

## SYLLABUS: BEWARE OF FOOTNOTES

January 6,7 .....	Strange Fire
January 13,14 .....	The Way God Gifts
January 20,21 .....	Dead Works
January 27,28 .....	Name It, Claim It
February 3,4 .....	Value of the Old Testament
February 10,11 .....	All Authority
February 17,18 .....	Predestination
February 24,25 .....	Value of Persecution
March 2,3 .....	no meeting, spring break

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## LESSON ONE: STRANGE FIRE

As we begin our quest to understand the phrase "strange fire," we need to read the story in Leviticus 10.

Leviticus 10: 1-5 and record what you learn: \_\_\_\_\_

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Leviticus 8-9 tell us that the first tabernacle had been erected and Aaron was sacrificing in the way God desired.

One day, two of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, came along and offered incense with "strange fire."

Do a word study on "strange" and record the results here: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Hebrew word translated "strange" means "unauthorized, foreign, or profane." God not only rejected their sacrifice; He found it so offensive that He consumed the two men with fire.

When the tabernacle had been dedicated, the original fire in the sacrificial altar was lit in a specific way. Read Leviticus 9:22-24 and record the events: \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Exodus 30:1-10 to determine the specific purpose for the incense altar. \_\_\_\_\_

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Continue your reading in Leviticus 16:12 \_\_\_\_\_

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After Nadab and Abihu were killed, Moses explained to Aaron why God had done such a harsh thing: "This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: 'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.'" The exact nature of the profane fire isn't known, but, since it was the fire that was unauthorized, we can believe that Nadab and Abihu were burning the incense with fire of their own making rather than taking fire from the altar.

Some believe that the following section in Leviticus 10:8-11 might mean that the two men came into the tabernacle drunk and therefore could not remember what was a violation and what was not. Whatever it was the men did to render the offering profane, it was a sign of their disregard for the utter holiness of God and the need to honor and obey Him in solemn and holy fear. Their carelessness and irreverence were their downfall.

In judging Nadab and Abihu for their strange fire, God was making a point to all the other priests who would serve in His tabernacle—and later, in His temple—and to us, as well. Since this was the first time sacrifices were being offered on the altar and Israel was getting to know the living God better, when Aaron's sons were disobedient and profane, God displayed His displeasure in no uncertain terms. God was not going to allow the disobedience of Aaron's sons to set a precedent for future disregard of His Law.

A similar story occurs in Acts 5:1–11, during the time of the early church. Read those verses and record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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A husband and wife lied to Peter about the value of land sold and given to the church, and they are judged with physical death because of their lie. As Peter puts it, "You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

God knows our hearts. He knows what we truly believe and our attitude toward Him. We cannot offer to Him proud "sacrifices" that are unworthy of Him. He seeks those who come to Him in humility, sacrificing their pride, and humbly grieving for sin.

Psalms 51:17 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 5:4 \_\_\_\_\_

Although there is abundant mercy and forgiveness for those who belong to Him, God wants us to know that He is serious when it comes to His honor and glory. If there is willful disobedience in the life of a believer, then God disciplines us out of His great love for us.

Hebrews 12:7–11 \_\_\_\_\_

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If disobedience continues, God will take harsher measures until we understand how we are disappointing Him.

1 Corinthians 11:29–30 \_\_\_\_\_

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## THINKING IT OVER

In what areas or ways have you offered “strange fire,” done work or used means that were not rooted in instruction from God.

Because the altar of sacrifice is looking forward to the sacrifice of Jesus, its coals were to be used to fire the incense altar. The significance is that we pray because of the sacrifice of Jesus – because of His completed work.

### **John 14:12-15 (NASB)**

<sup>12</sup> "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do; because I go to the Father.

<sup>13</sup> "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

<sup>14</sup> "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do *it*.

<sup>15</sup> "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

## LESSON TWO: THE WAY GOD GIFTS

**SPIRITUAL GIFTS:** The skills and abilities which God gives through His Spirit to all Christians, which equip Christians to serve God in the Christian community.

