

Free - Take One



# Shaqah

Shaqah

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”  
Colossians 2:8*

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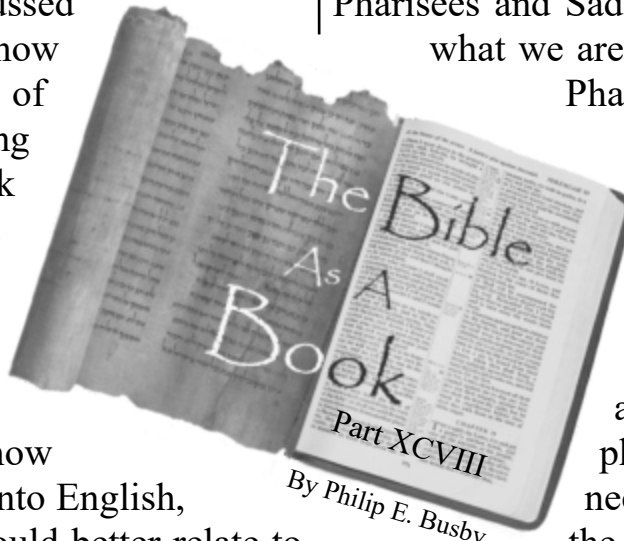
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Last time we continued our introduction to the Book of I Samuel and were talking very specifically about why the Book of Samuel is divided into a first and second book in the Christian arrangement of the Bible which is not true of the Hebrew arrangement. Due in large part to things that had been discussed earlier in the study and how they affect the subject of books like Samuel being divided, we began a look at Bible translation and the way politics and discrimination play a big part in that subject. This led us to look at some main points about how the Bible got translated into English, and we did this so we could better relate to the problems that arose/arise. We also got into the subject of how much the Greek culture, specifically its language and philosophy, have threatened the purity of God's Word while at the same time God has used the Greek language and man's love of it to preserve His Word through many generations. With all that we finally got to the main point at the very end of last segment, and that's the issue of why the

Bible (specifically what Christians call the Old Testament) ever got translated out of Hebrew into any other language, and that's the discussion we want to pick up on again as we begin this time.

Last time we talked about how the Pharisees and Sadducees represent a lot of what we are talking about in that the Pharisees were more into the mindset of looking at God's Word from the standpoint of a spiritual, “God is real” view, while the Sadducees had taken on a far more humanistic philosophy that didn't necessarily have to accept the existence of God as an absolute truth. While both groups of religious thought had major flaws in their doctrine, that point alone gives us an easy way to see how much the Sadducees were certainly corrupted by the thoughts of men to the point they never should have been involved in the discussion of what was and was not correct in understanding God's Word. It is not and never has been my intent to elevate the Pharisees when I say things



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like that because no matter whether people claim to hold onto spiritual things or blatantly disregard them for a more humanistic thought pattern, the degree of humanistic thinking that's part of the guiding principles of a group is what we are really discussing. That's why we can say Jesus pointed to more flaws within the Sadducees but found no lack of flaws in the Pharisees as well! The main reason all this is relevant to our continued look at the question of why and how the Hebrew Bible ever got translated into a language other than Hebrew is that the common man within the chosen nation was not immune to these same issues!

It really points to how little importance the issue of living for God and knowing the Law He gave the nation was to the common man when you discuss the point we truly ended last time with. That was the fact more and more people of the chosen nation were losing the ability to speak and read Hebrew! This was important because the words God gave His chosen nation should have been held in the most high regard among not just the "educated" of the people, but among all the people of the nation! If it had been, the simple desire to always be able to read the Scriptures for themselves or, at the very least, understand them when they were being spoken/read in Hebrew should have compelled the people to never let go of their language. In truth, there was already a system in place among the chosen nation to educate at least the men to know the things they needed to know in order to maintain the traditions of the nation, and that included the knowledge of the Hebrew language. Thus, when we look at the nation coming to a place where a great number of the people no longer understood

Hebrew we are seeing how much the system of learning important cultural truths was being neglected and/or ignored. Of course, this happens in many cultures and people would be quick to point that out no matter if they were a person who felt it's just how life goes or that it's a horrible tragedy when it happens. The problem with the chosen nation is that the everyday people had a God-given reason to maintain their culture and traditions that doesn't apply to other cultures which evolve purely through the choices of humans in the first place.

Thus, what we are seeing in looking at this happening to the chosen nation is a couple main points. One, the chosen nation was/is composed of flawed humans just as all the rest of the world and its nations are! This should speak volumes to people who hate the chosen nation and/or believe they no longer exist; especially those Christians who believe the nation is irrelevant today. From day one of human existence the real point of living has been to commune with God. The question that has always loomed is, will we or won't we? Beyond that there's the question of, to what degree will we? These questions don't just apply to the chosen nation, they apply to the entire world. This means the only reason we have to judge the chosen nation for its flaws is because they were given a special responsibility by God Himself. However, since that's true, it means how much they succeed or fail to live up to that responsibility is completely between them as a nation and God, not us! The Bible makes it pretty clear that judgment of all people belongs to God and He's not pleased when we attempt to usurp that authority. (Rom. 14:7-13) We can recognize flaws but

we don't have the right to ultimate judgment and never in God's Word are we told anything that says the chosen nation has been rejected by God; we just like to misinterpret a few verses here and there to make it seem it's there. The truth is it's totally opposite in that the Word tells us how the chosen nation has not just played a pivotal role in events of the past but is even now and will in our future yet to come!

The second main point is that God obviously knew this was true from the start. Sure Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (many would argue even Jacob doesn't belong on the list) were men of tremendous faith and they are the main forefathers of the nation. However, we quickly turn the page from Genesis to Exodus and begin seeing all kinds of examples of how much their descendants as a whole did not do very well in trusting and following God. It was always a constant struggle to keep the nation on track as God both freed them from Egypt and led them to the promised land! Time and time again they rebelled and even wanted to turn back to the slavery of Egypt rather than move forward with God's plan for their lives. The adult generation that came out of Egypt would eventually show such a resistance to God's plan and ability, God sent the nation back into the wilderness to wander for decades until that generation could die off before He gave the nation a second chance at taking the promised land. The bulk of these stories are some of the most familiar in all the Word of God when it comes to Christians and anyone who spent time in Sunday School. These things show us not just the flaws in the people but how

much God was determined to use this group in spite of the flaws! Why would God have such determination? Because it wouldn't have mattered if He used them or turned to another group of humans entirely, the same struggles were going to exist!

That's just the sinful human nature that shows us how necessary it will be for God to one day stop working among this world and for this world and just bring it all to an end! However, the overall point I'm trying to make here as it relates to our subject of the nation knowing the words God gave them was that considering the nature of people yes, it should come as no surprise the nation was losing it's ability to read and/or understand the reading of God's Word in Its original language. At the same time, this is an example of why we see God's hand come down heavier on the chosen nation than any other nation or even just some group such as the Christian. It was of the utmost importance the chosen nation not lose the words God had given them. To do so would not just be a lose of yet another culture and it's "knowledge" but a lose of something God put in place for a specific reason within this world! When God leaned heavily upon the chosen nation He did it, not just for their sake, but for all our sake. That understanding should add extra weight to the reason we need to step back from judging the chosen nation thinking we know so much about the plan of God!

