

Ten Commandments

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

Ten Commandments

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#1 -No Other gods before Jehovah

And God spoke all these words, saying, I am Jehovah your God...you shall not have any other gods before Me. (vs1-3)

Herein is the foundation to 'everything'. The Bible begins with the words, "In the beginning God..." (Gen1:1) When we consider the matter of being with/of God we know that "without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb11:6a) But we also know that this faith begins with the acknowledgment to "believe that He is". God exists. And furthermore our existence comes from God, "in Him we live and move and exist" (Acts17:28, Col1:17)

Jesus was asked one day, What is the greatest commandment? (Mt22:36) He replied by quoting Deut6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God..." with everything you have. And He went further, quoting from Lev19:18, "...and your neighbor as yourself.." These two 'commands' are the summary of the "Ten Commandments". The Ten Commandments, in turn, are the summary of all the other moral and civil laws that will be contained in subsequent chapters.

If a person loves God; there will not be other gods, idols, taking His name in vain, and one will keep the sabbath to the Lord.

If a person loves his neighbor as himself; he will honor parents, and will not murder, commit adultery, steal, be a false witness, nor covet.

And Jesus said, "And on these two commandments all the Law and the Prophets hang." (Mt22:40) This is the sum-total of Scripture. And thus, also, if we truly understand and obey the Ten Commandments, we can know Life with God. As Paul, who teaches that Jesus was the "end of the Law" (Rom10:4) quotes from the O.T. about the Law that "the man doing these things shall live by them." (Rom10:5, Lev18:5) If a person is truly a Believer "of the heart" (Rom2:29), the outward manifestation of that faith (Jas2:14-26) is the essence of the Ten Commandments.

This first commandment is a "Christian" commandment. Paul likens the Church and Christ to a marriage relationship. (Eph5:32) The traditional marriage vows include the statement "forsaking all others". That is the very gist and core of loving God with -ALL- the heart, with -ALL- the soul and with -ALL- the might. Paul prays that the "spirit and soul and body" be preserved "blameless". (1Th5:23) As we "entreat [God's] face with [our] heart", we "muse" [think] on His ways with our mind, and "turn [our] feet [bodies] to [His] testimonies." (Ps119:58-59)

Now, notice how "negative" these commandments are. You shall not, not, not. Only two "positive" ones. But also notice how -short- this 'list' is. And yet mankind breaks every one of them right and left. Modern

psychology suggests that all the evil in the earth comes from our 'parents', because they didn't give us "enough love" when we were babies; that, if only we could start from scratch, and put some babies in an idyllic environment without the rest of corrupt society to marr their psyches, that mankind could be good.

God already DID that! He put Adam and Eve in a perfect environment. And there were "no rules". Well... only one! There weren't even "ten" to worry about remembering or forgetting. Just one. It was a "don't" rule. But the law started out positive... "You may freely eat of every tree in the garden.." (Gen2:16) The whole earth is open to you. There are no restrictions. Whatever comes to your mind/heart, you have freedom. Go for it!

Just one 'little' restriction. Out of all the 'thousands' of things you -CAN- do, here is the 'ONLY ONE' you are commanded NOT TO. Just ONE (1) 'measely' tree...out of alllll those thousands. "Don't eat from it". (vs17)

So much for modern man's complaints that God is so harsh, unloving and restrictive!! God gave mankind total freedom in the very beginning. It's - ALL- there for you. Go - ENJOY! Just...beware the one little matter...!

When the serpent enticed Adam and Eve to sin, what was the bait? God is "lying to you". God is keeping secrets from you. He is restricting you from realizing your "full potential". This thing He is restricting you with... if you do it, you will "be as God". (Gen3:5) Don't you want to be just like God? Knowing everything He does, and having all His powers?

When the 1st commandment is broken, the primary "other gods" that people have is "SELF". Yes, surely, there are other demon gods people worship; and there are other 'things' that are worshipped; as well as other people. But the primary god people worship is Self. This was satan's message to Eve, and the same "doctrines of demons" (1Tim4:1) still exist today.

Forget the heathen godless world... Modern "christianity" proclaims that God's power is "released through (our) prayer". That as such, there is "power in prayer". They proclaim that we 'have' God's power "in" us; and so, all we need to do is learn how to "tap into that power". According to these teachings, when we learn "how to do" it, we can essentially snap our fingers, and do all sorts of wonders.

But please notice correctly that God's power is "toward" us. (Eph1:19) God's power -works- "in" us. (Eph3:20) But it is not "our" power; it is not -resident- "in" us (we do not charge up our batteries with God's power); "so that the excellence of the power may be of God, and not from us." (2Cor4:7) Notice the words carefully. The power is "of" God; it is His power. It does not come "from" us; because it is not our power. Yes, the Holy Spirit resides in the Believer, so there is God's power working through us as the Holy Spirit lives through us, but it is not 'our' power. When we

have "all things" regarding Godliness it is not from our doing; His power - gives- it to us. (2Pt1:3, Eph2:8)

When He says, "You shall not have any other gods -before- Me" what does "before" mean? Some translations say "besides". Actually both are correct, and are related. Since we know that "no creature is hidden" from God (Heb4:13) we know that everything is "before" Him in His 'view'. So, in other words, we cannot have other gods... only, just keep them hidden away from God, and don't let Him see them... doing it in secret. Rachel did that with her father's family idols. And Israel did that continually, even though they followed Moses and Joshua. After years of conquest of the promised land Joshua would say, "Now, then, fear Jehovah, and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and turn away from the gods which your fathers served Beyond the River, and in Egypt; and you serve Jehovah." (Josh24:14) He wouldn't have said such a thing if they weren't secretly worshipping other gods. And, indeed, Judges has an account of idolatry and its priest. (Judg17)

In God's command, not having other gods includes "And you shall not mention another god by name; it shall not be heard from your mouth." (Ex23:13) And also, "take heed to yourself that you not be snared to follow them after they have been destroyed before you; and that you not inquire after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? And I shall do so, even I." (Deu12:30)

The word for this today is... "dialogue" All the various religions and denominations 'dialogue' with each other, to learn from each other. And as they learn, they 'incorporate' things from other belief systems into their own religion. When Believers are invited to join with the one-world religion, it is an invitation to different gods.

When people go on vacations to "exotic" places, they see the cultures and religions of those places. As we considered a couple years ago in a weekly 'Portion', Bali does not have "art". What we would call their art is part of their collective worship. Their artists do their work as an act of worship and offering to their deities. Many other cultures are the same. When a culture has its festive times, that is their -religion- in action. Many Christians go on these trips, and observe, and maybe also participate in the 'ethnic' dances that are -performed- for tourists. They buy the trinkets, and take pictures. Perhaps they record the music and drum beats. They are unwittingly "asking after" these other religions. Even though it is disguised as "culture" and "entertainment", and they learn all about it, it is actually "other gods" they are taking keen interest in. And when they play these 'music' tapes back for all their friends, they perpetuate that worship, and spread the knowledge of those religions.

And finally, what about "Discernment Ministries"? There are many whose sole purpose in existing is to find out all they can about every religion, denomination and cult; and then, to disseminate all that information to

others. While it might be beneficial to know a -little- something about the people one witnesses to, it is not our calling as Believers to be "well-versed" in everything that is aberrant. If we spend all our time on what is false, our eyes are off of the Most High. If we are learning all about cults, we are not learning God's Word. Our eyes are not "looking unto Jesus..." (Heb12:2)

Fellows...if you were having an intimate moment with your wife, telling her how beautiful she is...you would not prepare for that moment by going out to the shopping mall or dating services, looking at, and investigating all the other women out there... and then, as you are 'now' with your wife, you would not be sharing with her your 'dialogues' with all these other women, telling your wife all about these 'other' women you had seen, looked at, talked to and had a good time with; and tell her how they compare to her. Not hardly!! You'd be out the front door faster than you could ask "how quickly did you want me to leave???"

God says, "I am Jehovah your God, a jealous God..." (vs5)

#2 -No Graven Images or Likeness

You shall not make a graven image for yourself, or any likeness in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow to them, and you shall not serve them; for I am Jehovah your God, a jealous God... (vs4-5)

I was born and raised in Japan during my childhood. As a child I was used to seeing stone-cut images. They would be in the temples and shrines, on shelves in people's houses, on the tops of new building frames for dedication prior to finishing the building's construction, along mountain paths where a person might go hiking... everywhere. These images' heads/faces were usually 'hideous' in appearance.

As a person views cultures from around the world, practically every society on the face of the earth has some sort of stone-cut images. People, monsters, animals, animal-human hybrids, plants and planets.

Modern TV shows preach to us and tell us 'where' these images came from. Certain frescos in Ireland came from an alien species called "Tailon" (Earth Final Conflict), a humanoid race characterized by a plazma energy essence. The gods of Egypt came from other galaxies, the Jafah/guaould; which are a larva-like creature which inhabits/possesses a human host body. (StarGate) The Roman/Greek gods, like Thor, came from another world, and when you get to know the 'real' Thor behind all the legends, he is a creature who looks like the little gray men with bug-eyes of the UFO alien craze. There are also "the ancient ones" (StarGate) who set mankind on their present path a long time ago, and are waiting for mankind to evolve sufficiently enough to receive higher wisdom. Again, these look a lot like the UFO "gray people". There are others from whom mankind came. They are human, and their space ship navigators are the little gray creatures. (Roswell) They, too, are superior to man, waiting for man to evolve up to their full potential.

Many of these have archaeology and art depicting the origins of their gods, such that when the alien comes, man compares the alien to the art, knowing that the species had visited earth in the past.

Many non-western cultures depict their religion in their art. As we learned over a year ago, Bali has no term to compare with the English word "artist". But their land is full of what we would call "art". They, as a culture, readily recognize their "art" as being integral with their worship. Homage to their deities.

When an American student goes to college/university, they might take a course in "art appreciation" as one of the required courses for graduation. Since I was a music major, instead of taking the Music Appreciation, I took the alternative... Art Appreciation. I don't remember it from the class... but

since then in more recent years, I have come to learn that most early western art was predominantly the domain of "the church". Uuuh! That's, the -Roman- church. Think about it. Most of the famous pre-Renaissance art is to be found in cathedrals and chapels. Paintings, frescos, stained glass, statues. They depict Horus and Isis, and what they presume are the "apostles" and other "saints". They have images of the crucifix. Well, we could go on and on. You know what I'm getting at. The 'holy' halos, a tribute to the worship of sun and moon of paganism from which the Roman church came.

When the Renaissance introduced "art" as a non-church concept, it was a novel idea; as nudes and other more erotic subjects become introduced. There, too, however, it is worship. Man worshipping man.

I never really noticed the "idolatry" nature of the Roman church until I was doing professional (choral) music in Montreal, Canada years ago. Most concerts were performed in cathedrals. And Montreal has some rather grand ones. I had been in catholic churches before (playing organ for weddings, and singing for funerals ...being paid as a 'professional' who was hired for the purpose). But while in Montreal cathedrals, as I would walk around and see all the little built-out cubicles with their statues, I was taken back in my mind to Japan. The labels were different, but the concept was identical. It dawned on me...'this is idolatry!!' These 'art' statues are "idols". And this was something with the label of "christian"

Western idolatry of the church of Rome has been culturally called, "art". This is a clever disguise, which attracts the intellectual elite and astute, to come and gaze at, admire, and spend a lot of time with. You see, as I understand it, -that- is part of Catholicism's form of 'worship' ...to "gaze" at all these things. People who think they are merely "appreciating art", are being suckered in to "worship". God warned Israel at Sinai, "warn the people lest they break through to -gaze- at Jehovah, and many of them fall." (19:21) We do -not- do as the swoony song suggests, to "..gaze upon His face..."

Eastern religions are not so subtle. There are no pretenses of it being called "christian". Their images are of dragons and snakes. Who are they worshipping? "And he laid hold of the dragon, the old serpent who is the Devil, and Satan..." (Rev20:2) It was the "serpent" who enticed Eve to the first human sin. (Gen3:1) They are worshipping satan and his demons. That's why their 'gods' are so hideous-looking.

Having lived predominantly in midwestern states and the Pacific Northwest, I hadn't been exposed to American idolatry. But when we lived in Salinas, CA for a half year, I was again reminded of Japan when driving over to the Monterey area. There would be set up what looked like old bath tubs, set up on their ends, to form little shrines. Within these shrines were images of Isis and Horus. You see, with the heavier concentration of Hispanic population, there was that pagan Roman influence from their

ancestral central-American heritage. These things were all over the place. In "public" places [Ed: and I didn't know of any government agency complaining, either, like they do about the posting of the Ten Commandments in courtrooms!] as well as private yards. Idolatry.

OK, now, let's get down to Christian christian. Evangelical, conservative, fundamental, independent, Gospel-preaching, immersion baptizing, etc. We don't have idolatry, surely? How many churches do you know of that - don't- have a 'cross' affixed to the wall behind the pulpit? I can't say that I remember -any-. They pretty much 'all' have them. When you partake of the Lord's Supper, if your group is of any size at all, you have the fancy silver plates and cup holders. What is on the top of the cup lid? A cross. And not a plain cross, either. It is a variation of the Celtic cross with its 'spirit-collector'. Your communion table has the inscription "IHS". If there are any vestments your church uses, or Bible Book Store-bought doily covers for the communion elements, they are inscribed or embroidered with "IHS". No, that does not mean "In His Service". It comes from pagan origins which Rome incorporated into the "church". It stands for Isis, Horus and Set; ancient Egyptian deities. (Isis and Horus, the "madonna-queen of heaven and child"; Set, the ancient Baal which Israel was in continual idolatry with)

Many people and churches like to have "pictures of Jesus" on their walls. What did Jesus look like? Since about the 70's and the charismatic-hippy "Jesus people" times, the fish symbol has come back into vogue. Somehow it is a "more spiritual" symbol than the cross, because it supposedly represents a more "New Testament church" type of mentality, instead of the traditions of the parents, from whom they were rebelling. If you want to "let people know you are a Christian" you wear necklaces and earrings with crosses and fish. You might have a fish symbol sticker on the back window of your car. In advertising your business, you want people to know you're a Christian... put a fish symbol in your yellow page ad. (I guess they won't know you are a Christian unless you bedeck yourself with these trinkets..?!)

What did God say? You shall not make a graven image...or any likeness. That expression "any likeness" pretty much takes care of even photographic technology that didn't exist back then. As Moses is reviewing these laws with Israel at the end of 40 years, he reminds them, "Therefore you shall carefully watch over your souls, for you have not seen any likeness in the day Jehovah spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire," (Deu4:15)

What did they see? Thunders, lightnings, heavy cloud, sound of ram's horn, smoke, fire, earthquakes. (Ex19:16-18) Boundaries were set around the mountain so that people could not approach, on the pain of death. But they did not see a "form" to God; because "God is Spirit".(Jn4:24) And a "spirit does not have flesh and bones". (Lk24:39) And so Moses warns them not to make images in human male or female form, or of animals,

fish, creepy crawlies, nor of the sun and anything in the heavens. (Deu4:15-19)

Well...what's wrong with having a cross'? It helps us "remember" Jesus death when He redeemed us from our sin; we are not bowing to it, nor worshipping it. What did Jesus give us for "remembering" His death by? The Lord's Supper. "...do this in remembrance of Me.." (1Cor11:24-25, Lk22:19) Not a "likeness" of His cross. Rome crucified Jesus on a cross, and the "church" of Rome has perpetuated the symbol of the cross throughout the centuries, both in warfare and in personal religious ritual.

Israel didn't think the cross was so bad either. They had one, you know. The bronze serpent that Moses had erected during one of Israel's rebellions, when God sent snakes in judgment, and people were dying. (Nu21:9) It wasn't until Hezekiah came along that he tore it down. (2Kg18:4) And it says of Hezekiah in that context, "He trusted in Jehovah the God of Israel, and after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him [Ed: including David?]; and he clung to Jehovah; he did not turn aside from following Him, and kept His commands that Jehovah commanded Moses." (2Kg18:5-6)

What is God's attitude toward idolatry? God is "a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers on sons, on the third and on the fourth generation, to those that hate Me.." (vs5) If you cling to these trinkets, God calls that act "hatred" of Him.