In the Old Testament, the Spirit of the Lord was given to selected leaders rather than to all of God's people. When the Spirit came to an individual, He brought with Him one or more gifts which equipped the individual to serve God by serving Israel. Examples of this are:

Bezaleel, who was given the gift of craftsmanship (Exodus 31:2-3);

Othniel, who was equipped to be a judge (Judges 3:9-10)

Gideon, who was given military skills (Judges 6:34)

Samson, who was given physical strength (Judges 14:6,19)

Saul, who was given political skills (1 Samuel 10:6)

Micah, who was given prophetic gifts (Micah 3:8)

These Old Testament stories are the background for the Christian understanding of spiritual gifts. The Christian view of spiritual gifts begins with Jesus. Read Mark 1:10 and record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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The Holy Spirit directed and empowered Jesus throughout His earthly ministry.

Jesus promised His disciples that they, too, would receive the Spirit one day and that the Spirit would guide them. Read Mark 13:11 and Luke 11:13 and record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost.

Discuss what you read in Acts 2:1-47 here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Peter made it quite clear that the Spirit would continue to be given to all who accepted the Christian gospel. Reread Acts 2:37-40.

Paul's letters reveal that this continued to be true in all the churches; every Christian was given the gift of the Spirit, so that Paul could write:

**Romans 8:9 (NASB)** However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

When the Spirit came into a person's life, He brought with Him a gift, or gifts, which that person could use to serve God. Read 1 Peter 4:10: \_\_\_\_\_

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Compare Peter's words to Paul's in 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 \_\_\_\_\_

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Neither Peter, Paul nor any other New Testament writer suggested that some Christians might be without gifts; all Christians are given gifts. Paul always set his discussion of gifts in the context of the church. In our day many people tend to think individualistically; it is easy to do this with reference to spiritual gifts. This can lead us to become arrogant about our gifts ("I have the gift of evangelism"), or else to be ashamed of our gifts ("My gift is only working with children"). Paul spoke of gifts in terms of the whole church, not in terms of individuals only. The church, he said, is the body of Christ; each Christian is a member (eye, ear, leg); and each member has its appropriate ability (to see, or hear, or walk). This understanding leaves no room for arrogance or shame concerning our gifts.

In his writings Paul referred to about twenty different gifts, including such things as preaching, teaching, and leadership. Some interpreters have suggested that by putting Paul's lists of gifts together, we get a comprehensive list of spiritual gifts. This seems unlikely and the lists were most likely not intended to be exhaustive, since that would limit God.

Read Romans 12:6-8 and write your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Paul's assumption seems to have been that whatever skills a Christian has are given to him by God and are to be used in God's service. What matters, then, is that Christians discover what their gifts are and then develop them.

How are the gifts to be used? Paul's answer to this is clear and emphatic: in love.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31-13: \_\_\_\_\_

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Love is the vehicle involved in the appropriate use of all of the other gifts. Read Ephesians 4:11-13 and carefully note the purpose of the gifts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, carefully read 1 Corinthians 12:11; after reading, do a word study on:

Individually: \_\_\_\_\_

Wills: \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual gifting are purposeful. They work under the power of the Holy Spirit according to the intent and purposes of God and the authority of the risen Lord.

Is it wrong to want certain gifts? Paul seems to say that it is not.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 1 Corinthians 14:1 \_\_\_\_\_

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## THINKING IT OVER

The desire for certain gifts should never supersede the purpose or will of God in our lives. As we close this section, read through 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: \_\_\_\_\_

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## LESSON THREE: DEAD WORKS

James tells us, in no uncertain terms, that faith without works is dead. Read the following verses and record the perspective of James here:

James 2:17, 26: \_\_\_\_\_

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Unfortunately, the book of Hebrews also tells us that works can be dead. Read Hebrews 6:1-8 and specifically note the context of these verses: \_\_\_\_\_

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Continue your reading in Hebrews 9:11-14: \_\_\_\_\_

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Today, we will consider dead works from the God's perspective. There are many who believe that they are saved by doing "good works." The concept of "dead works" is only found in the book of Hebrews. Repentance from dead works is a foundational thing. Repentance means to change the way we think. We need to change the way we think about dead works.

From the outside looking in we can't tell the difference between dead works and good works. They can look very much the same outwardly. They can be the same works, but they have different motives.

- Praying can be a dead or good work.
- Attending church can be a dead or good work.
- Reading the Bible can be a dead or good work.
- Telling others about Jesus can be a dead or good work.

Read through the following verses and write your thoughts:

Matthew 25:31-46: \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus and the apostles put the emphasis on *believing* right, because when we believe right we will naturally do right as a consequence. If we can't tell outwardly, then how do we know what a good work is?