The people of the chosen nation were living and going about their lives the way most people do, and each generation was absorbing the popular to the moment things

in the world just as we all do. Going to Hebrew school was not as important to them because it wasn't important to the direction the world at large was going in or so it seemed to many of the individuals of the nation. Thus, the same thoughts that moved the educated religious leadership class to become anything from what the Pharisees represented to a full blown version of humanistic thinking the Sadducees represented moved the common everyday individual. Without really stopping to even see you have it, it's easy to have the thought that going after what appears to be the necessities of life is king and in the ways God has to take a back seat in our lives to do so is just how it'll have to be. In truth people almost never think about it that clearly, it just happens organically over time until it becomes a full-blown way we live. It's the hustle and bustle of useless things humans chase after that causes it, and Satan loves it and promotes it in all the ways he can. It's not really important to Satan that we all turn to follow him if we are, at the very least, failing to follow God, and we are very good at that! Every day in a hundred different ways we all but totally forget about God; even as those who call ourselves Christians. We do it because there is always something of the world that seems more pressing than being sure we keep God first in our lives.

Because we as Christians have not been taught a focus on faith (a relationship with God) most of us don't have a clue what putting God first even looks like or is suppose to. If we go to church when we're told we need to and get a little prayer in here and there, we think we're good. For the chosen nation it was even easier to fall into this or depending on what angle you look at,

it was/is harder for them not to fall into this on the simple basis they were/are the chosen nation! That point is clearly seen in the religious leaders of the nation at the time of Christ and nowhere is it seen better than in the rejecting of The Messiah! This is the correct way to see what God was/is showing us through His chosen nation. Surely as the chosen nation of God they could recognize The Messiah when He came, right? Yes, but did they want Jesus to be The Messiah was the arrogant question the religious leaders dared to entertain. That aside, surely the chosen nation, with all their God-given laws and ceremony, could define what living for God on this planet should look like, right? That's a real painful question to even think about but it's a trap people who call themselves Christians fall into every day. We don't really strive to be Christ like because as "the church" and as a "culture," we define what it is to be the people of God on this earth, right? Both the chosen nation, as well as us today, couldn't be more wrong but if we are humble enough to at least look at what I'm saying here, the example of how easy it was for the chosen nation to slowly but surely move away from knowing Hebrew (in spite of the importance to the maintaining of God's Word it had) should be a real eye opener!

Now, once again some are asking what any of this has to do with why the Christian arrangement divides books of the Old Testament like Samuel? I assure you we are getting there. It's just that teaching the things of God comes before pure academic pursuit of knowledge. When opportunity to teach or remind of various important subjects comes up, especially to see them in the correct light or from an important

# Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

In our last segment we continued to talk about the issue of worship and how the things men did to worship The One True God gets mingled into the ways men choose to worship false gods and the creation in general. We got onto that subject while talking about the fact Isaac returned to Beersheba which was a place his father Abraham had planted a grove. Isaac likely went there to specifically spend time at that grove which shows us how men of God were compelled to use such things as places of worship because they are very natural and untainted by the thinking of men, yet later in the Law God gave His chosen nation, planting groves was forbidden. This led us to talk about the way we build our houses of worship today, and along with that the things we bring inside those places both physical items as well as in the way we come as those who are suppose to be worshipping God there. It's all a very big subject about our attitude toward faith and God Himself which many have been taught is irrelevant in our, post Jesus' sacrifice day, but it's always been very relevant and always will be! Discussing all that kept us in Genesis chapter 26 verse 24 and we will pickup where we left off this time.

The foundation of what we were talking about last time was not just the place Isaac had gone but also the fact God met with Isaac the very night he got there. As we covered, God told Isaac He was The God of his father Abraham and we talked some about the dynamics of that was not to say

God had been The God of Abraham but that He still was The God of Abraham! These details are some of the things we don't connect from what Christians call the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) to the New Testament. When Jesus was asked about the scenario of a woman being married to seven brothers and asked who she would belong to in the resurrection, Jesus told them they had greatly erred in the premise of the question. This because there would not be the things of this world, like marrying and giving in marriage, on the other side of the resurrection. Jesus ends His answer to them on this subject by pointing out His Father is not The God of the dead but of the living! (Mark 12:27) Keep in mind, Jesus was pointing this out not yet having died on the cross and rose from the dead. In doing this we see another example of a fact I pound on a lot, and that's the fact God has always had the power to resurrect those whom He chooses. God didn't have to earn that power by dying on the cross, and yet saying that in many ways flies in the face of a lot of Christian belief! From the obvious ways to the far more minor ways this is true, it's all important to how we build our doctrine. You see, I don't talk about it because I like to seem as if I know more than others. I talk about it because it should strike us all as odd that Jesus told the religious leaders (who eventually put Him to death) these things, and that's a large part of what made them upset enough to eventually demand Jesus be put to death!

That last fact has to do with the point Jesus wasn't saying it would be true in the end but that the religious leaders had missed things within the Word of God that should have made it clear to them it's always been true! What's really odd is that we judge these religious leaders for being angry with Jesus about such things and some take it all the way to the judgment that the entire chosen nation was/is rejected by God for doing it. However, we then turn around and build our doctrine as if the religious leaders were right in their thinking, and that's just unbelievable! Many would say I have no idea what I'm talking about, but if you look at what's taught within Christian circles you'll see that many beliefs do have the underlying thought that Jesus was correcting the religious leaders based on the work He was about to do (as in by the time the first resurrection took place it would be true) and not on the basis this is what the Old Testament has shown us from the start. We look at a story like this in the New Testament and should reflect back to where we are here in Genesis in this study and think of how much things have changed but so much has remained the same. God hasn't change, nor has His plan changed, but adjustments to how we come before God have been made since the day Adam and Eve took of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why has this happened? Because their actions were all about turning away from God and choosing something they felt would allow them to go at living their lives on their own. They would be "wise" and wouldn't need God anymore or at least not to the degree they had up to that point. This was appealing to them, so they ate the fruit! We stand back and judge them for doing such a thing because we look around at all the pain and suffering in this world and think, none of this

would have happened if they just hadn't taken of that fruit, but we are just as much to blame as they are!

As we talked some about last time, the real point we miss is that we all have the very same problem. We don't see it that well because we think post taking of the fruit, people are born not knowing God and someone has to tell us about Jesus in order to learn and be saved. That thinking oddly appears to excuse our wrong actions in being blamed for the suffering in this world in ways that weren't true for Adam and Eve. Due to this perceived "innocence" we believe Jesus coming the first time had to make a change to how all the dynamics work for humanity. Thus, we are so blessed because people of the past were really lost not having Jesus. That makes no sense and the truth is, people of the past were more connected to God than most of us will ever be in spite of the fact we have Jesus' work. That thought should scare us to death! That's why it was not necessary in God's eyes to put His Words in actual physical writing for a very long time into human history. It's why once God did It came in tandem with giving a chosen nation a law to follow and represent so many of the truths His Written Word was meant to show us. However, man just kept going downhill so the next step was coming among us in, not just human form, but human flesh and offering Himself to live and walk among us with all the answers we could possibly need. When we see The Messiah being put to death we are not just seeing a failure on the part of the chosen nation, we are seeing how far we as a world of people had gone down. It's incorrect to think God's chosen nation didn't recognize The Messiah but the rest of the world did and/or would have to the point the nation alone is guilty of

putting The Messiah to death! The correct way to see it all is to ask the question, if the chosen nation which was given every advantage to know The Messiah when He came reacted to Him as they did, how much more unrecognizable would God in the flesh have been if He had been born to just some random couple of faith living in some random place on the planet? Thus, we should be thankful for the chosen nation's existence!