Perhaps you have engaged in and entertained these idols? Perhaps you don't think you're worshipping them, but you cling to them. Have you wondered why your life seems to not be very fruitful? Perhaps this contributes to it? Up until now you have likely been in 'ignorance' of this matter. "Then being offspring of God, we ought not to suppose that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone, engraved by art and the imagination of man. Truly, then, God overlooking the times of ignorance, now strictly commands all men everywhere to repent," (Acts17:29-30)

Notice that when Babylon falls, God is going to make a complete end of all forms of satan-worship. This will include what we often term "the arts". "The sound of harpers, and of musicians, and flutists, and of trumpeters will never more be heard in you." And notice... "And every craftsmen of every craft [the ones who make these objects] will never more be found in you." (Rev18:22) Yes, you were likely deceived, because "by [Babylon's] sorcery all the nations were misled." (vs23)

If you are a Believer in Jesus Christ, you can receive forgiveness for your ignorance. I have often wept inwardly, in retrospect, over all the music I have performed in the past...all the Masses and other choral works of the domain of Rome. I did it in ignorance, seeing it as "art", not realizing it was in worship of satan. There were other works of other eastern religions we performed, too. Beautiful music! But, to satan's demons.

If you have your collection of these things, you need to throw them out, confess your error to the Lord, and receive His forgiveness, because He is "faithful and righteous that He may forgive us the sins, and may cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1Jn1:9)

"Turn back to Him against whom you have made a deep revolt, sons of Israel. For in that day each shall despise his silver idols and his golden idols, which your hands have made for you; a sin." (Is31:6-7)

See Also Addendum:

Q/A -What about Israel's Objects of Worship?

Q/A -Children's graphics, cartoons, videos, artwork

Charismania's 'dove'

How to Get Rid of Idols

Q/A -Cross/Fish/Dove?

#3 -Do Not Take the Lord's name in Vain

You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain.. (vs7)

"You shall not revile God.." (Ex22:28) And the beast "..opened its name in blaspheme toward God, to blaspheme His name..." (Rev13:6)

What's in a name? In our 'western' (American) culture parents spend a lot of time, often, thinking of what name to give their children. Typically, it would seem, the choice of name is based on what is in vogue at the time, or what 'sounds' cute to the ear. Those who are more "snobby" will name their children after parents or grandparents. And so you will end up with "So-n-so the third or forth". Or if father was "Charles", the son will be "Chuck". Etc.

As English-speaking people we think it unique, the names the Native American people have, "Running Bear", "Eagle's Feather", "Crazy Horse", etc. But as one reads the book of Hosea, his children were given names of meaning related to Israel. Names like "God Will Sow", "No Mercy", "Not-My-People", etc. (Hos ch1)

Indeed, in God's agenda names have great significance. Believers are promised a "new name". (Rev2:17) This is because God has various names. Names label the person as to their character. When Jesus wrenches the kingdoms of the world away from satan, the name on His thigh will be "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Rev19:16) Before He was born, it was prophesied, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Is9:6)

So, what does it mean to take His name in "vain" or to "revile" His name? It incorporates several things. First of all, to "curse". Wishing misfortune upon God, taunting Him, discrediting His character. A prime example might be how the Mormons suggest that Jesus and Lucifer were "brothers"; thus, degrading Jesus to the loathesome condition of satan's rebellion and condemnation.

A more commonly recognized form of using God's name inappropriately is in swearing. People will invoke God's name to "damn" people, objects and situations. If they are being 'nicer' because they are more 'refined', they will say "Gosh darn". Or from a more cowboy western mentality, "Dad gummit". But they mean exactly the same thing! And there are so many variations we won't utter here. What we have is quite enough. Anybody who has been in the world at all, has heard them. And, yes, after hearing them so much, have we also uttered them ourselves, or thought them?

And then, there is the one people don't think of much. In fact, when they do it they -think- they are exuding superior "spirituality". The more "spiritual" the prayer, the more "Lord"s they will sprinkle in. If they are

making plans or promises, they will sugar-coat their boasts with "Lord willing..." There are some who, for every activity they do, particularly if they are around others they suppose to be Christians, will stop everything and say, "Let's pray about this" and they will lead in "prayer", closing with "In Jesus' name". Now... this activity has been "blessed". Thing is, when somebody's back gets stabbed, the one wielding the dagger is usually this 'spiritual' one. When orders are promised for a certain date, and not delivered for months at a time, somehow as a subscriber suggested about one such person/organization, God's "Lord willing..." must have "changed His plans"!!

And finally, the situation we speak of periodically. There is that which is called "Christian" and invokes "In Jesus' name...." But they engage in all sorts of sorcery; being filled with demons, engaging in demonic manifestations, and false signs and wonders. They call it the "power of God". They attribute to God, the works of satan. They attribute to the Holy Spirit, the works of demonic spirits. They "pervert the Scriptures to their own destruction" (2Pt3:16)

Saying the words, "Lord, Lord" does not make things right. It does not turn evil into good. It does not turn a sinner into a saint.

Jesus said, "And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?" (Lk6:46) A person who claims to be a Christian, and thus 'loves' God will also "keep [His] commandments". (Jn14:15) But all these today who invoke "Lord, Lord" and "In Jesus' name..." are actually throwing away God's commandments. They claim that Doctrine is a "wall of division" against love and unity. They use "good words and fair speeches [to] deceive the hearts of the simple" as they actually DIVIDE PEOPLE AWAY FROM God's commandments [doctrine]. (Rom16:17-18) They suggest that it is alright to be "united" even though they don't "speak the same thing" and are not of "the same mind and in the same judgment". (1Cor1:10)

There was a situation where some Jewish exorcists used Jesus' name in vain, "...Jesus whom Paul preaches..", and paid the penalty by being attacked and wounded by the demons. (Acts19:13-17)

The second half of this commandment, which people often exclude, "Jehovah will not leave unpunished the one who takes His name in vain." (vs7b)

In our worship and service it is not enough to repeat over and over in song, "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, there just something about that name..." in "vain repetition as the heathen do." (Mt6:7)

Hear Jesus' verdict: "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord! Lord! Did we not prophesy in Your name, and through Your name...do many wonderful works? And then I will

say to them, I never knew you! Depart from Me, those working lawlessness!" (Mt7:21-23)

See Also Addendum:

God would prefer to be called "Lord" ??

YHVH –tetragrammaton

#4 -Remember the Sabbath

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy; six days you shall labor and do all your work; and the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God; you shall not do any work, you, and your son, and your daughter, your male slave and your slave-girl, and your livestock, and your stranger who is in your gates. (vs8-10)

Where did the sabbath come from? Just 'here' at Mt. Sinai? Notice that it is a "sabbath -TO- Jehovah". It commemorates the completion of creation. God created the heavens and the earth, and then "rested the seventh day" in commemoration of the "ending" of his work. (Gen2:2-3)

In other studies regarding God's "Covenants & Dispensations" we have considered the 7000 year program for this earth, how, after evil has been judged, and satan is bound in the pit, Christ will set up a righteous rule over the world from Jerusalem, and all implements of war will be dismantled. "..nor shall they learn war any more." (Is2:4, Mic4:3) It will be the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles where God is "dwelling with them". Where the earth will be "full of the knowledge of Jehovah.." (Is11:9) Where after the Lord has "broken the rod of the wicked" the whole "earth is at rest." (Is14:5,7)

Israel was a unique people. Everything about their laws, rituals and feasts were a symbolic representation of God's historic plan for the world. Passover through Pentecost have already been fulfilled, right on schedule, according to God's foreknowledge and eternal plan. (Acts2:23,etc) And so, Israel, on a regular basis, also kept the sabbath, as a foreshadow of the coming Millennium of peace.

However, notice that this is the first recorded account of God - commanding- its observance. Adam and Eve, certainly were not. Nor was Noah upon disembarking the ark after the flood, when God expanded on humanity's generic covenants, when He added "meat" to man's diet, forbade the eating of blood, and gave a special edict regarding murder. (Gen ch9)

And notice that when Jesus arrives on the scene, the prime accusation against Him is that "He does not keep the Sabbath." (Jn9:16) As He would make claim that "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mt12:8) He would explain, "The sabbath came into being for man's sake, not man for the sabbath's sake." (Mk2:27) When Israel first kept the sabbath on the days when manna didn't fall, "..the people rested on the seventh day." (Ex16:30) The Sabbath is a "sabbath of rest". (Lev23:3, Heb4:9) When Israel had been rebelling and were taken captive, God said that the 'land' would now have its rest. (2Ch36:21)

Even the world understands the concept of "rest". People have "days off" from work. And like Israel had their feasts, people of the world have "vacations", more extended periods 'off' from work. The need for rest was learned during the war years (I forget if it was WW1 or 2). It is told how some factory producing munitions was working 'round the clock, 24/7. I don't remember the full account, and the reasons 'why' they decided to try it, but they decided to shut the factory down on one day of the week. Totally. And the factory's output actually 'increased' from what it had been when they were operating 24/7. All things need "rest".

So... does the Church keep the Sabbath? When the Jerusalem council decided what, of all the Jewish laws, were necessary for Gentiles to observe (Acts15), the Sabbath was not on the list.

When Paul, the apostle to the gentiles, writes, he says, "One indeed esteems a day above another day; and another esteems every day alike. Let each one be fully assured in his own mind. (Rom14:5-6) In chiding the Galatians about their legalism he references their observation of "days and months and times and years.." (Gal4:10) In another place, "...let no one judge you in...respect of holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbaths. For these are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." (Col2:16-17)

Christ was the "end of the Law for righteousness" (Rom10:4) It seems apparent that the Sabbath was one area in which Jesus made some 'adjustments' in terms of its observance. So, while we might not keep the 'letter' of the Jewish law of the Sabbath, where they could barely do little more than get up and eat, and otherwise remain in their dwellings; these foreshadows point to Christ. We worship Christ, who is the "image of God's essence". (Heb1:3) If we observe a special day, we do so to the Lord. If we don't observe a special day, as Believers our whole lives are unto the Lord. No matter what we do, "we are the Lord's". (Rom14:6-8)

So, if a group is observing a special day for worship and exhortation, what day do they meet? Saturday or Sunday? Many who observe Saturday condemn the observance of Sunday as a pagan Roman day, worshiping the Sun deity. If they use that logic, I guess they didn't notice that Saturday was to the Roman deity "Saturn"; from which Saturnalia and X-mass come from. They claim that there is "no N.T. reference to Sunday worship"; that such a thing came about when Rome took over and made the Church "pagan". Well, the "romanizing" of the Church did not begin until the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and the matter became 'official' in the mid 300's AD.

But notice that there are references to the "first of the week". (Jn20:9, Acts20:7, 1Cor16:2) which seems to have come to be known as the "Lord's Day". (Rev1:10) Many have come to suggest that this came about due to the fact that Jesus was resurrected on the "first of the sabbaths" (Mt28:1 -litv) "Sabbath" also means, "seven days" or "week". The primary thrust and motivation of their preaching was "...through Jesus the

resurrection from the dead." (Acts4:2) Since Jesus is the "firstfruit" of the resurrection (1Cor15:20-23), and Jesus Himself said that He was "Lord of the Sabbath"; it certainly seems appropriate to observe the "seventh day" (out of the seven) on the "first of the seven", the day Jesus was raised. We serve a "risen" Savior!

Also, please notice that Pentecost, the day the Holy Spirit came and indwelt the Church, was also on the first day of the week. Pentecost was observed by the Jewish Law throughout the centuries. Notice, "And you shall number to you from the NEXT DAY AFTER THE SABBATH [Ed: the day after 'Saturday' is 'Sunday'], from the day you bring the sheaf of the wave offering; they shall be seven complete sabbaths; the next day after the seventh sabbath, you shall number fifty days; and you shall bring near a new food offering to Jehovah.." (Lev23:15-16) This offering where the bread was baked "WITH leaven". (vs17) Not only did Christ rise from the dead on the first of the week, observed by Jewish Law with that "wave sheaf" the day after the sabbath; the Holy Spirit came on that day, also. The prime characteristic of a Believer into Jesus Christ is the residing Holy Spirit. (Rom8:9,14,16)

Notice; these references are -before- Rome got into the act.

Oh yes... there is one other argument the "7th day..." people use; when the early apostles went about on their missionary journeys, it always says that they went "on the sabbath" to preach and meet. (Acts 13:14,42, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4) But notice that in most of those cases, they were going into the synagogues. When do Jews meet? On the 7th day. Jesus commanded to start preaching to Jews first, and spread out from there. (Acts1:8), which is what Paul proclaimed. (Rom1:16, 2:9-10) If they were to reach Jews as they travelled, they needed to go where the Jews were; the synagogues. And 'when' the Jews met; on the Sabbath. It would do no good to go on Sunday expecting to find Jews; they wouldn't be there.

So, what day should -you- observe? Sunday? OK. Saturday? OK. If you meet on Saturdays, don't condemn others for meeting on Sunday, and not Saturday as you do. If you meet on Sunday, don't despise the 7th day people -for- meeting on Saturday, if they preach the Gospel. There are cults who meet on Saturday, and don't preach the Gospel. We are not talking about them. Remember that Paul exhorts, "Let each one be fully assured in his own mind...why do you judge your brother? Or also why do you despise your brother? For all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ...so then each one of us will give account concerning himself to God." (~Rom14:4-12)

However, even though the N.T. doesn't specifically command a "sabbath" observance, God did command it 'here' at Sinai. (Ex20) And it's something God observed in the beginning at creation. So, whether we observe it as Sunday or Saturday (or some other day, or every day), one who loves God

I should think would ~~want~~ to "keep it holy" as God "sanctified it", observing it as a ~~rest~~ "to the Lord".

See Also Addendum:

Jesus healing on the Sabbath

#5 -Honor Father and Mother

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you. (vs12)

This is another command that has been abused down through history; primarily by parents. If we remember in our studies back to Jacob, perhaps it will be remembered how he had his grown sons tip-toeing around him, and afraid to do what needed doing sometimes, so as not to upset his self-centered emotions. Not, of course, that -they- were saintly by any means!

How many parents, who refuse to let their grown children leave the nest, will lay guilt trips on them with this command. If the grown child doesn't cater to the parents, the parents will whine back about "honoring" parents, with, "the Bible says you're supposed to obey us."

Let us look at the child's duties to the parents, and then see how Jesus exemplified what we learn.

First of all, "children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." (Eph6:1) And, indeed, it is the duty of parents to raise up their children, "...in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (vs4) "Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Pr22:6) Notice that parents train their "children". Training as children is in order to know how to be as adults. And yes, sometimes the matter must be - forced- with the "rod of correction". (Pr13:24, 22:15, 23:13)

But once the child becomes a man, God commanded, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall be one flesh." (Gen2:24) A lot of people have things twisted around. They think that "family" is the closest bond. The bonds of "blood". The sibling descendents of their parents. But the bond of marriage is stronger. No matter how close brothers and/or sisters were, when they get married, that close bond -MUST- give way to the new one, the marriage. And it is a MOST UNCONSCIONABLE (SELFISH) thing that many families do, when they refuse to let go, and continually meddle in the lives and relationship of the new couple. But God said to, first, "LEAVE" the old family. And then "CLEAVE" to the spouse. "Leave" is easy enough to understand. But "cleave" means to "cling to, stick close, keep close, be joined." After all, they become "one flesh". There is nothing closer than "one". They are no longer answerable to parents or siblings, but to each other, first and foremost.