A good work is when we do the will of God as a response to his love, mercy and our new identity of righteousness in Jesus Christ. In our New Covenant with God, grace is the ruling factor. Dead works are works of self righteousness.

Read Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 and describe your thoughts: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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We get significance from our work and like a job that is well done. And we should, because God created us to work. Yet all of our labors are useless, and thus dead, if they do not point to the worship of God. Any significance and esteem we attain from our labor apart from the end of bringing God glory and establishing His rule upon the earth is misplaced. Such godless labor may appear good to us and even receive the applause of others, but heaven finds it repulsive and defiled by sin. In other words, unless we have been washed in the blood of Christ, all our good deeds are worthless, useless, vain, and dead.

Dead works are dangerous because the thing that most keeps people from Christ is the belief that they can be good without Him. Their lives may be filled with good deeds in the eyes of men, but such works are not necessarily good in the eyes of God. Unfortunately, many have been led astray by the church, as pastors and teachers have told them that the gospel is what they do.

Ephesians 2:10 says, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." God's goal in saving us was not only to rescue us from hell, but also that we would reflect His character and goodness to the world.

God delights to see us becoming more like His Son. Read Romans 8:29 and record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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We were created in God's image. Sin marred that image. When God bought us back for Himself, it was to restore His image in us and free us to become all we were created to be. When the Holy Spirit comes to live inside us, He prompts us to do things that glorify God.

John 14:26 \_\_\_\_\_

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Our desire to please God grows as our understanding of Him grows. That desire to please God results in good works.

## THINKING IT OVER

Many people go through the outward motions of giving their lives to Christ, but no lifestyle change follows. That is not real salvation but is a “dead” faith (James 2:26).

When you walk into a dark room and flip the switch, you expect light. If no light appears, you rightly assume something is wrong. It would be logically inconsistent to say that the light is on when the room is still pitch black. Light naturally dispels darkness. When a dark heart receives the light of salvation, it is illuminated.

John 12:44-50 \_\_\_\_\_

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Priorities change. Desires change. Outlook changes. Life is seen clearly for the first time. If the darkness of sin continues, we can rightly assume no light came on.

## LESSON FOUR: NAME IT AND CLAIM IT

The “name it and claim it” or “prosperity gospel” is not biblical and is in many ways antithetical to the true gospel message and the clear teaching of Scripture. While there are many different versions of the name it and claim it philosophy preached today, they all have similar characteristics. At its best, this teaching comes from the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of some Scriptures, and, at its worst, it is a completely heretical teaching that has the characteristics of cult doctrine.

### **1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

<sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

<sup>17</sup> The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

This movement, also called “Word of Faith” may have its origins in Romans 10:8. Read that verse carefully, in its context, and record your hermeneutical position here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Another supporting verse used by adherents is Matthew 17:14-21. Read these verses and record your hermeneutical position here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Cross reference to Matthew 21:21, Luke 17:6, and Mark 11:23: \_\_\_\_\_

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In fact, the movement has more in common with new age metaphysics than with biblical Christianity. However, instead of us creating our reality with our thoughts, as new age proponents advise, name it and claim it teachers tell us that we can use the “power of faith” to create our own reality or get what we want. In essence, *faith* is

redefined from “a trust in a holy and sovereign God despite our circumstances” to “a way of controlling God to give us what we want.” Faith becomes a force whereby we can get what we want rather than an abiding trust in God even during times of trials and suffering.

The teaching really exalts man and his “faith” above God. In fact, many of the more extreme Word of Faith teachers teach that man was created on terms of equality with God and that man is the same class of being that He is Himself. This dangerous and heretical teaching denies the very basic tenets of biblical Christianity.

In the space provided, write your definition of “faith:” \_\_\_\_\_

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Now, read through Hebrews 11, known as the “Hebrews Hall of Faith.” Ask yourself this question: were the people faithful because they spoke to situations and demanded that God act, or because they believed God enough to do what He told them to do?

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Whether it is the power of positive thinking or the prosperity gospel, the premise is the same—what you think or believe will happen is ultimately what controls what *will* happen. If you think negative thoughts or are lacking in faith, you will suffer or not get what you want. But on the other hand if you think positive thoughts or just have “enough faith,” then you can have health, wealth, and happiness now. This false teaching appeals to one of man’s most basic instincts, which is one reason why it is hugely popular.