You see, once again we fly in the face of what Christianity teaches because Christians are taught (maybe not point-blank) to look at the circumstance of Jesus' first coming as being that He came to the chosen nation and they rejected Him but when He reached out to the non-Jewish population of the world, He was accepted in mass! This is how we view the beginnings of the church and Christianity as a whole but by and large it's propaganda. It's not all totally wrong, that would make it too obvious. It's just slightly wrong in very important ways. That slightly skews our thinking, and thus our doctrine to the point we do end up with everyday doctrinal thought patterns that are very obviously wrong; if for no other reason than the pride with which we teach it all. The problem comes down to the old saying, you can't see the forest for the trees! Now, there are any number of people who would read what I'm writing here and vehemently respond with the idea that there are plenty of verses in the Bible that dispute what I'm saying. However, within that statement is the point I'm driving at and it can be seen in one word - verses. That is yet another issue so many people have. We read our Bibles and we see those chapter and verse reference points and we see them as breaks in what is

being said. We go to church and hear the pastor read a few verses of Scripture and preach on them. Nothing really wrong with that last part but it tends to build, and seems obvious by this point in time that it very much has built this concept that if you can quote a verse all by itself and it seems to support your argument then we're good.

Case in point is that last statement. Some would immediately point to the fact that's what Jesus did when confronted by Satan after Jesus had fasted forty days and nights. (Matt. 4:1-11) No way to deny Scripture was quoted, but step back and think about the two entities involved in that conversation! On one side you have The Messiah and on the other side you have an angel who was removed from heaven when he chose to rebel against God. If you can't see why that matters, my point is that both of them knew the Bible's words very well and when Jesus spoke to Satan those few words He did to thwart Satan's arguments it wasn't just about the verse(s) Jesus spoke. It was about the entire context the Word of God gives us in order to see those verse(s). Each time, Satan had to take them as the crushing defeat they were because he knows that context better than the Pharisees, Sadducees, and every Christian living today! Today we still show the same things the religious leaders of Jesus' day showed, and that's an ignorance of the Bible's words as a whole! I'll repeat what I've said before in that this isn't about having the entire Bible memorized word for word. As helpful as that might be, the true element we're missing is that we don't grasp the overall context and truths that run Genesis to Revelation. This causes us to fail miserably when we attempt

to apply the words of the Bible to this world and life. Just like those religious leaders we have solidified a lot of wrong doctrine over time and find it easy to throw out verses to make an argument simply because we have been taught what independent verses “mean” whether right or not.

Now, let's get back to the point about people believing we are born not knowing God as well as the thought the chosen nation rejected Jesus but the rest of the world accepted Him in mass. The point I am really trying to get you to see in talking about anyone attacking my teaching using verses is that there is complete agreement between the Old Testament and the New Testament but we haven't been taught that agreement. We don't think about how when John wrote at the first of his Gospel concerning Jesus coming to His own and His own receiving Him not, John wasn't writing with an ignorance to what had just happened and what the Bible told us had happened in the past. He also wasn't talking within the context of the “church” being what it is now, and that's a huge miss many people don't see! John was speaking as a Jewish man who had walked directly with Jesus and watched the events unfold that led to Jesus' crucifixion. He was also witness to the events of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. So on the heels of those events he was not speaking to a worldwide church that existed largely outside the chosen nation. Yes, the church was growing and the Gospel was spreading, but a large part of why all four of the Gospel writers we read in the New Testament wrote their accounts of Jesus' life was that they saw it as important the events not be lost on later generations as well as on those who were accepting the message right then who were in no way direct witness to

what had taken place.

This means we should see John was not writing on the basis the church was this strong organized ever growing religion but on the basis there would be people here, there, and everywhere around the world attempting to live, not in a chosen nation setting but in a world that by and large would reject the Gospel! If you really get what I'm saying it should be a sobering thought, but of most importance is the fact John was really speaking first and foremost to Jews living in the land of Israel under the rule of an empire (something the chosen nation had done for a very long time with no end in sight; especially since the work of The Messiah had not been to free them from that rule as so many wanted and did believe Jesus would/should do). John was saying, understand that the leadership of the chosen nation did not and has not accepted Jesus as The Messiah. In other words, there is no nation on earth, whether free or under some other entities' rule, that in mass has accepted Jesus as The Messiah on an official level. These are the circumstances you as a Jew living in Israel will have to accept. If you believe or come to believe Jesus was The Messiah you will have no official backing of the chosen nation's religious leaders because Jesus came unto His own and even they did not receive Him. John was also telling Jews across the world that if they felt alone in believing Jesus was in fact The Messiah the nation and world had been promised would come through Israel, depending on what rule of secular law they lived under, they might or might not have it easier than those believers living in Israel. All this certainly would apply to those who were/are not part of the chosen nation by blood in any way. Again, the important point was there is no

# *What About God's Chosen People?*

## *Part LXXII*

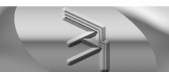
From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

*"Is it true that the Jews are God's chosen people? I have a Christian friend who says the Jews were not God's chosen people."*

As we continue our look at the history that shows us how the Roman Empire came to be looked at as a Christian empire, we took another step forward last segment, not so much with the history portion of the study, but in the facts of why this ever happened. We discussed the fact the Roman Empire existed for a very long time without ever having a state religion that persisted. That is to say, there were times an emperor attempted to force a religion on the people of the empire and we have talked about how those times were very hard on the Jews, as well as the Christians but often to a lesser degree. However, such attempts never really went on past the emperor who tried to push some religion on the people and in some cases was even given up by the emperor himself for various reasons. Thus, we started looking at how Christianity would become accepted and used by the empire in a religious form but how Christianity was not a religion in any way to begin with. This took us into a discussion about how Christianity was spreading so fast due to the fact the fields were truly white and ripe for harvest by the time The Messiah appeared on the scene. (John 4:35-36) We also talked about how Satan had attempted to muddy the waters by putting elements of the things he understood God would do for man into the false religions formed in the minds of men. Due to this, we ended last time talking about the specific

celebration of the winter solstice and the Christian version of that celebration known as Christmas, which includes elements of the tradition meant to represent the concept the gods, or some specific false god, had the power to die and raise from the dead. In this segment we will pickup right where we left off that discussion in our last segment.

As Christians celebrate Christmas and much of the world celebrates right along with them, a lot of the idea(s) of a dead god of some sort giving its physical remains to help us survive only to reappear as new life the next morning, has left our thoughts. Happiness and family, sharing and giving, are the larger thoughts for most people whether Christian or not. Christians are at least suppose to be celebrating this observance for the sake of remembering God's gift to us in coming down in the form of a human, but in so many ways even that thought sadly becomes only a small part of why Christians go to all the trouble and sacrifice to celebrate Christmas. I could go on and on about all the pros and cons of observing Christmas, but the point I wish to stay on for this study is the clear way we see embedded in the religious thoughts of almost all people, the idea of death leading to new life! Exactly what that new life would look like and what form it would take; whether it would be here on this earth or in some other mystical realm is clearly a quandary in the human mind. This is seen in the vast differences there are between the various ways different religions teach the subject. However, what God did in sending



The Messiah and allowing His eventual death, burial, and resurrection was to show us a clear answer to the seemingly unanswerable!