And then, there is the "honor". Eventually the parents become old and need care. They can no longer work. This is what "honor" is about. Do we know this from Scripture? The Jews, in figuring out a work-around to God's design came up with Corban. A child could dedicate something "to God",

and then not be required to provide for their parents. And Jesus denounced this. (Mk7:11-12) This word "honor" is also used in connection with financial support of those who "labor in word and doctrine" and Paul uses the example of the ox treading out the grain, and further, "The laborer is worthy of his reward." (1Tim5:17-18) Honor them by providing for their needs.

This may seem like an extra financial burden. But God exhorts that in so doing "your days may be long". When a child, obey them. (Eph6:1) When you are older, and so are they, you "honor" them. (Eph6:2-3) You put forth to honor them, "so that..it may go well with you.." (Deu5:16) This is God's way. Obey Him first, putting your money where your mouth is when you say you "love" Him; and then He promises "and test Me now with this, says the Lord of Hosts, to see if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until you cannot contain it." (Mal3:10)

So... did Jesus follow this? After all, He was God's Son. They went to the feast in Jerusalem, and the rest of the family headed home, and Jesus stayed in Jerusalem, learning from the teachers. When Joseph and Mary finally found Him, He acted surprised that they would be concerned about Him, "Do you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" And then it says, "He went with them..and..was subject to (obeyed) them." (Lk2:49-51)

But when Jesus was a man, his mother came around, trying to "boss" Him regarding the wine that had run out at the wedding, and Jesus responds to her, "Woman (not 'mom' or 'mother'), what is that to Me and to you? My hour has not yet come." (Jn2:4) He is making it known that He is not subject to her, but is on His Father's agenda now.

But then, also note, when Jesus is on the cross, about to give His life, he expresses His "will and testament" and gives John the duties of the son regarding Mary. (Jn19:26-27) Essentially, adopting Mary into John's family. (Apparently Joseph must have been dead at this point?)

Some people teach that Christian 'adult' children should obey their unsaved parents. But this 'honor' doesn't necessarily mean that. To follow Christ often involves -leaving- "..father, or mother, or wife.." (Mt19:29) because being His disciple doesn't necessarily involve "peace" and harmony. Quite often animosities are stirred up as the "sword" cuts into those earthly relationships, and family members become enemies. We sometimes are called upon to "lose" our earthly life, in order to "find" it in Christ. (Mt11:34-39)

A prime example of this in Jesus' life: As Jesus is beginning His ministry, His family and home-town people thought that Jesus had pretty much gone 'off His rocker'. "He is insane" (Mk3:21) and so they were trying to "take hold of Him" and get Him home and "talk some sense" into Him. In the mean time the scribes are harrasing Him, labeling His work as being

demonic, and about then, His 'siblings' and Mary come looking for Him, "calling Him". (Mk3:31) And Jesus is informed that His "family" is there, looking for Him. You can be sure He knows 'why' they are there. Notice the "distance" He puts between Himself and them, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?" (vs33) And He then tells His mission, His new family of those who are Believers. Jesus never married an earthly woman. His 'marriage' was to His Father's will. When He "left" His 'mother', He "cleaved" to what His mission was.

But even though there were these squabbles, and other arguments with His "siblings" who didn't believe in Him (Jn7:5), He knew that His siblings were -there- to care for His mother. She did not need Him for the daily support. But when it came time for Him to die, as her 'first-born' He made official His "honoring" of Mary. Even in this, He "fulfilled the Law". (Mt5:17)

#6 -Do Not Murder

You shall not murder. (vs13)

"To all there is an appointed time, even a time for every purpose under the heavens...a time to kill.." (Ecc3:1,3)

Some respected translations say "thou shalt not kill". Does the Bible contradict itself? When Israel took possession of the promised land, God would tell them to utterly wipe out its inhabitants, 'killing' them. Back in the era of the US involvement in Vietnam, 'Hanoi Jane' was proclaiming that US soldiers were "murderers". What does this commandment mean?

Jesus explains it. "You have heard that it was said.. "Do not commit murder! ..but I say to you, Everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause shall be liable to the Judgment." (Mt5:21-22)

When Cain killed Abel, it was Cain's anger which led to the deed. (Gen4:5-7) A bit later, Lamech killed someone in self-defense. (Gen4:23) A different deal. As part of the post-flood covenant, God speaks of "avenging" the death of someone who is murdered. (Gen9:5-6) Murder must be avenged.

On the other hand, there are deaths which are not "premeditated". God set up cities of refuge for those who 'accidentally' killed someone. (Nu35:6,etc) For when a person kills "without enmity". (Num35:22-23) Or where he was not "lying in wait" and planning the deed. (Ex21:13) That they could go and be 'safe' from the hand of the avenger of blood.

There are deaths which happen in warfare, as David "explains" to Joab to ease Joab's conscience (as well as his own) regarding David's murdering of Uriah through battle, "For the sword devours one as well as another." (2Sam11:25) While David spoke a truth about warfare, he twisted it to salve his own conscience for the murder he had committed. In that case, a "time to kill" became a "murder" because of David's premeditation, of his heart.

There is a mentality today which would disarm the common citizen. Certain administrations would seek to confiscate all guns, even though statistics show that an armed citizen is a safer one. If a criminal thinks a gun might be facing him when he breaks into someone's home, he will be less-likely to commit the burglary. What does God say about this? "If the thief is found breaking in, and is stricken and dies, no blood shall be shed for him." (Ex22:2) For the most part, private citizens are still allowed to defend themselves, even to the result of the death of the burglar. But there is becoming more and more of a mentality that causes the one defending their home to feel guilty for "murdering" the burglar.

There is a mentality which calls Capital Punishment "murder". And yet, God's Law is quite plain. If someone premeditates, and kills another human being, the murder is to be 'avenged' with the blood of the murderer. "...dying he shall die." (Ex21:12) He took a life. The death MUST be avenged. When societies refuse to obey God's Law, they heap up to themselves God's judgment, just like the blood of Abel was "crying up to [God] from the ground." (Gen4:10)

Furthermore, when Capital Punishment is not meted out justly and quickly, further murders are perpetuated. "Where sentence on an evil work is not executed speedily, on account of this the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Ecc8:11) Yes, Capital Punishment -IS- a deterrent. And yes, if the 'justice' system did not take months and years to convict, and prolong the ultimate sentence with multiplied appeals, we would see the murder rate go down quickly, drastically.

But, again, where does murder come from? From the heart. From hatred and anger. Remember how this part of the Commandments illustrates the "Love your neighbor as yourself", "the second is like it"? If a person obeys that -second- "great" command (Mt22:39, Lev19:18), there will not be anger, will there. And if there is not anger, there will not be murder.

#7 -Do Not Commit Adultery

You shall not commit adultery. (vs14)

Adultery == "Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a partner other than the lawful spouse."

Fornication == "Sexual intercourse between partners who are not married to each other" When reading the history of this word, it comes from the practice of brothels where prostitutes would "ply their trade". This word is closely linked, originally, with "whoredom".

And then, there is the question of "sex before marriage".

Let us consider this last question first. In order to do so, we must consider the definition of "marriage". Once we have done so, we can, in turn, fully understand the first two terms correctly, and thus, God's command.

What is marriage? According to the dictionary, the first definition one finds is of a "legal union" of a man and woman as husband and wife. Marriage is that piece of paper. It has also come to include the whole picture of the man and wife joining each other; and so, by default, marriage has come to include the sexual union. But in the very strictest sense, marriage is what the couple appears to be to others. What others see them to be.

But in the beginning when God brought Eve to Adam, was that a "legal" union? No. It was a "physical" union. "This now at last is bone from my bones, and flesh from my flesh..they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife..." (Gen2:23-25) When they sign the marriage certificate, are they "naked"? When they stand before the preacher or justice of the peace (a "legal" position), are they "one"?

Where did the whole concept of 'standing before the preacher' come from? There were many pagan rituals where fertility rites were performed. A couple would be 'blessed' by the priest, and then the couple would engage in sex in the vicinity of, or 'in' the temple. In some cultures, once they had been thus united, they would then be killed and offered in sacrifice to their deities... to insure bountiful crops and perpetuation of the race. Is our concept of the 'traditional' wedding descended from such paganism? So many of the other things certainly are, like throwing the rice, etc. Even in "christian" churches the common expression is that the couple "stands before the -ALTAR-". There is no Scripture where God commands such a thing regarding -His- altar. And yet, so many Christians will feel that they -must- have one of these weddings, to be blessed by God. Otherwise, they feel they will be "committing adultery" if they are together, without having first been "blessed" and "pronounced" by the preacher..."in the church". Also, remember that the preacher is a "legal" representative of the state. He must possess a "license". And he usually says something like, "..by the

laws vested in me by the state of [name of state], I pronounce you man and wife.."

When Isaac "married" Rebekah, it says that he "..brought her into the tent...and took her...and she became his wife." (Gen24:67)

In amongst all the laws on immorality, notice one item: "And when a man lures a virgin who is not betrothed, and lies with her, he shall surely pay her dowry for a wife to himself." (Ex22:16) All the other laws on immorality carried the death penalty, but where two were together in their "virginity", they were to become considered husband and wife.

Society looks at the piece of paper. But God looks at the physical union. If a couple are together, it is not a question of whether or not they -should- "get" married. They -already- "just -got- married" when they slept together. So, back to our #3 we opened with: there is no such thing as "sex -before-marriage". Sex -IS- marriage... in God's eyes. The world might label them as "not married", but in God's eyes they are "husband and wife". Two became one.

As such, fornication in the sense of "sleeping around" or being promiscuous in prostitution is actually "adultery". The first person you were with, you "married". Anybody after that is "adultery". You might not have signed any papers with the first one, but you married them, in God's sight, nonetheless. So, your 'second' act of "fornication", because of the first "marriage", -IS- adultery.

Thus, we see that there are really only two types of sex. Marriage and Adultery. God says, once you have married someone, and two have "become one", do not be unfaithful to that marriage. Do not pervert that union by being with someone else. When two become one, not only does God's design create the single zygote out of the (two) egg and sperm, there is also emotional and spiritual union. If a person loves his "neighbor as himself", he is not going to do to his spouse what he wouldn't want his spouse doing to him...being unfaithful and breaking that trust.

Adultery... don't do it!

See Also Addendum:

Wedding rings pagan?

Church weddings?

Renewing wedding vows? What is "perversion"?

Editorial: -Stay Put

Stay Put with Homosexual?

#8 -Do Not Steal

You shall not steal. (vs15)

This commandment is rather simple to understand, isn't it. Don't take something not belonging to you.

One primary fault of our US 'justice' system is that when somebody is caught stealing, they merely serve prison time, and/or pay fines. But rarely are they required to make restitution to the parties they stole from. It is assumed the victims have insurance against theft. But God's Law commanded that "he shall return what he got by robbery" (Lev6:4) Not only was he to return what was stolen, he was to add interest, "and the fifth part he shall add to it" (vs5)

Again, "love your neighbor as yourself". There are some who try to be "communal" regarding -other- people's property. "What's yours is mine." But the Law was specific regarding the rights of private property ownership. Very strict laws about boundary markers of land. (Deu19:14) In fact, that was an item for the curse, "Cursed is he who removes his neighbor's landmark." (Deu27:17) It is good and proper to 'own' property. Even for Christians. (Acts5:4) And it is proper to guard such property from theft. If you would not want your property stolen, as you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not steal his. As Jesus taught, "And according as you desire that men should do to you, you also do the same to them." (Lk6:31)

Most laws on theft (of THINGS) required, only, restitution. But in the case of adultery, one is stealing his neighbor's spouse. Since those "two [became] one", such theft is like stealing that person, himself; his very life. There is -NO- possible 'restitution' to erase the wrong done.

"So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; everyone touching her shall not be innocent. They do not despise a thief, if he steals to fill his appetite when he is hungry. But [if] he is found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery [with] a woman lacks heart; he [who] does it [is] a destroyer of his own soul. He shall find a wound and dishonor, and his shame shall not be wiped away. For jealousy [is] the rage of a man, and he will not spare in the day of vengeance, He will not lift up the face of every ransom, nor will he consent if you multiply the bribes." (Pr6:29-35)

#9 -Do Not Bear False Witness

You shall not testify a witness of falsehood against your neighbor. (vs16)

Typically, when this commandment is taught in Sunday school classes to children, the summary is along the lines of, "don't tell a lie". They are exhorted to always "tell the truth".

And, indeed, it is said that "..all the lying ones, their part will be in the Lake burning with fire and brimstone.." (Rev21:8) Because, as Jesus taught, Satan "is a liar, and the father of it" (Jn8:44b)

However, this commandment, more specifically, has to do with "being a witness". When on a witness stand in a trial, tell the truth. "You shall not..turn aside after many in order to pervert justice..you shall not favor the lowly in his lawsuit..you shall keep far away from a false matter..do not kill the innocent and the righteous..you shall not take a bribe..you shall not oppress an alien." (~Ex23:2-9)

The rich and famous, due to their wealth and fancy lawyers, tend to not serve time like poorer people do. People like T.Kennedy or O.J.Simpson can pay the money, in essence 'bribing' the system, and go free for murder. But a poor black or hispanic person from the slums will serve most of a life-time for something far less significant. A president from the (self-proclaimed) "most ethical administration" can lie repeatedly and avoid impeachment with the aid of high-priced attorneys, while righteous underlings are ushered away from their White House jobs, out the back doors, in security vans, in disgrace; merely for having served under the previous administration and being trustworthy and conservative. If the woman is pretty and cries just the right kind of tears, she can finagle her way out of trouble. How many "deals" do the rich engineer in the 'back rooms' by means of intrigue? Intrigue is just another word for dishonesty... often by "manipulating" the truth.

This is what satan did to Eve. "Did God say...?" Well, God -really- knows that if you eat the fruit...you'll know things. You won't really die. And, indeed, when Eve ate the fruit, she was still walking around, very much "alive". Thing is, the "truth" satan told was only -part- of the story. And by leaving out the part about the spiritual death, his partial truth WAS a lie.

In trials, people are asked to "swear" to tell the truth. They swear "on the Bible". In other cases, people swear by their "dead mother, may she rest in peace"... "cross my heart and hope to die". And then they lie anyway. Jesus taught, Don't swear at all. Just be truthful.

"But let your word be Yes, yes; No, no. For whatever is more than these is from evil." (Mt5:37)

#10 -Do Not Covet

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male slave, or his slave-girl, or his ox, or his ass, or anything which belongs to your neighbor. (vs17)

If "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev19:18) is the "second great commandment" (Mt22:39) upon which Numbers 5-10 hinge, Number 10 is the foundation and root upon which 5-9 are based.

Coveting is the [SELF]-ish part. Why does a person become angry with another, to in turn murder him? Something about that person got in the way of -ME- and -MY- desires. A person will not commit adultery if he doesn't first covet and desire her, that belongs to someone else. Jesus said that looking with lust was every bit as guilty as the physical act, because the lust motivates the act. (Mt5:28) That is what's in the heart. Why would a person steal something, unless he saw something he wanted, but didn't have? Why would a person lie and give false witness unless he perceived some 'advantage' for himself?

In order to fulfill 5-9 a person might be able to 'do unto others as you would have them do to you'. (Lk6:31) But that is still selfishly motivated. A person can be nice to another, IN ORDER THAT they will be nice back. You know, "A man who has friends must, himself, be friendly" (Pr18:24 nkjv/kjv) A person can help another, in the hopes that that person will remember, and return the favor. Commandments 5-9 are all in respect to PHYSICAL acts.

But to COVET is a matter of the mind and heart. It is where the desires are. A little child learns this first thing. Some of his first uttered expressions are, "No! Mine, mine...! Meee, meee!!" If there is no coveting, there is no problem with 5-9. The fact that we have so much trouble with 5-9 is because our -hearts- are evil and desperately wicked. (Jer17:9) We are all going our "OWN way". (Is53:6)

"From where do wars and fightings among you come? Is it not from this, from your lusts which war in your members? You desire [covet], and do not have. You murder, and are jealous, and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you have not..and..you receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it upon your lusts." (Jas4:1-3)

Coveting and lust are relatives to each other. Remember how Jesus taught about adultery, that if the looking after a woman is motivated by lust, committing the act in the thoughts, coveting her; even such looking is sinful. (Mt5:28)

Rather than merely being "even", giving what we hope to receive back, and thus being 'equal' with our neighbor, we actually need to have a heart like Christ's...