There is, of course, benefit in not dwelling on things that are discouraging, thereby giving the devil an opportunity.

Read Philippians 4:4-9 and answer the following questions:

In what manner do you make needs known to God? \_\_\_\_\_

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What things should occupy your thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_

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Read Matthew 16:24-26 and write your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Rather than being a message of self-denial, the prosperity gospel is one of self-satisfaction. Its goal is not becoming more Christlike through sacrifice but having what we want here and now, clearly contradicting the words of our Savior.

The prosperity gospel is completely focused on us getting the things the world has to offer.

Read 1 John 2:15 \_\_\_\_\_

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In fact, those with a fondness for the things of the world become enemies of God. The message of the prosperity gospel simply cannot be any more opposite of what the Bible really teaches. Read James 4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

## THINKING IT OVER

In his book *Your Best Life Now*, prosperity teacher Joel Osteen says that the key to a more rewarding life, a better home, a stronger marriage, and a better job is found in a "simple yet profound process to change the way you think about your life and help you accomplish what is truly important." How different that is from the biblical truth that this life now is nothing compared to the life to come.

As we conclude our thoughts for this lesson, read Matthew 6:19-21 \_\_\_\_\_

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Also read Philippians 4:11 \_\_\_\_\_

## LESSON FIVE: THE VALUE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

As we begin to read the Old Testament, we not only see Christ in a few cameo appearances, but we will begin to see Him on every page. **We cannot adequately understand** and share the gospel apart from knowing the Old Testament. This may be the most crucial reason why we need to read and understand it.

Begin your readings with 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and ask yourself what scriptures Paul would have been referring to: \_\_\_\_\_

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We cannot understand the New Testament apart from knowing the Old Testament. The book of Hebrews demonstrates this truth better than any other New Testament book that I can think of. For example, in chapter 11, the writer presents various Old Testament saints in a beautiful, encouraging chapter that we call "The Hebrews Hall of Faith." The stories of the men and women listed in The Hall of Faith are found only in the Old Testament. The power of this chapter, and much of the rest of the New Testament, loses its might apart from our knowledge of the Old Testament.

We cannot adequately understand the gospel apart from knowing the Old Testament. This may be the most crucial reason why we need to read and understand the Old Testament. The Bible is a story of redemption, but if we only read and cherish part of the story, we will never fully grasp the whole thing. We need to step back and see the big picture, and we can only do that by reading all of the chapters in the story. Right after Adam and Eve distrusted and disobeyed God, God promised that one day He would send a Savior to rescue them and their descendants from the consequences of sin. Read Genesis 3:15 and record your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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From that point on, the glorious story of mercy begins down the long road to Calvary's grace. As we see Jesus on every page, we trace redemption throughout the entire Bible, and our understanding of the gospel grows and our faith is strengthened. Jesus is really our Kinsman Redeemer, and we would never know this apart from the Old Testament. When Jesus wanted to reveal himself as the risen Christ, *"beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."* The "Scriptures" at that time that Jesus used to tell of Himself consisted only of the Old Testament.

Read John 5:39 \_\_\_\_\_

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## **WHY ONE NEEDS A REDEEMER**

1. Had become enslaved – kinsman redeemer paid the price to redeem the enslaved relative
2. Had lost control of land – kinsman redeemer paid the price to redeem the land
3. Family murder – kinsman redeemer served as the judicial executioner of the murderer
4. Had produced no heirs – kinsman redeemer married the one without heirs and produced heirs

## **WHO COULD SERVE AS A GA'AL**

The nearest blood relative who: (Leviticus 25:48)

1. Was willing to pay the price (would use his own resources to pay the price)
2. Was able to pay the price (was qualified i.e. sufficient resources and not himself a slave: Ruth 4:6)

## **MANKIND (ADAM) NEEDED A REDEEMER**

1. After the fall, mankind was enslaved to sin (John 8:34: Jesus answered them, “truly, truly I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.”)
2. Mankind had lost dominion of the earth (John 12:31 “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out”)
3. Mankind had been murdered (John 8:44 “You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning...”)
4. Because of sin, there were no heirs for the kingdom (Romans 4:14 For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified.)

