel which is not really another Gospel, Galatians 1:6-9.

B. The apostle John warned Christians to receive no other doctrine or those who corrupt the doctrine of Jesus Christ, 2 John 9-11.

C. Jesus Christ said that we must not add to nor take from the Word of God, Revelation 22:18-19.

D. Jesus Christ will deny a place in Heaven to those who though they profess to follow Him have rather acted according to human rather than divine will, Matthew 7:21-23; John 12:48.

Conclusion:

1. In summary, mankind must determine to walk by faith and not by sight, 2 Corinthians 5:7.
2. True faith comes biblical evidence, Romans 10:17.
3. We must appeal exclusively to what is written in the Word of God, 1 Corinthians 4:6 ASV.

4. Scripture came from God to man and is God-breathed, 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Invitation:

1. Since no new revelation after the completion of the New Testament is coming from God to man, we must appeal for religious instruction exclusively to the Word of God (Bible), Jude 3; Romans 6:17.
2. For salvation from sin, Jesus said believe and be baptized, Mark 16:16.
3. Christians also can receive forgiveness for their sins, not by being baptized again, but through repentance and prayer, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Do You Love Jesus?

John 14:15, 21, 23-24

Thesis: To emphasize that if we love Jesus, we must obey Him.
Song: "I Love My Savior Too"

Introduction:

1. There is ample biblical evidence that Jesus loves us.
   a. He loved us when we were vile with sin, Romans 5:8.
   b. Our Lord loved us and gave Himself for us that we might be saved, Ephesians 5:2; Revelation 1:5.
2. We have an obligation to reciprocate and demonstrate our love toward Jesus.
   a. Jesus loved us first, which prompts us to love Him in return, 1 John 4:19.
   b. Our love toward Jesus is demonstrated by obeying Him, John 14:15, 21, 23-24.
3. Whether we obey the Word of Jesus says something about one's professed love for Jesus.
   a. Disobedience demonstrates that one does not truly love Jesus, John 14:24.
   b. Jesus asked a pertinent question in the face of disobedience, Luke 6:46.

Body:

I. Do you love Jesus—enough to assemble regularly with His church, Hebrews 10:25-31?

A. Do you love Jesus—enough to worship according to divine instruction, Colossians 3:17?
   1. Lord's Supper reverently and weekly, 1 Corinthians 11:26-29; Acts 20:7.
   2. Purposeful giving according to one's prosperity weekly, 2 Corinthians 9:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.
   3. Singing as the type of worshipful music stipulated in the New Testament, Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

4. Bible filled preaching, sound in doctrine, Titus 2:1; 2 Timothy 4:1-8.
5. Prayer, Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:15.

B. Do you love Jesus—enough to accept God's assignment of male and female roles in the church, including the assembly?
1. Both men and women enjoy equality through the Gospel regarding redemption, Galatians 3:27-28.
2. However, women must remain silent in the assembly except for singing and confessing Christ to be saved, 1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

II. Do you love Jesus—enough to practice Christian living, Romans 12:1-2?

A. Christians are set apart or sanctified for use by God, 2 Timothy2:19-26.
B. Christians must avoid every kind of sinful practice, 1 Thessalonians 5:22; Galatians 5:19-21.
C. Christian living isn't merely not sinning, but it also requires positive activity, James 2:14-26; 4:17.
D. Christian living becomes a way of life where God is invited into every decision, James 4:13-16.

III. Do you love Jesus—enough to practice Christian service?

A. Evangelism cannot occur without individual participation in the execution of the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 1:8.
B. Benevolence is an opportunity to exhibit love toward brethren and non-Christians, Galatians 6:10.
C. Christians have the responsibility to prepare themselves and serve if they can as preachers, teachers, deacons, elders, etc., 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Hebrews 5:12-14.

IV. Do you love Jesus—enough to make him the Lord of your life?

A. Jesus can be the Captain of your salvation if you will obey Him, Hebrews 5:8-9; Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9.
B. Jesus, like the Father and the Spirit, are anxious for souls to be saved and not perish, 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 18:11-14.