"..having the same love...doing nothing according to party spirit or self-glory, but in humility, esteeming one another to -SURPASS- themselves; each not looking at their own things, but each also at the things of others." (Phil2:2-4) "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal6:2)

"..obeying from the heart.." (Rom6:17) "For he is not a Jew that is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that outwardly in flesh; but he is a Jew that is one inwardly, and circumcision is of heart, in spirit, not in letter; of whom the praise is not from men, but from God." (Rom2:28-29)

When Israel heard the Law they replied, "All which Jehovah has spoken, we will do.." (Ex19:8,24:7) However, God knowing their hearts responded, "..they have well said all that they have spoken. Oh that this heart of theirs would be like this always, to fear Me, and to keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them, and with their sons forever." (Deu5:28-29)

"..and you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man do, he shall live by them. I am Jehovah." (Lev18:5)

Amen!

Addendum:

What about Israel's objects of worship?

READER QUESTION:

I read with interest your articles on idols (pictures-figurines-etc.) but what of the Ark of Covenant which has two angels on top and the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place which had images of angels sewn in? And what of all the gold, silver and jewels which were used?"

VW ANSWER:

This is a matter that we have all grown up being accustomed to. We are sooo used to seeing pictures, symbols and images, that we are 'conditioned' to the notion that it is a "normal" situation. We have been so used to seeing crosses and fish symbols, and pictures...that when we read the 2nd Commandment, we have somehow blocked out of our consciousness the fact that all these symbols proliferate around us. We have been desensitized to their existence...or to the remote possibility that that Commandment might 'actually' refer to -them-. After all, they appear in our "Christian" churches!!

All the objects of Jewish worship, and the rituals, were heavenly patterns. They were "...the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was warned of God..See that you make all things according to the pattern shown to you in the mountain." (Heb8:5, Ex25:40)

But notice that the Ark of the Covenant was not something put on display. We won't give all the references now, but it went behind the veil. Whenever they traveled, the Ark was covered; so the people never saw it. (Ex40:3,21, Nu4:5) Only the high priest ever saw it, once a year, with special dedicatory anointing and blood. Remember that the Ark represented God's "presence" amongst Israel, and "...no man can see Me and live.." (Ex33:20) They did not make little "miniature Arks" to sell to people to wear as necklaces or earrings. When an unauthorized person touched the Ark, they were zapped dead. (1Ch13:9-10) When others looked inside it, same thing. (1Sam6:19) I didn't find anything specific about "duplicating" the Ark, but people were not to duplicate the formulae for the anointing oil for personal use (Ex30:32) nor for the special incense. (Ex30:37) These things were -only- for worship of Jehovah, -in- the tabernacle/temple.

That which they were to have -WITH- them continually, posting it around their homes, carrying with them wherever they went was "His statutes and His commandments". (Deu6:2) Notice this word "statute" is not "statue". "Statue" is an idol. "Statute" is "ordinance, something prescribed". Don't

remove a "t", in your hearts, where it belongs. "I have hidden Your Word in my heart, so that I might not sin against You." (Ps119:11)

Anyone who saw God's presence or the glory of His habitation (Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, John-Revelation) always came away in awe and wonder. In Isaiah's vision the seraphim (heavenly creatures) cried out "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah" (Is6:3) Holiness is not a state of having a "halo" hovering above one's head. The word means, literally, "set apart, cut apart, separated". Thus, the Ark was "set apart". It was made after the pattern of what is in heaven. "...And the temple of God in Heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple.."(Rev11:19)

Trouble is, people rely upon their little trinkets. They just "gotta have" them! Like occult amulets. When they react the way they do, scoffing at any suggestion of a wholesale "getting rid of" those things one may have, as the converted Ephesian occultists did with -all- their books when they burned them in the bonfire (Acts19:19); they are showing their true heart to be just like Israel's was. They may say, like the woman calling the store today did, that they "don't worship" them. But notice when Israel was being defeated before the Philistines, they decided to get the Ark out "...so that when -it- comes among us -it- may save us.." (1Sam4:3) Israel was defeated again. Eli's sons were killed. And when Eli heard the news, he fell over, broke his neck and died.

They were trusting in the "object". The "thing". Just like when Aaron made the golden calf, he announces about the -object-, "these are your gods, O Israel..." (Ex32:4)

It is not the Ark which is holy, but the One occupying the Mercy Seat of the Ark. As Jesus said, "And the one swearing by the Holy Place swears by it, and by the One dwelling in it. And the one swearing by Heaven swears by the throne of God, and by the One sitting on it." (Mt23:21-22) It was not the Ark which gave Israel victories, but God. "So says Jehovah the God of Israel, -I- have brought you up out of Egypt." (Jud6:8)

The reason there were to be no "graven images" (Ex20:4) and they should "not bring an abomination into your house" (Deu7:26) is because we are to have "no other gods before" Jehovah. (Ex20:3) Israel had certain physical representations of the things in Heaven. These were objects patterned after -THE- One and Only True Most High. But just as God is "-one-Jehovah" (Deu6:4), there was only -one- set of these representative objects. Just as God is not "many gods", there are also not many objects. Only -one- set, at God's designated location. God was specific about people -not- doing their own thing with regards to worshipping anywhere and in any way they chose. It was to be done in Jerusalem, at the temple...the representation of God's presence. (Deu12:8,11) Specifically... "Take heed to yourself that you not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which Jehovah shall choose in one of your

tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command." (vs13-14)

There is -NO- Scriptural precedent for the Christian Church, the Bride of Christ, to have -physical- objects. The Believer's "body is a temple of the Holy Spirit". (1Cor6:19) When the O.T. objects were crafted, God warned Moses that they match the heavenly 'originals'. Any worship of any 'other' objects would indicate a worship of 'other' gods which those objects represent. We are not to have "other gods". The modern day objects did not appear in the O.T. from Sinai; the cross, fish, crucifix, pictures of some human "likeness", etc. The "New Covenant" did not include objects. Only a "remembrance". (1Cor11:24-25) The "Christian" Faith is not a faith of "seeing" objects; but of "not seeing" and yet believing. (Jn20:29, 1Pt1:8)

If certain people insist upon their love and cherishing of their objects, objects which are not designed by God, nor commanded in the Scriptures, they are obviously objects of "other gods"; if a person comes face-to-face with the Truth of this matter, and in their heart they understand what God's Word is saying about this, no longer being deceived (Acts17:29-30, Rev18:23b) and yet insist upon their icons; they are obviously not Believers.

In the O.T. a person who "loved God" was known by their "keeping His commandments". (Deu11:1) And they were not to go off doing their own thing, whatever was "right in their own eyes". (Deu12:8) Not having idols.

In the N.T. a Christian is known as one who "loves Christ" and demonstrates that love by "keeping [His] commandments". (Jn14:15, 1Jn5:2-3) So, why would we go off hoarding our "images" and "likenesses"? People retort, "well, I'm not WORSHIPING them!!" Notice... that came in vs5. But vs4 began with you shall not even -have- them. Don't even "bring" them "into your house". (Deu7:26)

Again... why?

"I AM Jehovah your God...you shall have no other gods before Me...you shall not make to yourselves any graven image, or any likeness...you shall not bow yourself down to them, nor serve them. For I Jehovah your God am a jealous God..." (Ex20:2-5)

Children's graphics: cartoons, videos, artwork

QUESTION:

I have a concern of the verse of Exodus 20:4 which is the second commandment of the Ten Commandments. Exodus 20:5 tells us that we are not to worship with those objects which looks alike that are against God. Does this apply to children's graphic bibles and comics, cartoon videos, artwork and paintings, and plain wood cross in churches and even in my bedroom. Are those against Exodus 20:4-5? Are there any specificatons on this commandment that applies to those things which are used for memorial or learning beside worshipping or serving with an object such as a rosary?

ANSWER:

On one hand we see #2 saying "...or any likeness of anything..." And on the other hand we see how Solomon decorated the temple with pomegranates, lillies, oxen, lions, chrubs, wreaths. (1Kg ch7)

I don't remember art history all that well, to give you details, locations and dates. But, until somewhere around the Renaissance period, art was the domain of "the church" (of Rome, etc). Once the True Church leaves the realm of the first century, and the original apostles die, symbols begin to appear as part of the church's rituals; e.g. fish and cross. As Rome takes over and becomes "christian" and the "church" becomes paganized, one of its characteristics is the making of statues, painted ceilings, stained glass windows with depictions, crucifixes, etc. People genuflect the altar and crucifix, they bow and kiss the statues, they stare and gaze at the artwork. It is all part of their "worship" -experience-. And this is what God commands in vs5, "You shall -NOT- bow yourself down to them, nor serve them.."

Unfortunately, those that are protestant, evangelical, fundamental, independent, etc., in many ways still being part of that paganism, also have their crosses and pictures of 'Jesus', and in more recent years again, the fish symbol. As Moses is reviewing with Israel, just as they are preparing to enter the land of promise, after 40 years of wilderness wandering, he says, "You..saw no likeness, only a voice...take heed to yourselves, for you saw no kind of likeness on the day the LORD spoke to you...lest you act corruptly and make yourselves a graven image, the likeness of any figure, the likeness of male or female..." (Deut4:12,15-19)

I really think it is despicable to try to assume what Jesus might have looked like, and have 'His' picture hanging around. Whatever culture has them, they are depicted to the nationality of that culture...not the Jewish rabbi that He was.

Some think of the cross as a -mere- symbol of remembrance. And yet, Israel had been 'remembering' the old bronze cross/serpent Moses had made in the wilderness (burning incense before it), and when Hezekiah came along, in his zeal for the Lord, that was one of the things he broke up and tore down. (2Kg18:4) And when I read that account, I wonder to myself -why- David had never torn it down years earlier? But it says of Hezekiah in the context of this act that "he trusted in the LORD God of Israel, and after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he clung to the LORD. He did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses." (vs5-6) I don't think the matter of pictures, crosses, fish symbols could be any clearer than that.

Now, as for children's illustrated Bibles, comics, videos. It would seem to me that each situation would either stand or fall on its own merits, based on its implementation. Illustrated Bibles are not the same as hanging a "picture of Jesus" on one's wall. Pretty much -all- children's books have "pictures" in them. That's how children learn. Such a Bible could, I suppose, help them visualize the fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, or what offering a sacrifice in the O.T. might have looked like, etc. Help them to understand/visualize the 'culture' in which these things happened. But even so, I'm not sure I (personally) like the idea, myself. But I expect it would be no worse than the old flannelgraph stories for children. (Do they still do those?)

On the other hand, I know of special "Bibles" (for adults) that contain early Medieval/Renaissance art from some of the "great cathedrals" in the pages. Some of the 'classic' depictions of the Queen of Heaven (Horus and Isis), with their pagan halos, and all such stuff. That is like bringing Rome's idolatry -into- God's Word. Historically, one of the things the church of Rome is noted for is its artwork. That's part of its worship. (Just like we learned about Bali in a 'Portion' a year or so ago. They don't have "artists". Their artwork is in service to their deities.)

Comics and videos? Not seeing any specific ones, it would be hard to give an opinion. But what I tend to see of everything else...it would not surprise me if when I did see them, that I would not be impressed. I mean... what did all the poor children of Israel's households do before the days of comics and videos, when God commanded, "You shall carefully teach them [God's Laws] to your sons..." (Deu6:7-9) I expect He meant it to be accomplished by word and deed in daily life..!

Jesus was the "express image of [God's] essence" (Heb1:3) of the "invisible God" (Col1:15) Our Faith is one of "not seeing and [yet] believing". (Jn20:29)

Charismania's 'dove'

In the recent considerations about "images and likenesses" I have lumped together the cross, fish symbol, crucifix and pictures of Jesus. Since I don't have a charismatic background, myself, I forgot to include another one. But someone sent me a URL to a site of all sorts of related topics, and there it was. [The site has so much horrendous information, I'm not going to include its URL here. (Deut12:30) It seemed like the site was meant to illustrate the errors, and then give Scripture; but it gave me the eebie jeebies just skimming through it quickly. I don't want to send anybody there, and then have them unwittingly get bogged down in the extensive rubbish.]

Yes, we know that the Holy Spirit coming to indwell Jesus had the physical appearance of a dove descending. (Mt3:16) And when He came to indwell the first Church, like "tongues of fire". (Acts2)

I didn't know this before, but the symbol they use of the upside down dove has occult/satanist origins. Ditto for the dove that is caricatured in the 'flames'. Considering the fact that current charismania, after Paul wrote to Corinth, officially, is historically a more 'recent' phenomenon compared to these other satanist things, it seems pretty obvious 'who' was using the symbol first.

And yet we see it all over the place in "Christian" churches and bookstores. This I discovered -after- writing the 'above' Q/A in this mailing. But even in this, we see how "pretty much all the churches" have become charismatic to one degree or another. You can hardly go -anywhere- anymore without seeing it! It's about as proliferous as the cross. It even appears in churches that consider themselves to be "non-charismatic". It represents the continual charismatic rotion of being "spirit-filled"...which we have written enough about on other occasions, that they are 'demon' spirits. Perhaps some who insist on being blind will finally start making the 'connection'... Don't ignore how Paul begins the whole discusson of charismania in 1Cor12-14 with 12:2, their origins and backgrounds in "idolatry". The 'dove' icon certainly does.

"You shall not make to yourselves any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heavens above..." (Ex20:4) "...that you not deal corruptly, and make for yourselves...a likeness of any figure...the form of any winged bird that flies in the heavens..." (Deu4:16-17)

" How to Get Rid of Idols " ©2003

"And he (Hezekiah) did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah...he removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, chopped down the groves and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made...he trusted in Jehovah the God of Israel...for he clung to Jehovah; he did not turn aside from following after Him, but kept His commandments, which Jehovah had commanded Moses. Jehovah was with him; he prospered wherever he went." (~2Ki18:3-7)

Recently in the "Who is God?" series, God's comparison of Himself to idols sparked some Q/As and proclamation/exhortation to "get rid" of idols. We have just come out of a season of the year wherein our western cultures are immersed in idolatry; and we have observed periodically over the years that even so-called "christianity" has its idols. Some cling to their idolous images of the effeminate hippy, crosses, fish symbols. Others, like one subscriber of western origins, living in the Far-East, -surrounded- by idolatry, responded quizzically as to, 'why' so-called "christians" don't understand/recognize their idolatry for what it is? She could not understand the comments that some use their idol/trinkets, thinking them to be objects as "witnessing" tools. Where she lives she sees, as I did as a child growing up in Japan back in the 50s, idols all over the place. In Japan one could not go anywhere without seeing little built-in hutches with rice cakes, strips of paper with names of relatives being worshipped. Even hiking up in the mountains, away from 'civilization' they were there, stone images along the path. Most Japanese yard 'decoration' includes stone statues, I suppose their version of the "sacred pillars". They would not build a new building but what, first, once the frame had been erected, before the building was roofed and finished off, they would place objects of religious dedication on the top... rice cakes, paper strips with prayers, bow-and-arrow to chase away the demons, etc.

So, as I was then in high school in Mandan, ND (catholic/lutheran country), all the catholics had their statues on the dash-boards of their cars. I spent time in Montreal in professional music and had my first exposure to the inside of a cathedral where the outer walls were build out as nooks, where statues proliferated. Having seen it in Japan, I recognized it as "idolatry". Spent half a year living in Salinas, CA where the whole region proliferated with these little outdoor shrines... what looked like iron bathtubs propped up, with statues of the Queen of Heaven inside.