This brought hope to just about everyone who heard the Gospel! A man named Jesus was God and He came unto His specific nation who should have been the first to recognize who He was. Many did recognize Him but the governing religious power did not accept Him. Instead, they put Him to death. However, Jesus didn't remain in the grave and rose to walk among us once again. He did this still as a man but a man untouchable by those who would desire to dispose of Him again/completely. He would show Himself as only the first and best example of what God has the power to provide all humans if they will only desire a relationship with God (faith). Jesus then returned to His heavenly seat of power to prepare a new heaven and new earth for all those who have and will walk in faith. This was a clear and powerful message of what The One True God was/is offering and it won't cost you the life of your first-born son or anything of the kind to obtain it! I could put many Scripture references with what I just said, but it's not necessary because that's the entire message God has been trying to get us to see since we first were created! God loves us and He has a plan for us if we'll only walk with Him. This simple message resonated with ancient people not because it was a religion but because it answered questions with confidence religion was only taking stabs in the dark at. As much as the chosen nation was established to show forth these same truths in following and enacting the Law, even they did not clearly see these truths as their forefather Abraham had; a man who did not yet have a single word of the Law! Jesus provided a clear picture through

His life and actions of not just what God has in store for those who walk with Him but exactly what it looks like to walk perfectly before The One True God. He showed us this world is not all there is and therefore leaving it one day is not a problem because God has it all worked out as to what to do with death. Of most importance is the fact, Jesus proved God has the power to make His promises a reality!

With that kind of message there needs to be no force used to push out other religions or be aggressive toward them or how we go about sharing the Gospel with others. Those who have hearts softened by The Holy Ghost are hungry for the message. Those who have refused to allow The Holy Ghost to soften their hearts simply will not accept any message from God. It's a choice only each individual can make. One can't be tricked or lured into it. People either want what God is offering or they want what this temporary world and life can provide them. At the time we are talking about during those early centuries following Christ's first appearing, the message was gripping so many hearts and lives other religions were taking a back seat to the message of Christianity because people simply didn't need the lame explanations those religions attempted to provide about the meaning and continuance of their lives. For those who did not want to accept the Gospel, for those who demanded it not change their lives from either the inside or the outside, this was troubling and upsetting. There was no culture specifically to attack because real Christianity was/is an authentic universal truth not a religion! There is nothing to physically attack aside from the individuals who are accepting it and turning to that truth. This is why there are the stories of persecution of Christians just as there has

always been persecution of God's chosen nation. I'll also point out what should be obvious by this point in the study, which is the fact God used His chosen nation to demonstrate the truth persecution comes for those who believe the truth and so it should have been no surprise to any of us, both then as well as now, that persecution comes to the true believer!

The world goes after true believers on an individual, family, community and even governmental level. That's why going after the lives of Christians is something even the Roman government did at times and in ways. However, the problem was a real quandary. No matter how much they persecuted Christians there just seemed to be more and more accepting the truth without concern for the persecution they'd face. Secular government leaders had no idea exactly what to do about this. How do you fight a belief that assures people that to live is to walk with The God Who created the universe, and to die is the gain of being more directly with God and untouchable by earthly forces and concerns ever again? (Phil. 1:21) The really tangible problem the empire was facing was that it's secular power didn't mean the grand thing to these Christians that the empire wanted it to mean to everyone across the world. This made it obvious Christianity was a threat to the empire as it seemed Christianity was becoming an empire of its own in many ways! (Now there's the difference between what Jesus was talking about when referring to "the Kingdom of God" versus the religion we are so familiar with today which calls itself Christianity.) How to fight that was not clear to the Romans, but what seemed clear in the minds of some leaders was that freedom of religion

had to be put down for a couple reasons. First, Christianity could not be freely believed in or it would consume the empire's whole reason to exist; especially considering the decentralization of government Rome had so recently come to accept as being more workable. Second, the empire needed an identity to remain relevant, not just as a secular power but again, as something with lasting significance to people of this world. Even the long out of power Greeks held a relevance the Romans still had not developed in any form, and that was disheartening to say the least to the leaders with great thoughts about what a world empire could do and be in this world!

Thus, two clear paths of action lay before the empire. First, do what they could to discourage the spread of Christianity among the people. This would include a very convoluted struggle over how much to restrict freedom of religion as a whole. Second, find an imperial identity to bring a relevance back to being an individual citizen of the great Roman Empire! The first point was the easy to execute idea. It might not be as effective as the empire would like but it was a physical operation they could perform. That made it more straightforward. Thus, the great persecution of Christians under the Tetrarchy would begin! Remember where we started with all this and that's the back and forth the Romans had always had when it came to allowing or restricting religious freedom. The fact they so often found it not important to restrict became one of the pillars of Western Civilization. However, that in no way means or takes away from the fact people the world over desire to restrict freedoms of all sorts and yes, I meant to say "people" not "governments" because

individuals often find it way too easy not to look at their own selfish desires when they can blame things on an entity. Government as an entity is nothing more than a group of – people! Thus, those who comprised the Roman government wished to restrict freedom in general because the more people are allowed to think for themselves and act on the basis of those thoughts the less the government has the power to organize the herd. In short, the more freedom you give the people at large the less power you as a government have. This is a universal truth that is not special to any one form of government and that's important to remember. Since the days of the Greeks people have all but worshiped (and in some cases actually do worship) democracy as the best form of government the world has ever known!

The reason this is so easy to do and/or at least believe is because more than most forms of government, democracy appears on the surface to be the people at large who have the power! That should solve everything right? As we look across the world we see it does not solve everything, and even governments whose foundation is democracy just can't seem to help themselves when it comes to restricting individual freedom. It really begs the question, why? The answer, as much as many individuals would immediately stand up to say it's wrong, is that we all as individuals have within us the root cause of why government restricts freedom beyond the enforcement of basic laws needed to protect us from each other. The root cause of overbearing government can be summed up in one word, “selfishness.” That might sound over simplistic but think about what the Ten Commandments God gave His chosen nation right out of the gate tell us. We

cover so many of these things it might sound redundant but we really do have to look at such things from the perspective of the subject matter we are discussing at the time. Thus, here we go again with the short rundown. The first four commandments all pertain to our direct individual relationship with God. We are told we should put nothing above God in our lives. He and only He should sit in the top spot of our priorities and what drives our every action. We have trouble doing this because we as humans are selfish and want what we want not what God wants. Thus, the second commandment tells us, we as humans have a horrible tendency to allow other things to become gods in our lives which is something even the first commandment's words recognize. However, it needs to be specified that no such thing should ever be made tangible by being made into a physical object we worship!

One should note the command does not begin with the idea of specifically bowing ones self to the object. While that idea is mentioned in the further examples of how to follow this second commandment, the commandment itself simply says, don't make the object in the first place! (Ex. 20:4-6) The third commandment tells us to respect God even in times we feel the most compelled to blame Him for the wrong that takes place in our lives. This is a very broad ranging commandment in truth. It goes from those who would take the name of The Lord God in vain for any reason including being just a form of accepted speech pattern (which is quite prevalent in a language as weak as English) to the recognized and acknowledged cursing of God for making things the way He did and/or allowing the things He does as well as everything in between those two extremes. We may or we may not fail in our

lives to keep God seated in the top spot of our thoughts and actions. This may or may not have to do with trying to keep Him in that spot as some flat reject God as God in any form. However, faith begins with us coming to acknowledge God as God to at least the degree we look at ourselves as humans and so it is in our failings we find the reasons we have misery of all degrees. Faith requires us to not blame or disrespect God for beginning it all the way He did and allowing it to continue in the way He has. If we can't find that place of repentance we will find ourselves like Cain who walked away from the presence of God to go it on his own. (Gen. 4:16) This doesn't have to be a concise choice to be true. It can be true because we simply never bother to seek God, and in a world that is very much on the Cain side of the fence that's easy to do and it shows up in our speech patterns on an everyday basis!