C. We cannot divide our affections between God and earthly matters or even our families, Matthew 22:37; 10:37.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus loved us enough to die for us that we might be saved.
2. We ought to love Jesus in return.
3. We must demonstrate our love of Jesus by obeying Him.
4. Since we love Jesus, we will assemble with the saints at every appointed time if it is possible, and we will worship according to divine instructions.
5. Since we love Jesus, we will earnestly endeavor to practice Christian living.
6. Since we love Jesus, we will do our best to practice Christian service.

Invitation:

1. Finally, since we love Jesus, we will make him Lord of our lives.
2. We will happily be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins, Galatians 3:27; Acts 2:38.
3. Erring children of God will repent and follow the Chief Shepherd, 1 Peter 5:4; Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; 2:1.

The Importance of Motherhood

Ephesians 6:2

Thesis: To emphasize the significance of and express appreciation for motherhood.

Introduction:

1. Biologically, a mother is the female parent of offspring, but a good mother is much, much more than a baby machine.
2. A good mother loves her children enough to prepare them for earthly life and eternity.

Body:

I. The word "mother" has obvious meaning when connected with the home and the family, but the Bible lifts up motherhood to an even higher plane.

A. The Old Testament extols motherhood by highlighting heightened esteem toward mothers.

1. The Old Testament commands children to direct equal respect to both fathers and mothers, Genesis 28:7; Exodus 20:12; cf. Ephesians 6:2; Exodus 21:15, 17; Deuteronomy 21:18-21.
2. Psalm 35:14 indicates that one's grief for the death of his mother exceeds the grief caused by death of any other.

B. The New Testament exalts motherhood, too.

1. The highest exaltation of motherhood can be seen in the virgin birth; "The birth of Christ lifted motherhood to the highest possible plane and idealized it for all time" (*ISBE*).
2. The apostle Paul valued motherhood and bestowed praise on mothers, Romans 16:13; 1 Timothy 5:2.

C. Mothers contribute immeasurably to the spiritual development of their children (or the lack thereof).

1. Timothy's mother and his mother's mother instilled reverence for God and His Word in youthful Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:5.
2. Many contemporary mothers have thrown away their critical role in the home respecting the upbringing of their

children, e.g. sacrificing children upon the altar of a career, 1 Timothy 5:14; Proverbs 31:10-31.

3. Unfortunately, some mothers do not have "natural affection" and must be taught to "love their children," e.g. abortion, Romans 1:31; Titus 2:4.

II. The word "mother" sometimes is used figuratively in the Bible.

A. The word "mother" can refer to a nation, Ezekiel 19; Jeremiah 50:12-13.

B. The word "mother" can refer to a city.

1. For instance, one Israelite city was called "a mother in Israel," 2 Samuel 20:19.
2. Another city was called "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth," Revelation 17:5.
3. The apostle Paul referred to Jerusalem as "our mother," Galatians 4:26.

C. The word "mother" can refer to ancestry.

1. Eve "was the mother of all [the] living," Genesis 3:20.
2. Sarah was "a mother of nations," Genesis 17:16.
3. Rebekah was called "the mother of thousands of millions," Genesis 24:60.

D. The word "mother," like the word "father," can refer to one who is responsible for converting others whereby they became babes in Christ, 1 Thessalonians 2:7.

E. Jesus used the word "mother" to refer to His disciples as His closest of (spiritual) family, Matthew 12:49-50.

F. The last earthly responsibility to which Jesus attended was providing for the welfare of His mother after His death, which indicates His high evaluation of motherhood as well as compassion for His mother, John 29:27.

III. The Bible chronicles in its pages some outstanding mothers.

A. Hannah, mother of Samuel, is an example of an outstanding mother, 1 Samuel.

1. She loved God.
2. She prayed for a son.

3. She dedicated her son to the lifelong service of God.
4. She gave gifts to her son.

B. "Mother Jezebel" is an example of an outstanding mother in the wrong way, 2 Kings 9:22.
1. Her wickedness brought idolatry into Israel.
2. She also was guilty of murder.
3. Jezebel's wickedness is summarized in Scripture as "whoredoms" and "witchcraft."