And then, as one adds up all this pagan evidence in one's memory, and walks into the so-called "christian" churches, there are the symbols of the cross, dove, fish and statues/pictures of the effeminate hippy anti-christ!

Now, we can condemn such idolatry in the pagan world. But most people who call themselves "Christian" mentally DRAG THEIR FEET at the notion of GETTING RID OF the so-called "christian" idols. And I suspect they

drag their feet because, while the evidence can be presented to them, they don't really, in their heart of hearts, see anything wrong with them! They see them as being "good". They see them as being a 'loving' way to witness, and of symbols of 'mutuality' with others.

OK, now, I'm not going to brow-beat you-all over the 'need' to get rid of your idols. You are going to do whatever is in your heart, and you are answerable before God. But for you who understand what we've been observing, and your hearts seek to be "perfect before Jehovah your God" (De18:13), the next question is, "How?" How do we go about getting rid of our idols?

Now, if you see nothing wrong with your idols, and are in ecumenical unity with everybody in your area, you might as well stop reading here, because I can guarantee that you are not going to like what we are about to observe next.

We started out observing Hezekiah. He was praised for being a one-of-a-kind king. In his zeal he also got rid of the bronze serpent that Moses had made in the wilderness. It had been made for a specific one-time purpose in the wilderness, but then, the people treated it as an object of worship, burning incense to 'it'. (2Ki18:4) That bronze serpent was Israel's "cross". What Hezekiah did would be the same as if today he were to storm into all the churches and rip the big crosses off the front walls behind the pulpits, throwing a cable around church steeples and pulling them over with a tractor, going to the cemeteries and taking a sledge hammer to the crosses that adorn the tops of monuments. You wearing a cross on your necklace or as earrings? Grabbing them and ripping them off.

Remember, when Jesus died on the cross, that was a ONE-TIME EVENT. He died "once for all" (Rom6:10, Heb7:27, 9:26, etc), and proclaimed, "It has been finished!" (Jn19:30) While we, along with Paul, "boast..in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.." (Ga6:14), nowhere in Scripture are we exhorted to make "little crosses". Jesus instituted a physical manner of "remembering" His death; the LORD'S SUPPER. (Lk22:19, 1Cor11:24-25) Jesus never repealed God's Law: that we are not to make "any likeness" (Ex20:4) Yes, in the O.T. they had the ark of the covenant, altar, etc., but they were specifically commanded to not be offering sacrifices in every place of their own choosing. (De12) They were not to duplicate the worship items for their own personal use. (Ex30:37) They did not make little "arks" for people to wear as jewelry, or to decorate their homes with.

(Are you still reading? I told you, you wouldn't like it!)

Oh yes... something else you're not going to like: Remember how in the "Who is God?" series we have observed how God orders world kingdoms and even uses pagan governments to effect His will? even where His own people are concerned? Well, for as much as many bewail current governmental sanctions against public displays of "christianity", I see one

BIG BLESSING in it all. Yes, indeed! In that they are getting rid of the various so-called "symbols" of Christianity from public view, they are doing God a favor by prohibiting those particular idols. And when the government starts coming after the various organizations, they will be eliminating those aspects of idolatry, too. Just a thought to ponder...

OK, now let's look at some specific examples. Before Hezekiah, there were corrupt kings. Israel's corruption began with Solomon, who built idols and places of worship for all his pagan wives. And that was his downfall before God, and caused God to rip most of the kingdom away from his son. (1Ki11:4-11) Solomon not only constructed the pagan-like sacred pillars as part of the temple (1Ki7:21), he built a high place for Chemosh on the hill just outside Jerusalem, facing the temple. (1Ki11:7)

Now, skipping a few generations, along comes Joash. Before him has been rampant idolatry; and as he is being crowned king, the queen mother Athaliah, a 'daughter' from the idolatrous house of Ahab and Jezebel of Israel, has been reigning for a short spell. Joash (the 7 year old boy) is crowned.

First thing that is done... Athaliah is taken out and killed. (2Ki11:15-16) And then, the people go about... they tear down the house of Baal (vs18), smash the altars, kill the priest of Baal.

Now Joash is called a good king. He is known for repairing the temple. But there is a "but" attached to his reign. "-BUT- the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places." (2Ki12:3)

His son Amaziah rules as a good king, but again he did not take away the high places (2Ki14:4) He was "not like his father David". (vs3) Even though called a 'good' king, there was this "but" in his life. He was serving Jehovah...'BUT'...there was this bit of idolatry lingering in his reign.

Just like today's so-called (conservative) "church" (we're not even speaking of the blatantly apostate groups right now)...this involves the ones who preach hell-fire and brimstone, "Repent and Believe" congregations! They pretty much stick to God's Word in their preaching and teaching, and some of these might even be "separated". They are following the Lord. They are striving to keep from sin and serve God. And yet, they still attach the pagan name "Christ-mass" to their winter observances, adorn their buildings with crosses, wear the various 'religious' jewelry, etc. They are following God, -BUT-....

OK...back on track here...

His son Azariah is a good king, "-EXCEPT- that the high places were not removed.." (15:4) So, in his case, God struck him with leprosy. (vs5)

Are we getting the picture here? Is there a reason certain things are not going well for you? Has God given you your own version of 'leprosy' because of your idolatry? (I told you, you wouldn't like it! We're leavin' off preachin' and goin' to meddlin' here!)

So then Ahaz comes along, and sacrifices his son to the fires of the pagan gods (2Ki16:3), and sacrificed on the high places that his fathers had not removed (vs4), and does the abominations of the pagans around him.

It is in 'this' context that Hezekiah comes along, and does what we saw in our opening Scripture. Hezekiah does not follow in his father's footsteps, but eradicates the pagan worship. Notice that he also takes away those "high places" and chops down the groves. What were the groves? There seems to be a difference of opinion, based on what reference work one looks at, or what translation one reads. Some speak of "asherah" as being a carved wooden image. While there may be some truth to that, I believe in this case the KJV is most collectively accurate (and is what the VW-edition uses) in calling it "grove", because it also involved planted (live/growing) trees/plants. Somewhat of an arboretum, as a 'natural' worship place. After all, if the religions are based on "mother earth", what better place to worship 'her', than with contrived 'natural' surroundings. Thus, Hezekiah was not only smashing idols and altars, but was chopping down certain forested areas...not just a simple matter (translated to today) of backing the truck up and loading the items and hauling them away to the dump, but getting an entire work crew with chain saws and axes, stump-grinders and chippers; maybe a little dynamite to blast the roots out, too.

Notice about Hezekiah's heart... and this is very important... indeed, it is - KEY- to this discussion. "For he -CLUNG- to Jehovah.." (vs6)

In stark contrast to Hezekiah, his son Manasseh becomes Judah's worst king! He does even more than Solomon did. He not only worships all the pagan gods, he brings all their worship, altars and symbols INTO THE TEMPLE of God. Read all about it in 2Ki21. He rebuilds everything Hezekiah destroyed. He re-establishes Baal worship. He practices witchcraft, and consults mediums. He brings astrology into the temple. Sacrifices his son in the pagan fires. It says of him, "..he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him.." (vs11)

His son Amon is just as wicked. And then comes Josiah. But before we look at Josiah, let's have a look at the northern kingdom of Israel, because what Josiah does, is tied to them, too...

When Jeroboam is given the 10 northern tribes which become called "Israel" (southern is "Judah"), he establishes idolatry. He sets up golden calves, one at Bethel (which means, "house of the Mighty God") and Dan. (2Ki10:29) It is not the current purpose to go in depth into this, but if you read these books, you will see that he was keeping Israel from making the

annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem; he was afraid if people worshipped Jehovah according to Moses' Law with their continual trips to Jerusalem, that he would lose his kingdom. And if you read the history, you will see that every single king of Israel followed in the steps of Jeroboam, with these calves.

Now, along the way, Israel gets a particularly evil king, Ahab. His wife was Jezebel. What Jezebel does in proliferating Baal worship is so great that her anti-type is part of the "church of Thyatira" (Rev2:18-20), with idolatry and sexual perversion. It is this period where we see Elijah and the prophets of Baal, the widow's flour and oil being sustained through the famine, etc.

A couple of kings after Ahab comes Jehu. (1Ki19) He is commissioned to eradicate the seed of Ahab. And he carries out his work with vengeance. He has the royal seed killed, has Jezebel thrown out a window where she is later eaten by dogs, and spectacularly kills all the prophets of Baal in a huge time of "Baal worship" in the temple of Baal, and exterminates them all out of Israel. (2Ki10) And Jehu becomes king. And for all his "zeal for Jehovah" (2Ki10:16) God says to him, "Because you have done well in doing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, your sons shall sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation." (2Ki10:30)

--BUT-- Notice... there is a word "HOWEVER"

Even though he "..destroyed Baal out of Israel.." notice: "-HOWEVER- Jehu did not turn away from after the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin, that is, from the golden calves that were in Bethel and Dan." (vs29) And notice what his -heart- consisted of: "But Jehu took no heed to walk in the Law of Jehovah the God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin." (vs31) And God's judgment ensued... "In those days Jehovah began to cut off Israel..." (vs32)

And this was the case with -all- the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom. Any king that smacked of any slight amount of 'goodness', still followed in Jeroboam's ways, sacrificing to the golden calves. The same sin Israel committed at Aaron's direction, even while Moses was in the mountain with God, receiving the Law. (Ex32)

So now, We've seen Jehu's zeal and subsequent disobedience in Israel. We've seen Hezekiah in Judah, followed by his sons who corrupt Judah worse than the pagans around them.

And now comes Josiah...

Judah has had 57 years of pagan worship. The temple of Jehovah has been neglected while pagan worship has been going on. God's Law has

been abandoned. And 18 years into his reign (he is now a man of 26) he gathers the priests and scribes and commands that the temple be repaired, to fix its dilapidation with time. And as they are working they find a copy of the "Book of the Law". (2Ki22:8)

Thus far Josiah has apparently been following God from the conscience of his heart. But now, God's Word is read to him. He hears God's holiness, and sees what his fathers have bequeathed to his reign; and when he learned just how far they had fallen away from God, and hears of God's promised "curse" for disobedience, he "...tore his clothes". (2Ki22:11) In that culture, tearing ones clothing was a physical manifestation indicating the ultimate in grief of one's heart. If some one was extremely sad due to dire circumstances such as death of a loved one, etc. they tore their clothes. And when a person was in extreme remorse-of-heart, they would show this by tearing their clothes.

So, what does Josiah do when he hears of God's impending judgment? Does he hold candlelight vigils and embark on self-esteem seminars? No! He gathers all the people, priests and prophets, and READS TO THEM. He does not make 'signs-of-the-cross' before them, and teach them the symbolisms of trinkets and idols... but READS the WORDS of the "Book of the Covenant"; God's Word; The Scriptures. (2Ki23:2) He covenants with God before the people.

And then... he goes into action..!! He becomes like a Tasmanian devil...

He has the priests bring out of the temple all the objects of worship to Baal and the host of the heavens and burns them. (vs4) He kills the priests of the high places, Baal and zodiac worship. (vs5) He burns, pulverizes the groves, and throws the ashes on people's graves. (vs6) He tears down the houses of the temple prostitutes. (vs7) He defiled the place where they offered babies on the sacrificial fires. (vs10) He destroyed the horses and chariots dedicated to the sun. (vs11) (Sorta like destroying santa and his reindeer!) Some other altars that were in the temple he pulverizes and it says, "...and -RAN- and HURLED THEIR DUST into the Brook Kidron." (vs12) He defiles the high places that Solomon had built. (vs13) (Apparently Hezekiah must not have destroyed those?)

He doesn't just stop at Judah. By this time Israel has been taken captive, but Jeroboam's high places are still sitting up there. He goes to Bethel and tears things down, burns and pulverizes them. Then, he not only does like we suggest above, with the sledge hammer to the monument crosses, but he digs up human bones and burns them on Jeroboam's pagan altars. (vs14-16) And he further rampages through Samaria (Israel's capitol city) and further destroys the things "which the kings of Israel had made to provoke to anger.." (vs19) Slaughters pagan priests. (vs20)

Now, Josiah doesn't stop with merely the 'public' idolatry. He even goes into people's "personal-private lives", and eradicates "the household

images and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem.." (vs24) Why? "...that he might perform the Words of the Law which were written in the Book that Hilkiah the priest had found in the house of Jehovah."

What did the "Words of the Law" say about all this?

"These are the statutes and judgments which you shall take heed to do in the land which Jehovah God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth: You shall destroy to blot out all the places where the nations which you are dispossessing have served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall tear down their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their groves with fire; you shall chop down the graven images of their gods and destroy their names out of that place." (Deu12:1-3)

And how are Josiah's actions judged by God? "And before him there was no king like him, who turned to Jehovah with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him has any arisen like him." (vs25)

Well, some might argue... That was 'Old Testament'. But 'we' are the 'church!' Things are 'different'. We are under a "new covenant"! Well, any of you who feel that way, please tell me... show me from Scripture... where the New Covenant suddenly began to allow and condone idolatry? If you can show me, I will retract these words.

However, in the mean time while you're looking, let me show you some more. Please turn in your Bibles to Acts19:18-19, and if you read the context, in Ephesus, where the pagans were into witchcraft and the occult, when the 'gentiles' converted and came to Christ, those who had just been saved brought all their books of magical arts and burned them in a public display of a huge bonfire. These books were of high monetary value... "fifty thousand pieces of silver".

So, what about those today who claim to "name the name of Christ"? Paul says to let them "depart from iniquity". (2Tim2:19)

Do we go around with cables and jack-hammers, tearing down the buildings of paganism? Do we go desecrating cemeteries? Let us remember that Solomon, Jeroboam, Ahab, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah were 'kings' over God's 'elect'...Israel/Judah. Israel was a theocracy. By national heritage and constitution, they were a 'religious' nation. Whereas, when Paul and companions were persecuted in the Gentile world, it was said of them that they were, "neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess". (Ac19:37)

Hezekiah and Josiah were not going after foreigners and strangers, but were doing housecleaning in their -own- houses and back yards. God does not call Believers to shoot abortion doctors or tear down structures of the world. But he exhorts us to "come out from among them and be separate". (2Cor6:17) That's the part everybody remembers, but forget the last part of the verse, "Do not touch what is unclean.." We might worship the Lord, and follow His Word...but if we cling to these "likenesses", they are "unclean". We are not to touch them!

Seeing what we have seen here, "how" do we eradicate idolatry from our lives? It starts by making a "pile". What goes into that pile? Whatever is an idol. All those pictures and trinkets of the effeminate hippy anti-christ. Those trinkets of the cross and fish. Those rock albums (indeed, listening to rock is worship of demons!). That's a start.

What about that place-of-worship where you gather? That huge cross up on the wall behind the pulpit! The steeple? Many steeples not only have crosses atop them, many of them also are constructed like the ancient sacred pillars. That is idolatry. Look at catholicism's cathedrals and islam and hindu's mosques and buildings of worship, with their spires and minarets. That is paganism...and a place dedicated to Christ should not have something that looks the same.

But this sort of thing does not come about casually. Jehu was driving around in his chariot like a mad man. (2Ki9:20) Josiah was rushing around ("running") as he destroyed paganism's objects. In a "hurry" to get it done. Once a Believer comes to understand that some of the objects of their devotion are, in actuality, 'idols'...if their heart clings to God, they will be in utter horror over their error, and will not be able to get rid of them fast enough!

But therein is the rub. Where is the -heart-? If the heart is right, the "how-to" will come easily. But such a heart will never come unless the person knows God's Word. Notice again, that it was when God's Word was found, and read, that Josiah received sudden understanding, repented, and turned his repentance into deeds. What precipitated Josiah's 'rampage'? God's Word.

"But be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves... But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his deeds." (Jacob1:22,25)

Amen!