In attempting to do a short rundown of the commandments the third one might seem to many to be the most simplistic, but in truth it's the one I could spend the most time on due to what I just said above about it being the beginnings of real faith. In that light it's beyond remarkable that this commandment is the one that might be the most outwardly ignored by humans and sadly even many who claim to be Christians today! If anything makes it obvious just how far we've walked ourselves back to "as it was in the days of Noah," it's the violation of this third commandment in both the most blatant verbalization of taking The Lord's Name in vain to the simple outward questioning of God's actions so many do on a regular basis right out in front of others of the world. (Matt. 24:36-37) This is why this third commandment could be talked about for so long. Details matter but humans desire to

blame an entity (in this case God) for the evils of this world. One of the most over used arguments as to the non-existence of God and/or the main reason not to care about His existence is the question, how can a righteous/all loving/all knowing/all powerful God allow the horrible things to happen in this world, both in what history records as well as what we see in front of us every day? In this question is the fundamental misunderstanding of so many facts I don't know hardly where to begin in covering it all!

This is why the words of Scripture are so important to the true believer. When individuals ask that question they are ignoring the fact God gave us paradise to live in when He created us and the fact we'd still be living in that paradise if we hadn't violated the one thing He told us to never do! We ignore the same thing(s) Adam and Eve ignored, and many people today still never understand about what the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil gave us! Thus, we are ignorant of the fact that what we call curses God put on us after we "fell" were/are actually ways to daily remind us how much our not turning to God for the answers can, has, and will take us further and further from that original paradise continually! We have gone forward throughout human history ignoring that last fact so completely we can't begin to see how close we have brought ourselves to total annihilation. Thus, we look at the pain, the suffering, and all our sinfulness has caused and ask how could God allow it as if we are not daily part of what continues to cause it and increase it! Why do we not see and/or are unwilling to acknowledge we are what has and will continue to cause it? Because we have within us the same arrogance that Eve had when she made the choice to reach forth and take of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge

of Good and Evil; the same arrogance Adam had when Eve brought him the fruit and said, here let's both go ahead and ignore God's instructions and eat this! We have an arrogance that leads us to believe we don't deserve to have lost paradise just because some long ago relative of ours made one simple mistake in the distant past, a mistake we falsely believe we ourselves never took. All that puts us so far away from stopping to take the same actions on a regular basis we think we can judge God for His actions and/or inaction within our creation!

That kind of arrogance both proves we would have made the same mistake Adam and Eve made if given the same circumstances as well as the truth we are far, oh very far, from being in a place capable of judging the perfect, loving, all knowing, all powerful God Who created us! Until we come to a place where we can at the very least begin to see how true this fact is, we will never have within us the ability to come to God in a form that makes us eligible to receive the rewards of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) That fact right there is why I like to emphasize all the time that there is no formulated path to salvation! That Scripture verse I referenced at the end of the sentence begins by saying, "If we confess our sins...." People who can curse God, which is what taking His Name in vain is doing, on the basis we think we know better than He does about the course of what He allows and does/will not allow in the here and now, are not capable of standing before God with the humility it takes to give more than lip service to the statement, I'm just a sinner saved by grace! Never believe anyone who tells you just asking Jesus into your heart will save you! It takes more than vocal cords to confess

with one's mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead. (Rom.10:1-9)

The fourth commandment is actually a very simple commandment but yet it remains so misunderstood I literally have written a book about it. It simply tells us to remember the Sabbath in order to keep it separated for the purposes of God in our lives. It took just six days for God to make everything we know but He specifically took a seventh day to just live with us! That brings literal tears to my eyes to contemplate. In this day and age you can go on social media and find people all over the place that will tell you, you must honor the Sabbath or you're going to hell! The smugness with which such statements are made sickens me to my core! If you can find no other place in what Christians call the Old Testament that shows us the same God of love as we see in the New Testament it should be in this act by God right in the opening verses of Genesis. From before day one of this creation God understood He would have to sit back and patiently wait for those of us who were/are willing to come unto Him to do it. (Matt. 16:24-27) You can shop for "Christian" merchandise and find items that say things like, "I asked God how much He loved me and He stretched out His arms across the cross and said, 'This much!'" (or any number of variations of a saying like that) and those who call themselves Christians eat it up. However, I have to seriously wonder if any of us understand that has been true, at the risk of being redundant, since before God's Spirit moved upon the face of the abyss!

Not just because God is Love or any other platitude the Christian religion loves to use, but because God so very deeply wanted

to create us! He so deeply wanted and still wants to be with us! He diligently made what we know, including our very existence in six days and because that was not enough He sat back one more day and said, "This one is just for you and Me." We can argue until we are all blue in the face about whether the chosen nation really remembers the right day as the Sabbath; the day that corresponds to that seventh day God created. We can argue until eternity rolls about if for some inexplicable reason Jesus actually told us the Sabbath doesn't matter anymore or that it changed to another day like Sunday, but it will never change the fact God is waiting for us to stop arguing and accusing and fighting among ourselves and for once in our lives stop to ask Him; not just about the Sabbath, but about anything and everything! I said it in our last segment and I'll say it again here, we don't get things wrong because we misunderstand what God has told us. We get it all wrong because we never listened to Him to start with. Don't you see, that's what we're talking about here. It's what I talk about constantly in everything I write. We fail for the same reason Adam and Eve failed! Most people who call themselves Christians would/will agree that God loves us so much we can never begin to scratch the surface of understanding how deep that love goes, but still we find it so easy to get caught up in religion and the thoughts of men which are not the thoughts of God, that we miss out completely on hearing God's voice for ourselves! (Isa. 55:8)

The fundamental reason that is true and this world is what it is, has everything to do with the fact God takes time for us but we don't take time for Him. On so many levels it doesn't matter in the slightest what day the Sabbath is because we don't really want to

take any time and give it to God to begin with. It's built into our literal creation and we could not care less. God just keeps standing at the door knocking and we just keep ignoring Him because we have our magical ticket of salvation and that's all we're really wanting or worried about. (Rev. 3:20) We haven't the slightest clue why we'd want to go to a place where the entire point will be spending time with our Creator; we just want to go on living, existing, and why? So we can just keep having our own selfish ways in every way we can imagine. That's what got us onto this rundown of the Ten Commandments in the first place; one word, "selfishness." It's why we love to think of salvation as being by some formula instead of being through faith. God wants to be with us and all we can think about is how fast we can get away and do what our selfish flesh wants!