## **HOW JESUS REDEEMED US**

1. We had no eligible kinsman to redeem mankind because no one was able (i.e. not himself enslaved to sin) Sin entered through being a descendant from Adam’s seed
2. Jesus became eligible for us by meeting the requirements:
  - a. He became a blood relative (Hebrews 2:14 Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same)
  - b. He was able because he wasn’t born of Adam’s seed and therefore was not born enslaved to sin
  - c. He was willing

## **JESUS’ ACTIONS FOR US**

1. Redeemed any of enslaved mankind who choose His redemption
2. Will redeem the land over which Satan took control (Earth)
3. Will include the judicial execution of our murderer (Rev. 20:10, 14)
4. Will include marriage to those who had produced no heirs, making them His bride (the church)

## **EXAMPLES OF REDEMPTION**

Ruth and Boaz (he redeemed the land and married her) Ruth 4:1-13

Jeremiah 32:10-14 (he redeemed the land and put the deed in a jar of clay)

Articles redeemed were “sealed” as a mark of ownership and authenticity. Only the rightful purchaser could break the seal, which was both placed and broken before witnesses.

## **REDEMPTION TERMINOLOGY**

1. Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels (saved spirits in fleshly bodies)
  2. Ephesians 1:13 In Him, you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise
- Revelation 19:9 And he said to me, “write, ‘blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And He said to me, “these are true words of God.”

**Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.** There is no such thing as a "God of the Old Testament" that is different from the "God of the New Testament." Praise the Lord, He never changes! It is important for us to see certain aspects of God's judgment and anger in the Old Testament so that we worship God for who He really is. He is a God who judges sin and who will someday destroy the world with fire.

Peter tells us that, by remembering God's past judgment on the world (The Flood in Genesis 6-8), we understand that there is a future judgment coming. Knowing God in this way affects how we live as Christians

Read 2 Peter 3:11 and record your thoughts concerning the future: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THINKING IT OVER

Paul says that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

**Prophecy:** I hear so many people shrug off prophetic books, saying things like, "It'll all pan out in the end!" or "God says no one knows the day or the hour, so we're not supposed to understand these things," or "I don't want to reduce God down to a bunch of end-times charts and graphs." But, in reality, over 25% of the Bible is prophetic in nature! That 25% of God's word is profitable for us. When we read prophecies in the Old Testament that have already been fulfilled our faith and confidence grows that ALL the promises of God are going to come true. Our faith is strengthened! He will fulfill every single one, and so we read prophecy and rest in His sovereignty over the future.

We might get bogged down in the books of Numbers or Leviticus? But the glory of these books is Christ Jesus. Have you ever wished you were an ancient Israelite and could live under such strict laws about morality and sacrifice? No, we long for freedom! And that freedom is found in Jesus.

Read Galatians 3:24 writing your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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We can read the hard books of the Old Testament, rejoicing that Jesus satisfied the requirements of the Law. It can be hard work, but with every Old Testament chapter, look for Jesus, rejoice in the gospel, rest in God's power and sovereignty, and praise God that Jesus perfectly satisfied the requirements of the Law. His righteousness is credited to the account of all who put their faith in Him.



## LESSON SIX: ALL AUTHORITY

Issues of authority are difficult ones for the church. As we begin our thinking for today, read the following verses: Matthew 28:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Who does Jesus say has "all authority" in this verse: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the timing of His declaration of authority? \_\_\_\_\_

Do a word study, finding the Greek word for "authority" in the passage we just read. Write the definition here: \_\_\_\_\_

Authority has these parameters:

1. Is given by someone (or a group) to someone else (or group)
2. Has a domain in which it can operate
3. Operates under rules established by the one (or group) who gave authority

The question to be considered today is this:

**SINCE JESUS NOW HAS ALL AUTHORITY, DOES THIS MEAN THAT BELIEVERS ALSO HAVE ALL AUTHORITY?**

There are those who believe that Christians must use "all authority" to make the earth a good place to which Christ will want to return. Read Isaiah 9:6-7, writing your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

If time permits, read through Revelation 5 – Revelation 19:11 and discuss the condition of the world when Christ returns: \_\_\_\_\_

Some have the idea that *all authority* in heaven and on the earth has been given to Jesus and then to the Church. Others believe, since believers are indwelt by the same Holy Spirit that indwelt Jesus, as his body we have all authority on the earth as Jesus has in heaven. We can agree that Jesus has all authority, but does the church?