Cross (re: "How to Get Rid of Idols") © 2003

READER COMMENTS:

I hear what you are saying. However (love that word!), there is one consideration that is important to me. The cross reminds me of what Jesus did for me. I don't see it as a graven image leading to worshipping a false idol. I see a cross and immediately can feel the enormous sacrifice which was made for me. I also see the cross as a reminder of the Ten Commandments, the first three being vertical between my and my Lord and the other seven being horizontal between me and His other precious created beings.

When I see alternative rock stars wearing crosses and singing of devil worship, suicide, etc., I curdle. When I see a cross in a religious building, it reminds me of why I am there. I am sure this disappoints you because I so often agree with what you have to say. Help me with this, and please don't lose patience with me! I understand what's wrong with Halloween, Easter bunnies, Santas, etc. I know the birth of Jesus was not in December. I understand all that, but I don't understand why a cross can keep me on track and yet be wrong!

VW ANSWER:

First of all, before I address specific points in this person's e-mail, let me remind you-all, for the sake of newer subscribers, that whatever I preach, I practice. Whatever I proclaim from Scripture to "come out from among them" or to "put away ???", I've done it. I used to be there, and came out. I used to observe, and have quit. I used to do, and have stopped. I used to try to put "Christ -back- into X-mass". I used to use the symbol of the cross: back years ago when I was doing church concerts, the literature I would send out had a cross as part of its artwork and letterhead. At X-mass time, I would decorate the front of the house with lights in the shape of a cross. In fact, when I was tired of regular bulbs burning out, I came up with a clever (cool-looking) scheme using LEDs, with a red cross in the middle of a star-of-David. And this was my way, in my mind, of "witnessing" to the neighborhood. So please believe me when I say that I -understand- the emotional/mental anguish a person goes through when they come to realize something is wrong, and steps must be taken to correct the error; even though that error had -seemed- sooo 'right' for so many years. I also know what it is to not realize that something is even wrong. Back when I was using the cross, and returned people's greetings with "-Blessed- Christmas", if somebody like who I am now, had come along and proclaimed what I do, I likely would have look askance at them, with crossed-eyes, and shaken my head in 'pity' at them for being such a 'weirdo'. Well...now -I'm- the weirdo, yes indeedies! ...and I make no apologies for it... because it's Scriptural. Since my life became Ezra-10'ed (coming up on) 12 years ago, and the filth got cleaned out of my life, I've been seeing things in Scripture a lot more clearly.

This commentary resulted in only 2 responses (the other was an "Amen" note)...which is usually the case with the 'stronger' writings/mailings like this one was. But I suspect this person's comments echo the thoughts of many of you. I suspect I might have even written one like it in years past. Since I hear from this person on a regular basis, I think I have come to understand that they do love the Lord.

But this, now, addresses 'application'. It's one thing to read the Ten Commandments. It is quite another to -fully- obey them. It is one thing to "call upon the name of the Lord" (Ac2:21), but it's quite another to have a "perfect heart" (2Ki20:3) before God.

If I may...let's take a few phrases from the comments, and address them:

COMMENT:

"there is one consideration that is important to me"

VW:

But, what is important to God? What did -God- say? That's what is important.

COMMENT:

"The cross reminds me of what Jesus did for me"

VW:

But, this is not what Jesus commanded. Jesus instituted the bread and the cup, and says, "do this in -remembrance- of Me" (Lk22:19) And Paul says, "For as often as you may eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." (1Cor11:26) Yes, Jesus died on the cross; but His command regarding its "remembrance" is the Lord's Supper, not the pagan cross.

Remember, the cross was not a Jewish symbol, nor from any of God's commands of the "patterns" to be observed carefully as they had "been shown" (Ex25:40) because it WAS NOT -SHOWN-, but is from Rome. It was a "Roman" cross upon which Jesus died, and Rome to-this-day continues to crucify Him, saying that His wounds "continually bleed"! But Jesus died "once for all". Rome, satan's emissary, wishes to keep Christ crucified. They reject His resurrection to Eternal Life, just like the early Jews did. (Ac4:2)

Saul excused his disobedience by saying it was for "sacrifice to God" (1Sa15:21), but Samuel retorts back to him, "Has Jehovah as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in to obey the voice of Jehovah? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams." (vs22)

COMMENT:

"I also see the cross as a reminder of the Ten Commandments, the first three being vertical between my and my Lord and the other seven being horizontal between me and His other precious created beings."

VW:

Whooooaa Nelly!!! Sorry! NYETT!! IIEY!!! NOT!!! The 2nd Commandment says, "You shall not make for yourselves...any likeness..." (Ex20:4) for the purposes of worship. When you "remember" Christ's work on the cross, that is a form of worship. If the trinket in the shape of a cross is "reminding" you, you are allowing a "likeness" to help you worship. Israel's primary fault before God was idolatry...they bowed to idols. That's Commandment #3. Before one can bow to an idol, there has to be an idol to which to bow. That's why #2 comes before #3. If you don't have likenesses, you won't be worshipping them. And...the very fact that a person (any person) would become defensive about an 'object' like that, suggests that they are looking -at- the 'object'...the "likeness".

In contrast...and we already said this...but will repeat it: What did -GOD- give for "remembering" the Law? "And these -Words- which I am commanding you today shall be in your heart....and...You shall write them (the -Words-) on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (De6:6-9) The -WORDS-. The Word of God.

The very fact that rock stars wear the symbol, in and of itself, should be reason enough for a Christian -NOT- to! Satanists use the cross in their rituals. Catholicism continually makes the "sign of the cross". And as I understand it (although don't have the data at my fingertips at the moment) the cross actually originated in Egypt's paganism. If you want to have the cross, others might just as well consider you to be in affinity with the rock stars or catholicism...!! Seriously!!

The cross is -WORTHLESS- as a "witnessing" tool. All the years I would put out the 'cross' lights at X-mass time, I don't remember a single notice or comment about it, or its significance. However (in the January article I mentioned buying some 'calendars'...this year I got one for next to the customer counter area at the store with Scripture verses under the pictures) Friday (barely the 2nd day back for the new year) already, one of my customers noticed the Scripture, and commented on it. In light of these recent mailings, I took special note of the incident!

COMMENT:

"I don't understand why a cross can keep me on track and yet be wrong!"

VW:

Aaah, but! If you look to a trinket of a cross, are you -truly- "on track"?? If you are resting on "feelings"...well, charisma is based on 'feelings', too...and they are demonic. Since satan doesn't have the -genuine- Holy

Spirit, all he has to work with is feelings...so he conns people with their feelings. If it -feels- "right", it must be.

Again...that's why we have the Scriptures. Yes, we are creatures of feelings. When the Holy Spirit works in our lives, a by-product of His work, as our hearts are cleansed, getting them closer to "perfection", there certainly will be feelings of remorse for our sins, and feelings of gratitude for God's mercy. But if all we have is "feelings" (like that song..."feelings...nothing more that feelings..."), that is a slip-sliding-slope.

Again...that's why we have the Scriptures. Remember: the Holy Spirit wrote the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit indwells the Believer. And so... if our 'feelings' do not match up with Scripture's authentication, our feelings are 'wrong'. In other words, contrary to what the world teaches: If it feels right, it might not necessarily -be- right!

That's why we have the Scriptures! 2Tim3:14-17 Everything we need, to have a perfect heart before God is found there.

And regarding "what to do" regarding the cross? What did Hezekiah do with Moses' cross? He "broke it in pieces". (2Ki18:4) And what was the verdict upon his actions? Let's repeat the Word which we already have considered:

"He did what was right in the eyes of Jehovah...He trusted in Jehovah the God of Israel, so that after him was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he clung to Jehovah; he did not turn aside from following after Him, but kept His commandments, which Jehovah had commanded Moses. Jehovah was with him; he prospered wherever he went." (2Ki18:3,5-7)

Forget "feelings"... What does God's -WORD- say?

Addendum

Online at the VW website please also check out:

"the Cross is Pagan?" www.a-voice.org/ga/crosspgn.htm

I contains links to information regarding the pagan roots of the cross.

Fish? Dove? ©2003

READER QUESTION:

I see many cars today with the christian fish symbol on them, what are your views on this?

VW ANSWER:

Dagon, the god of the Philistines, whose head God knocked off to the ground when they had stolen the ark from Israel (1Sam5:4), was a -fish- ...atop a human torso.

"You shall not make for yourself...any likeness of anything in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth.." (Ex20:4)
I'd say "in the waters" pretty much covers "fish", don't you think.

And while we're at it, if "in the waters" covers -fish-, would you also not say that "in the heavens above" also covers the -dove-.

God would prefer to be called "Lord" ??

QUESTION:

I really enjoy studying your lessons from Bible. I understand you clearly, but I notice that you always call God Jehovah, not Lord while you give them. I know that His real name is Jehovah but I believe that He would prefer to be called Lord. Will you give me an explanation why you haven't called God Lord? With Holy Spirit 's help, I understand the KJV pretty well and love it dearly. Thanks!

ANSWER:

Before I go into a brief explanation of God's names, let me ask a rhetorical question. If God has, as you say, a "real name"; why would He -PREFER- to be called something else? He commanded, "You shall have no other gods before Me...you shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain." (Ex20:3,7) If your name is "Judi", would you prefer to be called "Ma'am"?

OK, now that I've possibly riled up your dander, let's look at this issue:

Many English translations (including KJV) don't use "Jehovah". Instead, they use two forms of "Lord". In one instance they spell it upper-lower as "Lord". And in another as all-caps, "LORD".

An instance of "Lord" is found in Gen15:2 where Abraham says, "Lord GOD". In the Hebrew the words are "Adonay" .. "Yehovih". (Notice that "GOD" is all-caps) "Adonay" is not a -name-, but rather a -position- of elevation and respect. Like addressing a man respectfully with "Sir", "Your eminence", etc. A king might be called "King David"; or if the name is not used, perhaps, "Your lordship". That is "Lord"... upper-lower.

In this same verse "GOD" is derived from the same root as in Gen5:29 "...which the LORD has cursed.." "GOD" (Gen15:2) and "LORD" (Gen5:29) coming from the same basic root. This time it is "Yehovah". This is where the Jews and most other non-Roman languages derive "Yahweh".

It is quite possible that English useage of "LORD" came into being for some of the same reasons the Jews often used "Adonai" instead of "Yahweh". In fact, because God's name is so holy, they were afraid to invoke their equivalent of vowels even when they wrote it, so it would come out looking like "Yhwh". And rather than being rash with their lips, and thus take His name "in vain", they would substitute "Adonai" in their speech.

But "Yahweh" (Jehovah) means, literally, "the existing One". This is how He introduces Himself to Moses/Israel, "I AM THAT I AM". (Ex3:14) This is what distinguishes the Most High from other gods. He exists. They don't. (Is43:10,44:8,46:9, 1Cor8:4)

Perhaps this is where Israel's fall began? Because they would not fully recognize His Deity? Instead, calling Him "Lord"..? He pleaded, "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." (Is45:22)

Due to our salvation in Christ, the veil of separation has been torn (Mk15:38, Heb10:19-23) thus, we can "come boldly to the throne of grace..." (Heb4:16)

People who have recently received their new (c)1999 MKJVs will find this as a major change in the O.T. from previous editions. One of the focuses of its update, globally, was the changing of all instances of "LORD" to "Jehovah". The LITV pretty much already does that. Having been reading/using MKJV and now the LITV for a couple of years, I find it refreshing to be thinking more in terms of Jehovah's -name-, rather than merely His -title-. Jehovah has many names found in the Scriptures by which His attributes are defined; but the most reverent one illustrates His essence as "The Existing One". After all, this is the beginning essence of Faith, which fallen man denies... "...for he who comes to God must believe that HE IS.. [exists]..." (Heb11:6)

Tetragrammaton - God's name ©2000

READER COMMENTS:

if one desires to really get God's name correct, one must use the tetragrammaton, which is the hebrew form of God

yud
hey
vav
hey

which is truly unpronounceable and to the Jew, so sacred, that they don't even say it. They use the word - Adonai to express the name of God. there is no J in hebrew, thus Jehovah would never ever be correct. yhvh in hebrew hvhy is the correct way, according to Hebrew, the language in which God gave His oracles initially.

ANSWER:

God never instructed them to not "even say it". He said, don't take it "in vain". [Same legalism as Eve: God didn't say to "not touch" the fruit.] They substituted a -title- in place of His -name-. [Adonai means == lord, your lordship, eminence, etc] As we will see next week, when He gave the Law, He enclosed and summarized successive commands with "I am Jehovah".

Trouble is, Israel was a "house of rebellion". (Ezek2:8) Just as soon as Moses was up in the mountain, they started to worship idols. Even after successful military campaigns to possess the land of promise, Joshua - still- had to exhort them to "...now put away the strange gods among you, and incline your heart to Jehovah God of Israel." (Josh24:23)

Even though He knew their rebellious heart, God said, "For I am Jehovah their God." And as He promises to remember them in the land of their captivities, it is "so that I might be their God. I am Jehovah." (Lev26:44-45) Notice in these kinds of instances, He doesn't say, "I am Adonai." He proclaims His -NAME-.

Moses' relationship with God was such that it is said that God knew him "by name". (Ex33:12) Moses called out to God in the cloud and God answered him. (Ex19:19) But with Israel as a whole, God was "not pleased" with "most of them". (1Cor10:5) They were not like David, a person after God's "own heart". (1Sam13:14) A true "Jew" [Believer] is one who is so "OF THE HEART". (Rom2:29) It was David who said, "Jehovah [not Adonai] is my Shepherd". (Ps23:1)

Jehovah is not some scholar's grammatical label... a four-letter-word!

[Yes, in Hebrew it is four letters, but we are not communicating in Hebrew... At Babel God made -many- languages. Currently 'English' is the

world's universal language, used officially at all international airports by pilots and control towers, etc. For the N.T. God used the world's prevailing language of that day, Greek. When Israel was in captivity, He used the prevailing language, Aramaic, in the O.T. There is nothing intrinsically 'sacred' about Hebrew, as a 'language'. Just as KJ-eze is not intrinsically a sacred 'Biblical language'. Are you beginning to see a connection here? The legalistic Judaizers include "tetragrammaton" and "the Hebrew" as their focus. English-speaking legalists REST UPON their 'KJ-only'. Jesus had plenty to say about this... "because this people draws near with its mouth, and they honor Me with its lip; but its heart is far from Me, and their fear of Me is taught by the commandments of men" -Is29:13/Mk7:7 That 'Hebrew' is not sacred... "For with stammering lip and -another- tongue (language), He will speak to this people" (Is28:11) While God gave His Name originally in Hebrew, He does not limit the knowledge of Himself to only the Jew, and the Jew's language-Hebrew. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." (Hab2:14)]

He is the Eternally Existing One. "I AM THAT I AM". (Ex3:14) A person who cannot "receive Him" (Jn1:12) in His full 'existence' (Heb11:6), can never have the faith necessary to "please God". Just as Israel did then, they do today, along with their "Hebrew roots" friends. They are busy being "experts" in the things of "Judaism" (something S/Paul was saved OUT OF -Gal1:13-15), as they dash out "G-d's name. They are not "in Christ" (2Cor5:17); thus, having bold "access" to the Father through "the Spirit" because of Christ (Eph2:18), to come "with confidence to the throne of grace". (Heb4:16) They are not saved!

The only reason to not use someone's name is when there is a separation due to some conflict. Before Isaiah was cleansed, he wails out "Woe is me!" (Is6:5) What is it that separates between man and God? Sin. (Is59:2) If a person is so 'afraid of' God, as Israel was at Sinai, that they cannot be in His presence, he is not saved. If a person is afraid of God, it is because he knows he is due punishment. He has not been perfected in God's love. (1Jn4:18) That love which sent His "onlybegotten Son" (Jn3:16) to die and pay the penalty for us.