C. Truly, the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world!
1. Mothers need to ask themselves what kind of mothers they are.
2. Children need to ask themselves what kind of sons and daughters they are.

Conclusion:

1. A God-fearing, godly living mother is a blessing to her home, especially to her children, Proverbs 31:30.
2. Fathers and mothers have the responsibility to prepare their children for life, including starting their own families, Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31.
3. Fathers and mothers have the responsibility to prepare their children for eternal life, too, 2 Timothy 1:5; Ephesians 6:4.

Invitation:

1. Mothers need to do their part to lead their children into the faith of Jesus Christ, and children need to do their part to become and remain the faithful children of God.
2. Jesus urges all souls to become Christians and remain faithful Christians, Mark 16:16; Revelation 2:10.
3. When Christians falter in sin, they need to repent and pray for forgiveness as publicly or as privately as they sinned, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Why Do the Churches of Christ Not Have Female Leaders?

1 Timothy 2:12-14

Thesis: To emphasize biblical fundamentals, especially when they differ from contemporary religion.

Introduction:

1. The churches of Christ belong to Jesus Christ, and consequently, they are obligated to conduct themselves according to what Jesus authorizes, Romans 16:16; Colossians 3:17.
2. People living in the Gospel Age must heed the words of Jesus Christ rather than Moses or the Old Testament prophets, Matthew 17:1-5; John 12:48.
3. Jesus Christ is the Lawgiver and the Mediator of the New Testament, to which people living today must turn for religious instruction, James 4:12; Hebrews 9:15.
4. Jesus Christ condemns alteration of the Gospel with "the commandments of men," false Gospels and the human will, Matthew 15:9; Galatians 1:6-9; Colossians 2:23.
5. One must turn exclusively to the New Testament to learn what God has authorized respecting Christianity.

Body:

I. Manmade religion has improvised regarding several aspects of church leadership—displacing the leadership in religion that God authorized in the New Testament.

A. One way in which mankind has altered religion from the New Testament pattern is by introduction of a formal clergy.

1. Often this clergy is distinguished from the rest of the church by special clothing for the clergy, e.g. often colorful, flowing robes and headgear.
2. Companion to special clothing for clergy are special religious titles reserved for clergy, Matthew 23:8-10.
3. Many denominations have formalized worship with this

special clergy beyond what the New Testament reveals respecting worship under Christianity.

B. Another way in which mankind has altered religion from the New Testament pattern is by introduction of leadership roles for women in the church.
   1. For instance, she elders are foreign to what the New Testament authorizes, 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6.
   2. In addition, female preachers to audiences of men and women are prohibited by New Testament Scripture, 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:34.
   3. The respective roles for men and women in the church and in the home are not culturally based, but they go back to near creation and were implemented by God before there was any culture, 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 Corinthians 11:8-9.

II. The churches of Christ are obligated to implement the type of church leadership that the New Testament authorizes.

A. The churches of Christ are obligated to adhere to what the New Testament authorizes for church leadership.
   1. This includes not developing a clergy and not distinguishing its leaders by special clothing and special titles.
   2. Subsequently, formalized worship services, etc. beyond what the New Testament authorizes is ill-conceived.

B. The churches of Christ do not have female leadership in the church because it is not authorized by God.
   1. Despite differing God-given roles for men and women in the church and in the home, male and female Christians are spiritually equal, Galatians 3:26-28.
   2. There is sufficient work for women to do within the framework of their God-given role, Titus 2:3-5; 1 Timothy 5:14.
   3. Since God has restricted women from leadership roles in the church, this places a serious responsibility upon male members of the church, 1 Timothy 2:8.

Conclusion:

1. Anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all in religion.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will concern themselves with what Almighty God has authorized.
3. In the case of church leadership, that means that the local church will be led by godly men, and that the church will have neither a clergy nor female leaders.

Invitation:

1. Likewise, anyone unconcerned about biblical authority or pleasing God can do anything or nothing at all regarding human salvation; such a person will remain lost.
2. However, everyone who respects biblical authority and wants to please God will implement God's divine plan of salvation in his or her life, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