When it comes to the fourth commandment I used to point out often that people misquote it to say, we are to honor the Sabbath to keep it holy when in fact the word "remember" is the key word. I used to stress how we need to be careful not to change that word or forget that word. However, we've come so far in forgetting not just when the Sabbath is but what it represents it's astonishing! We haven't just forgotten to remember the Sabbath. We haven't just forgotten to honor the Sabbath. We have chosen to cast aside it's meaning and usefulness all together no matter what day it is! We've left out of our doctrine the core meaning of what it is which is not just to spend time with God, but to want to spend time with God! Again, we come to why salvation can't be obtained by some formulation, set of ceremonies, verbalization, etc. God has no reason to extend our existence, especially not into eternity, if we

don't desire to be with Him; to spend time, real quality time with Him. You can forget that, ignore it, or believe you've found a formulated way around it, but in the end you will have nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth! (Matt. 8:5-13, 22:1-14, 25:14-30)

Now, in all of that we've only covered the first four of what we call the Ten Commandments, but the reason an entire book could be written on each of those first four speaks to why the following six almost don't need to be covered. Once you pick yourself up off the floor from the shock of hearing me say such a thing stop to realize one simple point Christianity has all but totally forgotten. We cannot in more than the most basic rudimentary ways know how to follow the next six commandments if we don't in earnest follow the first four! If you disagree that what calls itself Christianity has all but forgotten that fact and/or doesn't really teach it as the core understanding it is, then you'll force me to repeat myself again and again in talking about how Jesus told us with His own mouth the greatest commandment is to love God with your entire being! Jesus said that as a point blank answer to the question, "What is the greatest commandment?" (Matt. 22:34-40) Yet what does Christianity teach us is the "Golden Rule"? "...whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:..." Matthew 7:12 That just solidly brings us back to what I said above about how we don't listen to God in the first place. It is with a humble heart that I say I'd be embarrassed to admit how old I was before it dawned on me what true heresy it was/is to say that's the golden rule. It's the little foxes that spoil the vine yet many would say the golden rule thing is a technicality of no real importance. (Song. 2:15) Wave after wave

the examples come crashing to shore as to how true it is we don't really care what God says. We claim to be a "New Testament church" as a way of saying the Old Testament is mostly dusty irrelevant words (beyond the historical value of its stories) and yet, we don't even care that much about words that appear directly in the New Testament, not to mention words that came from Jesus' own mouth!

This is what brings me to say the last six almost don't need to be covered in light of how little we care about the first four commandments. We forget, God's love shines forth on this world in the fact God allows us to die. Why would I say such a thing? Because it points out the fact God didn't make this existence eternal. The reason for that has everything to do with our inability to follow even what we think of as the golden rule, and that inability has everything to do with our desire not to recognize and adhere to the greatest commandment! Thus, all the misery we want to curse God for "creating" and/or "allowing," will one day all come to an end. All the damage and harm we daily do to each other, God simply will not allow it to continue. He's warned us and given us the answers we need to see the future that's important to our existence. The problem is, most of us just don't care to have what God is offering and that shows in how we treat each other all the time!

Until next time, may we each continually choose to be the people God wants us to be!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,  
answered by Philip E. Busby.***

FBS continued from pg. 8

backing as there should have been for The Messiah living in this world. That's why Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead to ascend to His Father. Most of us don't get any of that when we read John's words, but that's what he was saying and it means he was not saying the chosen nation rejected The Messiah but the rest of the world accepted Him in mass!

In truth, John was pointing out that in an overall way, Jesus was not accepted by the chosen nation as The Messiah that was to be sent to them and through them, and because that was true he didn't have to speak about the fact Jesus was not accepted in any better way by the world at large! It's one of those, should go without saying statements but instead it gets looked at as just the opposite by most Christians. When you see it in the correct light you see John was warning all of us the world was not moving forward in the way one would have expected things to go once The Messiah did appear. Having grounded everyone in that reality John goes on to say, but all is not lost! That low percentage of the chosen nation that did receive Jesus as The Messiah, to them God gave the power to become, "...the sons of God,..." John 1:12 In other words, there is hope in spite of the fact people at large are constantly making the same choice Adam and Eve made so long ago. The world at large, even the chosen nation in an overall way, wanted their own ways and not God's. However, those who did choose to follow God still received the same benefits The Messiah came to give. If we continue to put this within the context of words written by men who without John's words already understood this, it gets even clearer. Exactly what John is trying to deal with in his words

we find people like Paul attempting to explain using slightly different words. Thus, Paul talks more about the idea of becoming "joint-heirs" with Jesus. (Rom. 8:12-17)

I always find it strange how turned around people often are when they speak of eternal rewards as if they are, or should be, our rewards in the here and now. (The Jewish religious leaders did a lot of this same thing and it's why they couldn't receive Jesus.) Then when we are talking about things that apply to the here and now, people see it as a heavenly reward. In my estimation there is almost nothing the modern church doesn't attempt to claim as a here and now reward because it brings people into the church who are more interested in earthly things than Godly things, but even in the ways they turn the joint-heirs wording into earthly rewards, like authority and such, there is a larger thought that being a joint-heir with Jesus has more to do with getting to one day live in the place and way He lives. In truth, the joint-heirs wording is not talking about heavenly things as much as it's telling us we have inherited the work Jesus came to do! This makes it more of a negative earthly thing than a positive when looked at from the perspective of the flesh. Jesus Himself said the world hated Him and it would hate us if we received the power. It persecuted Him and it would persecute all those who became joint-heirs. (John 15:18-21) That said, the positive side of things is that hope John was talking about in that just because all of the chosen nation didn't receive Jesus as they should have, those who did, still had/have the power to continue Jesus' work. The hope and opportunity didn't die when Jesus left to return to His Father. It also wouldn't die when those who walked with Jesus directly and received Him died. It

wouldn't die with those who lived at the time of Christ but never got to walk with Him directly yet still received the message from those who did. If we keep going with this we can say it didn't die with the next generation or the next because it will never die as long as there are those who receive the message from those who have already received the power to become the sons of God. This is the true joint-heirs idea. Each generation of believers can pass to the next generation the power to become the sons of God.

This is the true message of the Gospel! That Good News that says The Messiah has come and the power of His work lives on through and for each generation! Saying that makes this an excellent time to mention that's where we get tripped up when we don't think and/or go about how we attempt to reach the lost (as well as build our doctrine in general) understanding each human is born knowing God. The power to carry on Jesus' work is not the message that God exists, it's the message that He still cares about us the way He cared about Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, and every other generation that's come before us. He has proven the truth we have fallen so far away from and which earlier generations understood. God has reached out to us and continued giving us the help we humans need, like His Written Word. Now, in these latter generations, God has reached out to us by coming down in human flesh and walking among us. People know God exists and while many have doubted it, pushed it away (for any number of reasons), even flat rejected it, the Gospel message still has power to open their hearts to The God Who created them; to show them what they

already know is true and that it's still alive! While we may do a fair amount of conversing with individuals on the subject of, "Does God exist?" our message is not to inform people God exists as if they don't know. Our message is to show people what God has done in the hopes they too will lay aside their doubt in their Creator's ability, love, and nature to begin following him with a whole heart; to begin walking in true faith!