"..neither is there any other NAME.." than "Jesus" by which to be saved. (Acts4:12) It is at the "NAME of Jesus" that every knee shall bow. (Phil2:10) When Jesus comes to wrench away the kingdoms of this world from satan, He will come with the NAME "King of kings and Lord of lords". (Rev19:16)

Salvation comes about when a person "calls upon the -NAME- of Jehovah" and all that is associated with it. Not merely His -title-. If you are calling, only, upon "Adonai", you are not saved! Whether your native language renders His name as "YHVH", "Yahweh", "kami/atte arumono", or "Jehovah", you must call upon His -NAME-.

"For it shall be, all who shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved."
(Joel2:32a)

Jesus healing on the Sabbath

QUESTION:

I have a question regarding when Jesus told the lame man " Rise...take up thy bed and walk.....(on the Sabbath). Why did he tell the man to take up his bed? Was he trying to give the man something to do that would demonstrate his faith, or was it to prove a point to the Pharisees (regarding work on the Sabbath?)

ANSWER:

Probably -both-. "All of the above". He demonstrated His authority to "forgive sins" by healing the one let down through the roof. (Mt9:6) He would say that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. (Mt12:8) One of the primary complaints against Him was that He didn't keep the Sabbath. (Jn9:16) And yet He would point out their hypocrisy to them...that if one of them had a donkey/ox fall into a ditch, they would pull it out on the Sabbath. (Lk14:5)

And, in actuality, had they -truly- been keeping the sabbath, they wouldn't have even been 'out and about' to even see Him healing. In the original sabbath keeping, the people stayed in their dwellings. (Ex16:29)

But their hypocrisy had established a system of "sabbath day's journey". (Acts1:12) (Among other things) They had arbitrarily set up a certain "distance" that was permitted to travel on a sabbath. Of course, I don't recall seeing anything like that being issued from Sinai. As Jesus said, "For forsaking the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men: dippings of utensils and cups, and many other such like things you do. And He said to them, Do you do well to set aside the commandment of God so that you may keep your tradition? (Mk7:8-9)

They had quite a complex system set up, with boundaries, within which they could come and go freely on the sabbath. If they wanted to go visit somebody some distance away, the boundary of the one area could not exceed the "sabbath distance" to the -boundary- of the next area. And if several areas were all within sabbath distances of each other, they could pig-tail these areas, traveling from one area to the next, and to the next...each, being within that sabbath distance of each other...and they could actually end up travelling great distances on the sabbath, also travelling -across/through- these boundary areas, never exceeding that "sabbath distance" from one -area- to the next. The thing I find rather bizarre about this scheme is that they were -SO- bent on circumventing God's Law, that they made contrivances to get -around- the law. But this "sabbath distance" was not even -God's- Law. It was their own. Thus, they were busy contriving how to "get around" laws that God hadn't even decreed!

Remember, God had said "don't -EAT-". Eve said, "we can't eat -OR- -TOUCH-"... adding to God's Law. (Gen2:17, 3:3)

So, yes...I expect that a lot of what Jesus did was an "in your face" approach against their hypocrisy. But, I expect your other thought about the ill person's "faith" is also valid. It doesn't say so specifically about the "bed-carrying" incidents, that I recall...but in some cases Jesus would ask, "Do you believe that I am able to do this? according to your faith be it unto you." (Mt9:28-29) And, indeed...what better way to 'demonstrate' faith (Jas2:18) than for a -lame- person to get up and carry his bed roll.

But even that was to God's glory. They complained about Jesus' lack of sabbath observance. But... 'Who' gave the Law in the first place, anyway? If God gave it from Sinai, surrounded by miraculous power; couldn't Jesus the Son make some "adjustments" to it, authenticating His authority to do so, with miraculous signs? What better way than for a formerly lame person, now standing upright and 'tall', carrying something! Just like He authenticated His authority to forgive sins, He could have said, 'You don't like Me -WORKING- on the Sabbath? How many lame people have you had authority to heal lately??' "My Father works until now, and I work." (Jn5:17) These things authenticated Jesus' "Deity". (Jn5:17-32)

Wedding rings pagan?

QUESTION:

Do you know the history of exchanging rings as a vow of togetherness during marriage of a man and a woman. Has it a paganistic or biblical backing else how did it come about. Please enlighten me if you can.

ANSWER:

Well, I just did some looking through some encyclopedias here. Jewelry, generically, seems to vary from culture to culture. In some cultures it was merely decorative. In others, only those of higher social status could wear jewelry, and jewelry was an outward manifestation of that status; the more extensive the jewelry, the higher the status. In some cases, jewelry is made specifically as spiritual amulets. But I don't get the idea from the various skimmed reading that jewelry is -intrinsicly- "pagan".

In terms of the "social status" element, one can perhaps better understand Peter's exhortation, "...through the behavior of the wives, without a word they will be won, observing your pure behavior in fear. Of whom let it not be the outward act of braiding of hairs, and of putting gold around, or of clothing of adorning garments.." (1Pt3:1-3)

When one observes all the hoopla surrounding something like the "Oscars", one prime element that receives almost more attention than the event itself, is the adornment of the women who appear at the function. - Whose- 'design' they will be wearing (or be unclothed with)? And the "millions of dollars" worth of jewelry they will be bedecked in. To be 'seen', and to make a world-wide sensation. While there might not be anything wrong with any of the jewelry (as 'jewelry'), it is the whole -spirit- behind the function, glamor and attentions. Many women would come to Christ from these kind of backgrounds, and Peter is saying that the whole 'scene' is not a Christian one. Christians are to be "pure" and "humble"; which, the Hollywood sensational provocative sensuality is neither. Peter is not teaching that women shouldn't wear jewelry; after all, God uses jewelry as part of the picture He 'paints' of how He redeems Israel (Eze16:12); ...but to discern "how" they wear it. What are they wanting others to see? Their "glamor", or their "quiet [Godly] spirit"?

However, as far as 'rings' are concerned, I seem to come to the conclusion that its background might be more contractual/legal/economic in its origins. Now, this is rings in general. A ruler, rather than signing his name, would use his signet ring. Business people would sign contracts with their signet rings. A practice similar to this was in existence in Japan as recently as the 50's and 60's. (I don't know if it still is today) People would have their personalized specially engraved "han" (stamp). The glass/plastic stamp would be pressed in a special red ink, and the stamp would be impressed on the document...rather than a signature, like we do. If you see Japanese

art, that little red round/oval/square-shaped insignia is the artist's stamp/signature.

If we consider that up until more recent centuries, marriages were usually arranged. Marriage unions were often political and/or economic arrangements. Wives were "purchased" and became the man's "property". And all the subtle variations existed from culture to culture. But, considering that rings seem to originally have a legal function, and that marriages were an economic exchange. For instance, part of the vows in the Church of England include the words "...and with all my worldly goods I thee endow" ...could it be that the wedding rings came about from those traditions?

On the other hand, I get a distinct impression that the marriage ceremony, as conducted in "church" has pagan origins. In most cultures the couple go and say their "vows" to their 'gods'. I no longer have the document that was e-mailed to me several years ago...but I recall reading of some ancient middle eastern fertility rites/festivals where a couple was 'blessed' by the priest. This couple having been prepared previously with special ointments, oils and drugs, then had intercourse in a special place in the temple as part of this worship rite. And then were killed and offered as human sacrifices, as burnt offerings...to their gods. This priestly blessing would have been done as the couple came up to the priest, up the stairs to the altar/temple...much as couples do in typical 'church' weddings...up the steps to the platform/altar.

Please understand that these comments are not hard-and-fast. These are my 'impressions' gleaned from what I've read. The sources I have read also seem to be somewhat hazy in these things, speaking of archaeology, traditions, and such things; not with any kind of acknowledgment of The Most High as any kind of foundation to their presentations. All of these kinds of sources are very in-exact as to absolute certainty, I should think.

The matter of wearing wedding rings seems, today, to be mostly cultural. Some couples exchange rings, others don't. Wearing a wedding ring certainly lets any potentially 'interested' party know that the wearer is "taken"...often alleviating any unwanted advances.

Church weddings?

Quote from article:

"..Churches are -places- to be married and buried.."

COMMENTS:

While reading your April 1st article, the above statement stood out to me. It has suddenly occurred to me that people really shouldn't be married or buried in the church. If I remember correctly, there is nowhere in the Bible where anyone had a wedding or a funeral in church. I never questioned this practice in the past, but now I see that the church is (ideally) a group of people coming together to worship the LORD. I think that people have weddings and funerals at church because it makes them somehow feel like they have had a more meaningful experience, which to me suggests that they are seeking out "experiences" or want to be made to feel good rather than actually following Biblical example.

Also, I am amazed at the number of people who are not aware of the fact that a marriage ceremony is found nowhere in the Bible. They just don't want to believe that nowhere in the Bible does it say, "Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today...". Therefore I believe that two people can be married simply by promising to be faithful to one another. Of course, then they need to legally do it, so that they are not violating any of the laws of man, but a judge or captain of a ship, etc. would do as good a job as a preacher. Nowhere in the Bible does it mention that performing marriage ceremonies, funerals, etc. is the duty of a preacher. None of the Apostles did any of those things, did they? Wasn't their duty to preach the gospel?

ANSWER:

Well...you've just summarized the gist of part of the 7th Commandment (study) on "Adultery". You're exactly right.

One little 'adjustment' to your comments. You speak of them "..not violating any of the laws of man.." Actually, don't most cultures also have a "common law" provision? At least, many do. In most states in this country, if a couple have been together for seven years, their "marriage" is just as legal as if they went to the justice of the peace for that piece of paper.

And yes...when Paul exhorts Timothy he doesn't say, "Until I come, attend to reading, to exhortation, to teaching...[and performing weddings.]" (1Tm4:13) And yet, how many 'pastors' consider that to be one of their primary ministries...and they will sometimes pride themselves as to "how many" couples they have married...almost as much as how many souls they've won for the Lord, or weak Believers they've helped to grow in God's Word...!

Renewing wedding vows? © 2005

READER QUESTION:

What are your thoughts on Christians "renewing" their wedding vows? Is it scriptural?

VW ANSWER:

Have you read the stuff on marriage? And be sure to also check out the links at the bottom of the Ten Commandments ('adultery') section.

So then....once you've read those....if the 'wedding' -ceremony- is of pagan origins, why would 'renewing' such vows be any better?

Yes, Jesus went to the wedding in Cana (Jn2), but His purpose was not to change all the social customs, but to 'save' mankind (Lk19:10)...but where in Scripture is there any directive regarding "weddings"? Even what Jews do, stomping on the wine glass and stuff...where is that found in Scripture? When Isaac took Rebecca as wife, he took her into his (late) mother's tent, they were intimate, and they were married. (Gen24:67)

Do we, as Christians, require the saying of pledges, in order to be 'faithful'? Does not Jesus say to not be swearing, but instead, "But let your word be yes, yes; no, no" (Mt5:37) And the Lord's brother, Jacob, says, "But above all things, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your Yes, be Yes, and your No, No, so that you do not fall under condemnation." (Ja5:12) Is not the pledging of vows a form of swearing?

Should that not also apply to marriages? Typically, wedding vows are said in the company of "witnesses" at the command of somebody who is presumed to be in superiority over them, 'authorizing' to them that it is 'OK' for them to make these pledges, who then intones, "I pronounce you man and wife". Well, whose marriage is it? All those witnesses... or the man and his wife? And under whose authority are they said to be married? "He who made them...and the two shall become one flesh...what -GOD- has yoked together, let not man separate" (Mt19:4-6) Are not promises and fidelity between the two, before God? Certainly, to have some sort of ceremony gives a lot of people something to wax emotional over, dress up in tuxes and gowns, have tasty cake and raise the glass and give toasts about; but I don't see it anywhere in Scripture.

And to say that a church wedding "legitimizes" the marriage is to hark back to Rome/Babylon and their self-presumed 'magisterium' authority. Did Adam and Eve have Babylon's magisterium? The wedding ceremony originates from paganism, with its fertility rites. Do Christians partake in paganism?

The magisterium is not that which "made them" nor "yoked" them together

Le 18:3 "According to the doings of the land of Egypt, where you have dwelt, you shall not do; and according to the doings of the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you, you shall not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances."

If a Christian does ???, are they still saved?

READER QUESTIONS:

I have been enjoying your articles. It makes me wish I knew a little more about you. Somethings I am a little confused on in [sic] reading your articles. For instance, I looked up smoking & cigarettes, but from the articles, I couldn't really tell what your position was. So I'll ask you directly. Can a true Christian smoke & still be saved?

I also read your articles on divorce & remarriage. I understand your position [sic] to be that a divorced & remarried couple can still be saved & remain married. However, can a homosexual get saved & remain an active homosexual? Can an unmarried couple be saved & yet remain an unmarried couple? It seems to me that to repent is to turn away from your sin. Doesn't God recognize the original marriage as still a marriage?

VW ANSWER:

'Not saying that that is what this person is doing, but in reading this e-mail (I've included only a small part of it here) I was reminded of Jesus' ministry. John records that, "although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe into Him," (Jn12:37); and on other occasions the passage might record how Jesus would have been healing people right and left, and teaching many things, and then, in that context, the scribes and pharisees (the ones with all the book learning, assuming themselves to be quite intelligent) would pounce on Him, "If you are the Christ, TELL US PLAINLY" (Jn10:24)

In many things I -purposely- do not give direct answers. But like in last week's Q/A item (mailed to the subscribers, but not posted at the website) on playing games (checkers/chess), we try to address Biblical concepts and principles. There are many things about which the individual Believer must live with their own God-given conscience in "faith". (Rom14:23) I cannot give a blanket statement about a lot of things. Like the illustration given: dominos might be OK in one region, but not in another. If I were to give "inches" in terms of the hemline for a woman's skirt, well, there are parts of the world where it wouldn't matter how long her skirt was, if her face wasn't covered or she wasn't wearing a shawl, too. And in this matter, women's attire is often not as much 'what' the woman is wearing as much as 'how' she wears it... and with what 'spirit' emanating from within herself. Somebody with a skirt above the knee, whose heart is pure, could be perceived as being 'modest' where somebody wearing something floorlength, if her spirit that manifests out to others is one of sensuality and seduction, is not. Jesus said that it is what is in the 'heart' that either justifies or condemns a person, not what one "eats" or whether or not one washes his hands before a meal. (Mt15:17-20)

Also, let us review another thing: In the Revelation series, in connection with "Pergamos" the question is asked, "Is it possible for an individual to

be in a Catholic or Mormon church, and also be a Christian?" Catholicism is Babylon. Mormon is the name of a demon. But both of these organizations use, to greater or lesser degrees, the Scriptures. What is it that God uses to save the sinner? "Faith is of hearing, and hearing through the Word of God" (Rom10:17) And when God's Word goes out, it does not return empty, without performing the purposes for which it was sent. (Is55:11) They both speak of Jesus dying on the cross to save us from our sins. To the degree that an individual hears God's Word, and receives it into the heart, and "receives" Jesus; that individual is given "authority" to become a child of God. (Jn1:12) In many settings, where individuals are surrounded by falsehood, with no clear way of understanding a lot of fine points, as everybody reading these mailings is, Jesus exhorts, "Hold fast what you have till I come" (Rev2:25) God knows that many True Believers are "tormented from day to day" in the midst of the wickedness of the world in which we live. (2Pet2:8)

So, what about smoking? I'm not going to give a 'clear' answer. But I think the concepts/principles should answer the question. Is smoking harmful to the body? Of course it is. I don't know the statistics of 'how many' die annually of lung cancer and other related illnesses. If our bodies are the "temple" of God's Holy Spirit (1Co6:19), should we not keep them clean? Of course we should. Thus, is it not a no-brainer that a Christian should NOT smoke!

But the question is asked whether a person can be a Christian, and continue to smoke. Well, is it possible for a person to be a habitual overeater, and still be a Christian? How many people die of complications related to overeating? What about a person who works with toxic chemicals without proper protection and introduces harmful substances to the body, and eventually develops complications? What about a person being an athlete in a sport where the likelihood of injuries is high? Paul even speaks of boxing. (1Co9:26) What about it? Purposely bashing another person in the face and body with the intent to do them harm, for the purpose of "winning"? Personally, I couldn't do it. ...nor do I smoke.