We know that we have authority given by Christ, that when paired with the Holy Spirit's power, enables us to engage in the purpose God has for us successfully. So a secondary question arises: Do believers have all power?

We have authority, but we ***do not*** have **ALL AUTHORITY**.

An alarming thought is this: it may very well be the devil that offers all authority. He does it for only one reason, to deceive by power, and to bring a person to a place of operating in pride, where he can separate him and have him think he can function without being co-dependent on Christ. The first person that was offered this authority was Eve. She was offered to be like God and rule. Instead of being satisfied with her position she had, she was offered more, she coveted the power and position that God had. By this the Devil deceived her into losing even what she already had.

Read Luke 4:5-7 and look at what the devil offered Jesus: \_\_\_\_\_

Do a word study on the word translated "domain" and write the result here: \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was offered ALL authority, glory, by worshipping a creature only once. Keeping the commandments perfectly and knowing who He was and the Father, He knew he could not worship any creature.

## THINKING IT OVER

Authority has always been a problem with humanity. Many rulers have come and gone down through the annals of history wanting to rule and become famous. Even the disciples that were learning of Christ whom they were following thought about the authority they would receive from Jesus.

### **Luke 22:24-30 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

<sup>25</sup> And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.'

<sup>26</sup> "But *it is* not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must

become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

<sup>27</sup> "For who is greater, the one who reclines *at the table* or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines *at the table*? But I am among you as the one who serves.

<sup>28</sup> "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;

<sup>29</sup> and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you

<sup>30</sup> that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

We were not given the ability to say and do whatever we want. Tagging His name when you exercise authority does not make it anymore valid or authentic. To claim we have all authority; is to say we have the same authority as Jesus; this means we are not under His authority. We are told by Jesus a servant is not greater than his master. Are we servants or are we masters?

## LESSON SEVEN: PREDESTINATION

Predestination is a greatly misunderstood concept within church teaching. There are two general positions to be considered:

1. God chose certain people to be saved; others will not be
2. God chose actions by which people would be saved and others would not be

We will be considering four main passages in our discussion. Read through these sections and write your findings here:

Ephesians 1:4-11 \_\_\_\_\_

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Romans 8:28-30 \_\_\_\_\_

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2 Thessalonians 2:13 \_\_\_\_\_

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Acts 2:23 and Acts 13:48 \_\_\_\_\_

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After considering these passages, do a word study on the word translated "predestine" and write your results here: \_\_\_\_\_

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The view of deterministic predestination and foreordination that has affected the religious world most profoundly over the past five centuries was set forth by John Calvin. Calvin defined predestination as the eternal decree of God by which He decided before the foundation of the world what is to become of each and every individual.

On the other hand Arminius, Wesley, and numerous others modified or directly opposed the Calvinistic interpretation. These opposing views strongly stressed the free will and free moral agency of every person. In trying to arrive at the truth taught by these passages (or, for that matter, any passage), it is necessary to practice five basic principles of exegesis.

First, one must exegete lexically—that is, study and understand the meanings of the words as they were understood and used by the original author.

Second, one must exegete syntactically—that is, understand the syntax or grammar as it was used and practiced by the original author.

Third, one must exegete historically—that is, study and understand the historical background of the original author and his audience.

Fourth, one must exegete contextually—that is, study the passage carefully in both its immediate and remote contexts.

Fifth, one must exegete harmoniously—that is, the final interpretation placed upon the passage under consideration must be in harmony with all other passages of Scripture.

Do a word study on another key word: chosen (or elect) and write the result here: \_\_\_\_\_

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The word's actual use describes the act of selecting or choosing one or a few from other options or possibilities.

The passage is saying simply that God chose—before the foundation of the world—that those whom He would bless with every spiritual blessing would be the ones who would be holy and without blemish before Him in love. The election has to do with selecting or predetermining holy characteristics, not individuals.

God limited in advance those who would be saved –based on a limiting factor. This factor was very simply “those who would accept Jesus.”

In the fullest sense, the larger context of every passage of Scripture is the entire Bible. Since God is true, His Word is truth. There can be no contradiction between truth, and the interpretation of a single passage of Scripture must be in harmony with the whole.

The clear teaching of the Bible is that God “would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.” Read this section from 1 Timothy 2:4 with its contiguous verses: \_\_\_\_\_

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God does not wish “any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Peter, who at one time thought only a particular race of people was chosen of God, had to be taught a thorough lesson on this very point. Through the vision he experienced, he learned truth.