That's the power of being joint-heirs with Jesus. The power we as believers hold in this world but which a majority of people in this world do not hold. When we get the truth of the verses we might want to use to make wrong arguments straightened out in our heads we can do much better in being heirs to the power. A slight adjustment in how we see the words God has given us can make a literal world of difference. We begin to put a lot of things together all over the Bible instead of just "knowing" a verse here and there. Things like what Paul explains about the Second Coming of Christ when he talks to the church about how the living won't prevent the dead. (I Thes. 4:13-18) Those in the church were worried people were dying before Christ returned because they didn't fully understand the same things the religious leaders didn't know and showed in asking Jesus the question about the woman who went through seven husbands. They didn't grasp that this generation Jesus talked about wanting a sign and not passing away until they see Him return, is a generation of joint-heirs to Jesus' work on this earth. (Matt. 12:38-40, Luke 21:29-33) Generations of humans, as we count them, will live, have children, and pass away. However, in each of those generations there

will be those who are heirs to Jesus' work, carrying it forward. It will remain true that Jesus Christ and Him crucified is the only sign given to the world until that day Jesus splits the eastern sky and sets His feet on the Mount of Olives. One can certainly see how that day will change the kind of "sign" those of the next segment in time will have as Jesus will remain physically here until the true end of this creation.

This means believers in Jesus didn't have to and shouldn't have expected to necessarily live until the day Jesus returns. Instead, when they die they leave behind all the things that so easily beset us in the here and now. They lay down their burdens and receive the blessing of being with God directly which is the true reward of those who diligently seek God! (Heb. 11:6) That's why Paul says we can't prevent them. They have gone on before us and just like the issue of Isaac being told by God that He was The God of his father Abraham, they are alive in all the ways we hope to share in by being sons of God. It is the fact they are ahead of us that cause the words of Paul to come to us in English as being that the dead in Christ will rise first, then we which are behind the curve, so to speak, will need to catch up and so we shall! The more we understand such things the more we easily put verses together and the Word of God becomes a whole truth not just a collection of things some of which have been true, some of which are now true, and some of which will be true. In many ways it might be the best perspective we can have in the here and now of what it means to be eternal. It's a perspective of how much God never changes, and that truth we talked about last time is something we need to keep in mind concerning those who have gone on before us. God is The God of the living and

very much due to that He will not change for our sake because there are already so many before us who have taken hold and in ways we don't understand as yet, are living what He's always been offering us!

What shifts and changes is humans and that's part of why we got onto all this talking about people of true faith planted groves to keep their places of worship very natural and not designed more than it had to be by the minds of men. Most people live only for what is in this world and they often take things that were done by Godly people and apply them to the worship of false gods, because let's face it, man doesn't really have much to go on when it comes to worshipping something that doesn't exist. This is why the root of almost all false religion is the worship of the creation instead of The Creator. (Rom. 1:24-25) Nature is real and the forces within it are all things God set in motion. That should cause us to worship God, but the fact it doesn't is a clear sign of how much we are determined to worship something other than God! (Rom 1:18-23) The fact men worshipping creation found planting a grove something to take on as a way to worship false gods is why God told His chosen nation not to follow that specific example of their forefather Abraham. It's why so many things in the Law are there to tell Israel specifically how to go about their worship of God and not to bother if the nation didn't follow those instructions to the letter. While on this earth religious practices all become a tangled web and because we that are suppose to be Christians don't have the basis of our thinking firmly rooted in a desire to prepare our lives and everything in them to draw closer to God and be joint-heirs of Jesus' work, we end up making the same mistake the religious leaders of the chosen

nation made!

We just read verse by verse and right past the words God tells Isaac about being The God of His father without taking in the depth of it's meaning. That causes us to build our doctrine on a premise that says God has not always been The God of the living and instead believe we are different because we live in the time post Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. We say we do believe He is The God of the living or life in general but it never dawns on us how wrong we are not to see that's always been true and it's that false narrative that causes us to teach God had to obtain the power to resurrect the dead. When we believe the fullness of God's Word we see it's not a technicality when we miss what seems to be one small thing. We see it bleeds and oozes into every corner of how we think, believe, and live! This is why I spend so much time on what seems like small details. They may be small in and of themselves but they are still very important. God is The God of the living, and this is why John says in his Gospel that in Jesus was life and that life was the light of men! (John 1:4) Jesus didn't come to obtain that life, He already was that life, and that's why it was useless to crucify Him if you were someone like the religious leaders who wished to dispose of Jesus. It is because God already had the power to resurrect the dead that it was a foregone conclusion Jesus would rise from the dead before they ever put Him on the cross! Proving that point to us is the reason God allowed The Messiah to be put to death and why it happening was turned to our good!

As we move to the next words God

speaks to Isaac we see the other important element within that same discussion and something we covered last time and touched on at least once this time. However, some things just can't be stressed enough so I'll repeat the fact many have fought the fight and finished the course of living in this world and still walking in faith in generations long before us. (II Tim. 4:1-8) God tells Isaac He would be with him, bless him and multiply Isaac's seed. God would do all this for Abraham's sake. Abraham had received the promise because of the walk of faith he walked with God. Isaac would be the chosen son to carry those promises into the next generation. This would be true not just because Isaac was the son who came from the correct mother (that being Abraham's wife Sarah). He would be that because of who Isaac was in being a man of faith himself! If you don't believe that all you have to do is look at the next generation and see that there were two sons of Isaac and Rebekah eligible to take the work forward but only Jacob, for all his flaws, was the true man of faith God would say these same kind of words to. His brother Esau in some ways, especially as man judges things, might have been a more stable and steady man through whom the work could be accomplished but Esau didn't care about faith. He didn't care about the things of God. Part of what made Esau a successful man in this world was that he cared very much for the things of this world, but that focus is why he would never be one to receive the power to become a son of God!

Until next time, Shalom!

perspective, we have to take it or this isn't a real Bible study! That said, our goal here is to simply understand that the people of the chosen nation drifted away from their Hebrew language roots and along with that the words of the Bible were becoming harder and harder for them to know as individuals. This is part of the reason we see such a "victory" for the religious leaders during the life of Christ when we should have seen a defeat. For all the ways Jesus came walking and showing Himself to be The Messiah, and all the ways Jesus was spectacularly attractive to the people due to His miracle working powers, the people had learned not to make such serious determinations on their own. Now, there's a point to stop and chew on for awhile when it comes to how we live our lives today! We look at Christ's life and see people following Him in droves only to turn around and cry out to Pilate they wanted Barabbas not Jesus. This was to such a degree that when Pilot asked the people what he should do with Jesus they answered that Jesus should to be crucified. (Matt. 27:15-23) These subjects are so very important to where those who claim to be Christians are today I can't over state the point!

The people of the chosen nation had handed over their ability to make an informed choice about who was The Messiah and who was a false messiah or teacher leading them astray. No matter how many there were who had seen Jesus with their own eyes and been massively impressed by Him in one or many ways, a vast majority of the people in the end would say, if the religious leaders don't accept Him as The Messiah who are we to disagree?

That kind of reliance on religious leaders instead of a knowledge of God's Word for one's self didn't/doesn't come about overnight! In truth, that's one way those who claim Christianity have a better excuse than the people of the chosen nation. Christians are taught that follow the leader is how they improve to be capable of not having to follow the leader. It's clever really because it makes one feel they are growing while actually becoming that much more dependent on the doctrine they have been spoon fed. It's just the "Christian" way of doing things from day one. Believe you know nothing and let the church teach you everything to the point even when you do read the Word of God you don't end up reading It for what's there but to find the support for what you already have been led to believe. Those of the chosen nation were told by God directly to never let that happen and that knowledge of God's Word for themselves was important! I won't put a Scripture reference after that but instead refer you to the entire book of Deuteronomy. If that's too much to bite off all at once then at least read through the last of Moses' life recorded in the Torah. What you'll find is an almost painful agonizing on Moses' part, reading the words God had given the nation over and over and over again. It's as if coming to the end of the reading each time brought back the fear Moses had that the people would forget them and that would compel him to read them one more time!