But there are those who are, and do. Most people do not fix 'everything' in their lives all-at-once. Perhaps in their spiritual growth they are yet dealing with matters of honesty and marital fidelity? Perhaps they are dealing with issues of anger? And the list could go on. If 'honesty' and 'smoking' are placed side-by-side, which, do you suppose, is a more 'urgent' matter to be addressed in that person's life? Scripture speaks much of truthfulness and lying...but does not say a word about smoking.

HOWEVER:

Regarding marriage and homosexuality, the Scriptures give some very clear and -specific- words. And in those things I equally am specific.

Men with men is an "abomination" to God, and is due God's wrath. (Le18:22,20:13,Rom1:18,27) When a person comes to Christ, if they are

truly saved, they receive Jesus' cleansing of no condemnation, with the exhortation to "go and sin no more" (Rom8:1,Jn8:11) If a person "makes claims for Christ", but "continues in sin" (Rom6:1-2), by their fruits they are known to be false, and Jesus says, "I never knew you!" (Mt7:20-23)

And having had extensive conversations with one particular sodomite, and also seeing the scoffing militance with which that crowd maintains their objective, I have concluded that it is not a matter of them "not knowing any better", or that they "have no choice" and that they were "born that way"....all those lines are a bunch of crock! They -DO- know better. And like in the case of the one I've conversed with, his 'alcoholism' I believe is directly related to it. Within the depths of the conscience he is not happy - because- of his 'lifestyle', and so he drinks, to drown it out. Statistics show similar things regarding that whole culture, both with booze and drugs.

Regarding marriage, divorce is only condoned where "perversion" is involved (Mt5:32), or in the case of where the unbeliever leaves a Believer (1Co7:15)

However, again (related to the preceding item): the gauge of "marriage" is not the vows, ritual, certificate or license. It is the 'relationship' of the man and woman. In God's eyes marriage occurs when the man "goes in to her". (De21:13,22:13,25:5) Even where intimacy occurs outside society's ideas of what creates a marriage. If it is "out of wedlock" (based on the lack of a piece of paper), God considers them married. (De22:29) It is not "the church" that says whether or not the couple is married...God established it according to what they did in the bedroom. There is no such thing as an "unmarried couple" having sex; the fact that they are sharing the bed makes them "married" (if they are not committing adultery because of being married to others). They may not have the 'blessing' of the priest or justice of the peace, along with the signed papers; but in God's eyes the two become "one flesh" (Gen2:24,Mt19:5,1Co6:16,Eph5:31)

And supposing the couple, prior to being saved, had been busy jumping in and out of various beds (we've touched on this in the past, especially in connection with the "Life is in the Blood" series, especially the closing Q/A of that series), and then they get saved... do they attempt to find that very 'original' one they had been with? God commanded Israel NOT to do that: If a person is with one, and then moves to somebody else, they are not to return to the first. (Jer3:1,De24:1-4) And Paul furthers the exhortation that: Whatever situation you find yourself in 'now', STAY PUT. The music for musical chairs has stopped: so SIT DOWN, and STAY there.

"Let each one remain with God however he was called" (1Co7:17,20,24)

Many from the '1st Legalistic Fellowship of Phariseeism' don't think it is possible, and will often tell such a couple to separate due to their 'first' marriages and will refuse to legitimize a couple's current state; but God's cleansing at salvation covers even that past. Remember, Solomon came

through Bathsheba, Boaz came through Rahab, and Pharez came from Judah through Tamar. Jesus told the woman, "neither do I condemn you...go and sin no more". And also review the case of the woman of Samaria in John ch4. We may still have the physical/emotional scars, but (like from this past week-end's mailing) 'positionally' God makes us "righteous". God "has received him" and is "able to make him stand" (Rom14:3-4) When a person comes to faith in Christ, all past sins are forgiven...

"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Ps103:12)

What is Perversion?

Recently, also, a subscriber asked the definition of "sexual perversion" (Mt5:32,19:9); and it seems like that might be appropriate here, along with the preceding two items....

Often it is assumed to be leather, cuffs, toys and various such things; and/or the touching of places, positions and doing things not directly related to "fruitfulness" (Gen1:28,9:1)

I don't think it's necessary for me to address the far-out things, so I'm not going to. But what about, generically, intimate activities not directly related to reproduction? What is OK, and what is not? And is any of it 'perverse'? Scripture doesn't say much, other than Solomon's entire book of love songs.

When mention is made in the book of dove's eyes, goats, sheep, scarlet, pomegranates, fawns; and of being ravished; what is the likelihood that they are standing, as if on stage, with outstretched hand, giving an 'oration' to each other from across the room? Is not the context that of "His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me." (SS2:6) Passionate intimacy and lovemaking.

"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but prostitutes and adulterers God will judge." (Heb13:4)

There are no Scriptural descriptions of 'what' goes on in that bed; either yea or nay; either this or that.

But what God judges is adultery, prostitution, men-with-men, and cross dressing.

"...male and female He created them" (Gen1:27) to "cleave" together and be "one flesh"...in "unashamed" nakedness. (Gen2:24-25)

Thus...

Adultery is perversion because it robs from that "one flesh". It is no longer "one", but a stranger has been added to the mix.

Prostitution is perversion because "one flesh" is never established. Paul speaks of the "one flesh" in being joined to a harlot. (1Co6:16) But how many times does that happen, and with how many different people? It is confusion. It is not God's design. Anything that is contrary to design, by definition, is "perverted".

Men-with-men is called "abomination". (Le20:13) It 'perverts' God's design of "male and female".

Cross-dressing is "confusion". "God is not of confusion" (1Co14:33) God made men to be men, and women to be women. And if you read Song of Solomon, the two also 'enjoy' what they see of each other physically. That is by God's design. God made women to be eye-candy to men, and for men to be 'whatever' it is that women see in men. (Being a man, I couldn't say for sure 'what' that is!) When people cross-dress, it is, by deed, a lie. Same with sex-change operations. God created them one gender, and by rebellion they refuse to accept it, and change.

Thus, as I concluded the matter to the subscriber: "sexual perversion" is not so much 'what' a man-and-wife may do in the privacy of their own God-honored bed... but with 'whom' people do what they do. God-honored sex is the intimate activity between a husband and his -own- wife, of 'whatever' the nature of their mutually agreed upon and desired activities.

Perversion is anything with ANYBODY ELSE.

Stay Put

EDITORIAL:

"But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all churches...Let each one remain in the calling in which he was called...Each in whatever way he was called, brothers, in this remain with God." (1Cor7:17,20,24)

A couple weeks ago in considering the 7th Commandment, "Do not commit adultery" (Ex20:14) we considered the matter that in God's eyes, the first act of sex is "marriage", and that anything with anybody else is adultery. (Mt5:32) And then that same week in another study we observed how Israel made a purposeful point to put away the heathen wives and the children begotten of those wives, as they went about to make things right before God. (Ezra ch10)

Recently a letter was snailed to VW's POBox, a person seeking guidance on a related matter; and that prompted me to realize that we need to address a matter related to this, because of today's society and how things are so messed up and squiggled around all over the place. Some people have slept around so much, they don't know 'who' is who to their relationship. Some families have children from as many different marriages as there are children. It's a real mess! And how do we sort through it all to come to a place where the lives are pleasing to the Lord, once a person becomes a Christian or comes back from backsliding?

Today there is a real epidemic of perversion regarding marriage. And how people write to me about their personal problems is usually quite predictable depending on whether they are male or female.

If a woman writes, her husband is usually some combination of driven by his career and no time for family, is abusive, is seeing somebody else, or just doesn't give her the attention she thinks she deserves. When women write, there's actually some variety as to their husbands' problems, from woman to woman. Of course, when the woman writes, -she- is "living for the Lord faithfully", and her husband is the one who is wandering from the Lord.!???... Let's see, have -any- of the women who have written ever suggested that -they- have any weaknesses/flaws where their marriage is concerned? [Editor: as I sit here thinking about this, their e-mails aren't all that different from what one hears during 'share times' at prayer meetings, as they talk 'about' their husbands to everybody within hearing!]

But when men write, there seems to be one theme. Their wives, whom they love dearly, seem to be "driven" as though "forced" to seek 'something', as they (the wives) are not content. They feel like they are not getting what THEY "want". They are lusting after something 'else' (more). And yes, usually, they end up going to some other man. Unlike the women who write (who are always 'self-righteous') I would guess that half the men

will admit/volunteer that they have not been stellar, themselves, in their relationships. [Editor: no, ladies, I'm not being 'chauvinist'. Just observing - facts- as they happen to come in to VW's INBOX.]

The common theme, however, seems to be this "drive" ...almost as though it were a (don't laugh) 'hormonal' thing. And yet, I suspect it is -spiritual- in nature. I see the same spirit whenever I see snips of the talk shows where a woman is proclaiming her newly-achieved "independence". Being "on-her-own". Doing her "own thing". But these women are "driven" to it; almost as though they can't help what they're doing. When I read the notes from distraught husbands, I see the same thing I observed first-hand when my unequal yoke ex left. There was a period of time where I observed this state of "being driven" ...even though I didn't understand it until it was past tense. And to "what" she was being driven I could not see. And then, in retrospect, I saw the running away from God IN ORDER TO go worship - other- 'gods'. And this is what I see in the world... many of these women leave their husbands, and subsequently are devoted to existences full of "spirituality" and "spiritual awareness". And if they go to other men, these new men are supportive of their new-found self-aware spirituality. They are not so much escaping to other 'men', as much as to 'spirituality', 'SELF-awareness' and 'SELF-empowerment'. -SELF-

They are not "Christians"...even though they might have attended church with the husband/s they left. It is part of preparations for "that day" (Is3:7) as "women rule over them". (Is3:12) It is the same time prophesied when children would rise out from under proper authority. (Is3:4,12) This is part of the age in which we live. Another sign of the times as to how close we are to the Lord's return.

OK... so, a long-winded side-excursion introduction to get to the point of this Q/A-editorial:

What happens when the light finally clicks "on" and you see what a mess your life has been? You look at yourself and at your spouse, and you realize that you -really- "married" somebody-or-other "else" way-back-when, and ever since then, you have had a life full of adultery (by Scriptural definition). What to do? Do you go back and seek out those "first" relationships, to attempt to get back together with them? Do you part company with whom you are presently living because the circumstances under which you joined them were not right? Do you frantically scurry about, trying to put the pieces back together? Well, by now, those "pieces" have been joined to others.

We observed in Ezra ch10 that Israel went about to "fix" things. If you married somebody you shouldn't have, in either blindness to God's will, or direct disobedience, do you put them away? Well, Ezra ch10 certainly seems to give a precedent for such a thing. But the context of Ezra should be understood. They had married "pagan" wives, and were also joining into their idolatry. Their act of putting away these wives was really an act

of cleansing themselves of paganism. But that is only one such recorded incident. However, Paul does give release from unbelieving spouses, when the unbeliever wishes to leave. (1Cor7:15)

However, when David and Bathsheba sinned, they did not subsequently break up, in order to "fix" things after Uriah was murdered. Trying to put things back the way they were before they sinned. God judged and took the baby in death. But they remained married. And God's grace subsequently chose Solomon from their marriage, even though David had several other wives prior to Bathsheba to whom he was still married, to succeed David to the throne.

We've looked at this before briefly. Let's look at it again. What does Scripture 'teach' about all this? What if there is a divorce? Either REMAIN UNMARRIED, or be reconciled. (1Cor7:11) What if there was a divorce; and then you remarried; and then got divorced from -that- person? According to "Law" you can then no longer be reconciled to your 'first' spouse. (Jer3:1,Deu24:1-4) You've been "defiled" regarding that first marriage, by the second one. Paul uses the expression "first faith" (1Tm5:12) ...that first pledge to fidelity.

Now, suppose you were married, and divorced, and remarried. Now, suppose this marriage has also had incidents of infidelity? And, essentially, after a period of time, one can't keep track anymore of who has been with whom how many times? Then, finally, the consciences are smitten as to the sin of it all; it has been "confessed" before God and "forgiven" (1Jn1:9) and now, there you are...with this mess of various relationships. Who belongs to whom? Do you scurry about trying to find your "first" and thus, go back to your original "innocence"? Trouble is, your "first" might not have been -their- "first" at the time they were -your- "first". ...if you get what is being said. It's a royal 'mess'.

Notice that it is in the context of this chapter where Paul is discussing "marriage" that he says, essentially, "stay put". And if you notice from the opening Scripture quotes, he says this 'three times'; thus emphasizing this point. So, you've been widowed. You're married to an unbeliever. Don't go changing things. Just "stop" where you are. You've been busy playing "musical chairs" but now the music has stopped. You stay where you are. Yes, the past may have been a mess, but when Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery His grace said, "Neither do I give judgment. Go, and SIN -NO-MORE-." (Jn8:11) Sin cannot be un-committed. You cannot un-sleep with somebody. It is water under the bridge, never to be recalled. But when one receives forgiveness of sin, that sin is not remembered any further. "I, even I, am He who blots out your trespasses for My sake; and I will not remember your sins." (Is43:25) And "...all things have become new" (2Cor5:17) Yes, there may be the physical mess, and possible diseases. But before the Lord, the person has a 'fresh start' ...where they are at. "This" is where you are... go 'forward' from here-on-out. "...sin no more."

True... you may not be with your "first" one. But God's grace has a way of causing "all things [to] work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose." (Rom8:28) And so, wherever you are now, receive God's chastizement and forgiveness, and then "Hold fast to that which you have, so that no one may take your crown.." (Rev3:11)

Stay Put as Homosexual?

QUESTION:

Can a homosexual be saved and still living with his male partner? Is there a such thing as a homosexual christian? What about a celibate homosexual?

ANSWER:

Why is it that when I figure 'all the bases' have been covered on a given subject, that something else comes popping along..!!

No. No! NO! Again I say... "!!-NO-!!"

One of the definitions of "ungodliness" and "unrighteousness" for which God's "wrath" is revealed from heaven is women who have "changed the natural use into that which is against nature" and men who have left the "natural use of the woman" have gone into "males with males working out shamefulness". (Rom1:18,26-27) God made them in the beginning "male and female". (Gen1:27) The design was to be "fruitful". (vs28) And the command was that the "man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his -WIFE- and they shall be ONE FLESH." (Gen2:24) Like I've heard on several occasions, God made "Adam and Eve", not "Adam and Steve". Even cross-dressing is called "-ABOMINABLE- to Jehovah your God." (Deu22:5) I wonder what Scripture would have said about sex-change operations! I dare say it fits along with this last cited reference.

The woman who was brought to Jesus was accused of whoredom. Jesus said to her, "Go and SIN -NO-MORE-" (Jn8:11) Now, if one wants to pick at degrees, whoredom, at least, is "male and female". And Jesus says, "sin no more". Don't 'stay put' being a "working girl"; after all, doesn't she need to "earn a living" to "put herself through college"? !!! By comparison, God rained down fire and brimstone onto Sodom and Gomorrah, and utterly destroyed them.

Obviously, the message is clear. If you have a homosexual past, get OUT OF it! Reject it! Put away those acquaintances! "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not go in the way of evildoers. Avoid it, do not pass by it; turn from it and pass on." (Pr4:14-15) And by the same token, if you are "in" that path... LEAVE IT! "Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? Let it not be! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom6:1-2)

How can something which God calls "abominable", "shameful", "perverted" (Lev18:22), "defilement" (vs23-24) and "detestable" (20:13) [various such words, depending on which translation you are reading] be called "Christian"? It isn't!

In 1Cor ch7 Paul is talking about the God-ordained "male and female" relationships. -That- is the relationship (or lack of one) in which to "stay put".