Read Acts 10:34-35 and record that truth here: \_\_\_\_\_

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## THINKING IT OVER

From these and numerous other passages it is clear that:

(a) the Bible teaches that God loves every human being and has acted to make possible the salvation of each one;

(b) the death of Christ was for every man, and makes it possible for every man to receive atonement for his sins.

Clearly, the atonement is not limited (as Calvin taught). The plain teaching of Scripture is that election is conditioned by man's response, or failure to respond, to God in faith and obedience.

## LESSON EIGHT: THE VALUE OF PERSECUTION

One of the incredible benefits of studying church history is that we are able to see the faithfulness of God playing out in real lives, real circumstances, and, yes, in the midst of very real hardship. When the story of the church looked bleak, when the days were dark with persecution, even then the Lord was present for His people. Even then the Lord was powerfully at work for redemption and, amazingly, used persecution to further his purposes of drawing people to Himself. This means we can look back and remember God's faithfulness, and we can look to our own day with a renewed sense of trust and hope.

Read 2 Timothy 3:12: \_\_\_\_\_

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We expect persecution from the world. After all, Jesus said: "A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20).

The sad reality is this: Occasionally, hateful conduct comes from our own brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Paul was not exempt from such things. Read 2 Corinthians 11:26-28: \_\_\_\_\_

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For further illustration of this reality, read the apostle's description of certain envious brethren in Rome who attempted to compound the apostle's affliction while he languished as a prisoner, awaiting the disposition of his case before Caesar.

Philippians 1:12-18 \_\_\_\_\_

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It is difficult to conceive of such ungodly evil. And, unfortunately, we know that it still exists.

Persecution allows us to share in a special fellowship with our Lord. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul cataloged a number of things he had to forfeit for the cause of Jesus. Read his conclusion from Philippians 3:8-10, especially noting the "fellowship of His sufferings." Take some time to reflect on what this might mean: \_\_\_\_\_

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Persecution is can actually be used for good for us. James argues that trials “prove” our faith, work “patience” (endurance) in our lives, and help develop maturity.

Read James 1:2-4 and write your thoughts here: \_\_\_\_\_

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Just as steel is tempered in the flames of the furnace, adversity helps to grind off those rough edges that mar character.

Yielding graciously to persecution allows one to demonstrate that he is of a superior quality than his adversaries. It is easy to be hateful, but the ugly disposition throws a floodlight upon human weakness. It is much more Christ-like to remain calm and to respond in kindness, in the face of evil opposition. This is a tremendous challenge.

Read 1 Peter 2:23 \_\_\_\_\_

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**The genuine Christian must employ a greater ethical code than that to which his detractors subscribe.**

Persecution enables us to value the sweet consolation of true friends. Conflict sometimes brings faithful children of God together in a thrilling way they might not have known otherwise.

Affliction can stimulate the Lord’s people toward a greater resolve to love one another. There’s nothing like an ugly example to help the more mature escalate toward a higher level of brotherly love.

Continue your reading in 2 Corinthians 11:24 \_\_\_\_\_

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And we can pray for those who would accuse, misuse, or abuse us. In 2019, the following statistics are staggering:

- Over 245 million Christians living in places where they experience high levels of persecution
- 4,305 Christians killed for their faith
- 1,847 churches and other Christian buildings attacked.
- 3,150 believers detained without trial, arrested, sentenced or imprisoned

### THINKING IT OVER

The early Christians didn't attend church, they WERE the Church; an active, energized body of believers equipped to change the world.

In the New Testament persecution, was an expected result of living and speaking for Christ, but it was not something in itself to seek. All persecution is not created equal—sometimes it's just the result of arrogance.

While it is right to "give honor to whom honor is due," we must remember that our persecuted brothers and sisters are sinners saved by Christ alone who face the same temptations and needs of daily grace and obedience that we all do. James 5:17 says that they are men and women "with a nature like ours." We may not know what it feels like to be beaten and imprisoned for the sake of the gospel, as believers we all know what it feels like to battle anger, lust, fear, and discouragement.

Understanding our common, daily, desperate need of Christ's sustaining work gives us empathy and a more meaningful prayer partnership with our suffering sisters and brothers.