Moses knew by God's direction Joshua would take over after God took him home, and Moses of all people was wore to the bone trying to practically carry the people on his back. In looking at those facts

and then back at how much he insisted on reading the Law to the people over and over before he left this earth, you see how little Moses believed in the theory that the leadership having knowledge of the words was good enough. He certainly stands as a testimony to how much God didn't intend it to move forward in that way! Thus, we have a clear picture of the importance there was for the individuals of the chosen nation to know God's Word for themselves. Then, in the Gospels we have a clear picture of just how badly we can fail God when we don't know His Word for ourselves. If it was important for a God organized nation of people, it's important in ways we can't imagine that those of us living out here in the wild world at large know the words for ourselves! The Word of God just cannot afford to be lost among men, and that's why we see all the arguing and struggling we see about Bible translation along with all the things related to it that we have been talking about the last couple segments. On one side are the humans and Satan who all want it to disappear because God's Word threatens their power (just like Jesus threatened the power of the religious leadership of His day), and on the other side you have God Who simply will not allow His Word to vanish from the face of the earth! In the end, who do you think will win and on what side do you find yourself?

Now, we have taken a long, and in many ways, important road to talking about the fact the chosen nation was losing Hebrew but I repeat, it's not something that happened overnight. You can boil a frog to death if you turn up the heat on its water slowly, and that's such a good example of

what happens to us as people when it comes to how we handle the things of God. The common people were quickly forgetting Hebrew in favor of knowing a more useful to the purposes of this world language, which was Greek. Because this was true the religious leaders felt they had no choice but to begin reading the Hebrew Scriptures to the people in the Greek tongue alongside the Hebrew. It's not hard to see how the pressure of necessity and what simply seem to be common sense begin to scream louder and louder that the Bible should just be translated into Greek, and saying that brings us to yet another very interesting subject. This is where the struggle between what man wanted and Satan wanted began to show and it got really hard to tell which individuals were right when they argued either side. The question became, to translate or not to translate and what really muddied the waters of answering that question was that if you were sincerely worried about the purity of the Written Word of God you'd probably argue for the side that said, don't! On the other hand, sincerity for the things of God is exactly what would cause people with the best intentions to argue, it has to be done!

Back and forth the argument swung like a pendulum on a clock and time is almost always the enemy of any debate. The people needed to not lose knowledge of the Word of God for themselves but they were already sliding down the slippery slope of losing the ability to do that if Hebrew was the only language those words were written in. They say necessity is the mother of all invention? Well necessity can be a real driving force in both good ways and bad!

Satan would just as soon let all things take their natural course. The Bible was in Hebrew and the people were coming to have no knowledge of that language, especially a knowledge deep enough to understand the Bible. Conversational Hebrew wasn't going to cut it, and that's part of the reason so many English translations of the Bible have little to no value today. Satan was totally fine with this drifting away finally coming to the point Hebrew was so archaic not even the religious leaders could understand the words written on the scrolls; at least not in truth which is yet another issue important to how so called translations of the Bible are coming about in English today. Thus, in ancient times, there was only two options for those who with a good heart or just a love for the nation's culture could insure no such thing took place. One, they could give in and translate the words into whatever language was most useful to the people at large or two, they could hold the line and make more of an effort to insist people of the nation get back to their Hebrew training. It's pretty obvious which one of the two was the easier path, but that fact didn't change the minds of everyone involved in the debate!

This subject is actually the baseline subject the conversation about knowing the Bible for ones self comes down to. It's one of those very typical things where there's a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning of the argument is the big part of what we've been talking about when it came to the chosen nation; will people actually care enough to know God's Word for themselves? If the answer to that is yes then the next question people very often ask is, what version of the Bible should I read? This is where the conversation can be very

different depending on the language you speak/read and the available translations in that language. Some languages are very blessed to have even one translation, and others, such as English, have almost more than you can count. To simplify this discussion I'll just stick to the argument as it relates to the English translation which is a subject I've been pretty clear on, on many occasions. What's important to our discussion here is that there are all kinds of arguments about what makes one translation better than another or, at the very least, "acceptable." That issue is actually where this middle part of the subject begins because you have people who believe there is one translation that is best and others who believe a couple three can/should be utilized. On the polar opposite side of those people are those who believe any copy you can get your hands on is what you should use and not worry about it. It might surprise many to hear me say I actually agree with the second group, minus the "not worry about it" part and with a couple very important stipulations. One, if you're very limited in what you can obtain then by all means do not allow the non-availability of a particular translation to stop you from studying God's Word and two, "limited" can be a temporary condition. In other words, be sure to take the opportunity to get a better translation when you can. In any case I only say I agree, with stipulations, because any study of God's Word has to be done with a heart open to The Holy Ghost or you won't really get things correct no matter what translation you're using. I'll add to this that it can also be helpful to understand and admit to yourself the translation you have available isn't the best one or even that it is one of the really poor ones. If you keep such things in

mind you'll remain more pliable to better and correctly understand things as The Holy Ghost speaks to you as well as when you get a chance to see more appropriately translated words or hear them quoted.

All that said, I actually agree with those on the losing side of the translation argument among the chosen nation. It's a sad thing that we have to have so many translations that this even has to be a discussion. The reasons for that are things we've already touched on. Every time the words are translated there is always the possibility something gets missed, mistranslated, and a few more very important items of concern. This is why those with a pure heart on the side of never wanting to see the Hebrew Bible translated out of Hebrew held the high ground in the argument we've been talking about. If there had been a way for them to win there wouldn't be a beginning, middle, and end to this subject, there would just be the truth the Hebrew Bible is only available in Hebrew. Because that is for simplicity's sake what I'll call "impractical" in a world of people speaking a multitude of languages our subject's end loops us back to that beginning. If you ask, what's the best way to know God's Word for yourself and want the drill down to the bedrock truth of the subject the answer is, you should learn to read Hebrew and for the New Testament, Greek. After all, this is exactly what those who have translated the Bible into other languages had to do. They had/have to know both the original language as well as the language they are translating into. However, this is where all the arguments end up in a jumble of greatly overlapping discussions. If you as

an individual attempt to learn the original languages so you can read the Bible in Its purest form you will face the same struggles that affect every person who has ever translated a, shall we say, "official" copy of the Bible!

This is precisely why I've resisted people who use that drilled down ending of the subject as a basis to suggest, if not demand, that the only way to really know the Bible in truth is to go down that learn the original languages path. Simply put, no one today speaks the ancient languages the Bible originally was written in. That's not a reason to dispose of the most original copies of the Bible we can find as a source to translate from but it completely relates to what I was saying about seeking the very best translation available. Thus, I'll wrap up for this time by repeating our two points. One, Only God can open our eyes to what He's trying to tell us and this is a process of growth all through our lives. Two, we have to care! Oftentimes the whole of the problem is that we're just lazy and we want to be told what to believe. We don't just see it as impractical to become a scholar of ancient languages, we want a translation that explains the words more than being the words and that's what I find so disturbing about so many English "translations." God gives us what we need but Satan is always ready to take advantage of what we want!

Let's stay in God's Word!