

# THE PRIME MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING

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These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped lectures given between 1977 and 1997 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D., formerly the Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

## PREFACE

**WARNING!** Those who join any church will be expected to believe what they are told by the ministers that the Bible says is really what the Bible does say, and this is rarely true. Most simply use verses in the Bible to support or “prove” what they want you to believe. The examples in this paper will make this abundantly clear.

The Bible repeatedly says in different words all through its pages:-

Jeremiah 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

If anyone questions a minister about their churches doctrines or teachings there are likely to be unpleasant repercussions. Be prepared, the response may result in a rebuttal, a severe reprimand, being disfellowshipped, or worse.

The more emphasis a church puts on doctrinal matters and obedience to their version of the law, the more vehement and drastic may be the response.

There is no such thing as an organization on earth today that can truly claim they are the true church of God. Study will reveal that none actually stays true to the teachings of Christ who inspired the Holy Bible, no matter how much they may claim to do so. In the New Testament era Christ never intended ‘churches’ to be authoratative and rule over people. The word ‘church’ is always a mistranslation from the Greek ekklesia which meant group, not a building, or any organization of control. There is only one true church, and Jesus Christ is building it.

After Christ’s resurrection, there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ, the Firstborn Son of God, and His Word is the only true source of truth from God. We do not need any man to tell us what He meant by scripture, the truth comes from the Holy Spirit leading and guiding our study.

Regrettably most people never realize that their ministers are giving out false information. Most so-called Christian churches are in reality cosy social clubs, where little is really taught or believed. Their buildings and publications are riddled with pagan ideas and practices, idolatrous pictures, images, and statues.

Such organizations and their leaders are actually an abomination in God’s eyes and unless they repent, will eventually face the wrath of God.

## THE PRIME MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE TEACHING

The Bible is used more today than any other time in history to support the beliefs, teachings, and doctrines of the hundreds of so-called ‘Christian’ denominations which are in conflict with each other.

Any intelligent person might ask: How can this confusion exist when all these organizations, many of whom claim to be the only true church of God and who use the same book, the Holy Bible to support what they believe and practice?

And that would be a reasonable question, but almost nobody, actually very few, ask the question. Most people simply accept what they are taught by the ministers; or others allow this claim to discredit the whole matter of Christianity, dismiss it and just go on their way in life.

One reason these religious people are in confusion about what the scriptures of the Bible mean, is due to prime misuse and abuse of the inspired Word of God. Although they are often very sincere, unfortunately sincerity is no substitute for being very careful about how we use the scriptures.

Here are some guidelines to ensure we benefit from our study of the Bible:

## **1. GOD'S WILL AND THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS INTO TRUTH**

The first rule of Bible study is to realize that our proper understanding of it can only come with God's help. Before we even look at the specific learning skills we need, we need to realize that we cannot even want to study, or understand the Word unless God supplies His Spirit, and opens our eyes, ears, minds and hearts. It is important to understand this in our approach to Bible study. The skills offered here have to come from Him, so it is a good plan to ask Him for help!

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is God the Father that motivates us and He works by creating the desire in us to want to study His Word and thereby draw closer to Him. Our "work" is simply to respond by action. Jesus said:

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Do not trust any minister of any religious organization to tell you what are the truths of the Bible. They say: “It says here in the Bible that God says we should...”

Jeremiah 31:31 Behold, I am against the prophets (ministers, priests), saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He (God) saith.

Many break every rule that would lead to the correct understanding of the scriptures in order to make the Bible appear to support what they teach. This abuse of the Holy Word of God is what causes the hundreds or thousands of different groups to differ in what they believe, and what they teach. This is confusion and Paul addresses this if ‘prophets’ in the group differ.

1 Corinthians 14:33 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.

Let God teach you directly through His Word with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will understand. Be taught of and by God.

John 6:45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

## **2. PRINCIPLES FOR ‘RIGHTLY DIVIDING’ THE WORD OF TRUTH**

So how can we avoid misusing and abusing the scriptures? What are these vital principles for a proper understanding of the scriptures?

We are exhorted “**rightly** to divide the Word of God”, carefully, having due regard for these important principles.

2 Timothy 2:15 **Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth.

When we **study** the Bible (not just read it!), we need to be expert skilled ‘workmen’, who do not need to be ashamed of the work we do in our attempts to understand the scriptures. A skilled workman knows how to use the proper tools to achieve good work.

So what does it mean to “rightly divide” the word of truth? It means we need to read carefully and analyse the scriptures according to several

rules, to make sure that we understand correctly what each verse is saying, and how we should apply the information.

It is important that we ask ourselves: Am I looking at this scripture in an attempt to support something I believe or have been told, or to justify what I think or do? We should never take for granted that anything a minister tells us is correct. Because if we do, that could lead us into a mess!! We have to allow the Spirit of God to lead us into the correct understanding of each topic.

2 Timothy 2:15 rightly dividing...We must never use scriptures for our own purposes in an attempt to convince others that our ideas have scriptural basis and authority. We should especially avoid taking scriptures out of context, or using them inappropriately.

#### LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE?

Another trap many fall into is to take what is clearly figurative language, using figures of speech to tell a story or parable, and taking the content as being a literal event or matter. Or on the other hand, looking at plain language statements describing literal events or matters and take them as being figurative language when they are not.

An example of this is when people take the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man which many use to support the false doctrines that a) people are alive when in fact they are dead and not conscious, and b) that there is a burning hell fire which God uses to punish the wicked.

It is important for us to understand the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, as it is unique in its figurative language.

Luke 16:19 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

If this is literal, then Lazarus is in the 'bosom of Abraham' along with millions of other who have died. Clearly this is figurative language. Also

clearly, Abraham and Lazarus are 'afar off' but in close enough proximity to the Rich Man who is in torment to be seen by him.

If Abraham and the beggar are 'in heaven' they will not enjoy their time there being able to observe others in torment. But of course Abraham and the beggar are not in heaven, and the rich man is not across the road in Hell! They are all dead, this is just a story to illustrate the Rich man's callous disregard of the beggar's plight.

Christ also said in Matthew 19:23 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. 24 And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

This is not literal either! This man had a problem with his riches being more important to him than following Christ. The Rich man who ignored the beggar had another problem in his lack of compassion for others. These are parables and stories, figurative language to illustrate a point as in Paul's statement about heaping coals of fire on our enemies' heads!

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

Literally? Of course not!! An enemies' conscience would burn with remorse, and a burning desire to make it right with you. Only a fool takes figurative language literally.

Proverbs 26:7-9 7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool. 9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouths of fools.

Only a fool would be so ignorant that they would take the parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man and suggest that it was literal and not figurative or that it supported the doctrine of a Hell fire of punishment for the wicked.

Luke 16:25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

In this parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man, Christ is using a story to illustrate the very important point that a great gulf exists between those who hear His Word and act on it, and those who do not. This is also the theme of the parable of the sower.

As Christ says at the end of the Lazarus story, concerning those who misinterpret and fail to 'hear' the teachings of the Law and the Prophets, and who have a wrong perception of God in their hearts, though one rose from the dead, as Christ did, even that would not cause them to change their minds or their hearts. And that fact was true in Christ's time, actually from the beginning of time, and is also true regarding the majority of people today.

Here are some additional guidelines to apply to each passage we study in order to "rightly divide" the Word, and glean as much knowledge, understanding and wisdom about its application that we can.

### **3. APPRECIATE THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCRIPTURES**

Many ministers and evangelists use one particular scriptural reference to support their method of using the scriptures.

Isaiah 28:10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

This is repeated three verses later for emphasis, as God usually does about something He views as important.

Isaiah 28:13 But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line; line upon line, here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

**"Here a little and there a little"**

This is a true, correct, and very valuable principle which can help us in our study of the Bible. The Word of God IS written in this manner, “here a little, and there a little”, and using this information we can piece together what God wants us to know about any topic by searching the scriptures carefully.

What does God say about who needs to learn?

Isaiah 28:9 Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts.

Very young and inexperienced children barely weaned! This is the state most students of God’s Word are in, little children in type, and in experience.

Isaiah 28:10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little: 11 For with stammering lips and another tongue will he speak to this people.

So yes, line upon line, and her a little and there a little, but also with “stammering lips, and another tongue” will God speak to His people.

What is another tongue? The word ‘tongue’ means another language. God’s uses His own language in the writing of the Bible. It is a language that needs careful study to extract the true meaning.

Using all these keys, we can search out and find all the details concerning each aspect in a number of scriptures. We then need to put the pieces together in order to gain a proper knowledge and understanding of the subject. Then we need to use wisdom to apply what this study offers to us, so we can arrive at what God wants us to know about any topic.

#### **4. THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT**

**Probably the greatest misuse and abuse of scriptural study is to take any verse or verses out of context.**

So does line upon line etc., mean that we have a licence to take a verse or passage ‘a little here and a little there’, and put them together to ‘support’ or ‘prove’ any doctrine, idea, belief, or notion that we wish to demonstrate to others? Absolutely not!

And does that mean we can or should pick and choose any verses, and put them together to prove a point without having due regard to certain very important principles for understanding the Bible. No! That will lead us into misunderstandings, and to inevitable conflicts with others who use other verses to make their point.

The evidence for that is all around us in the hundreds of churches who cannot agree on even the basics of the Christian religion.

### QUOTING SCRIPTURE OUT OF CONTEXT IS SATANIC

Misquoting scripture for your own agenda is a satanic device. Satan used it to test Christ when he was at a physically weak point after fasting for forty days and forty nights.

Satan came to Christ and quoted scripture to Him, quite a bold step really when we realize Christ had written the scriptures, and studied them diligently as a human child as well, and knew what He meant by them!

Matthew 4:5 Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, 6 And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7 Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Ministers who misquote the Bible to suit their own agenda are serving the Devil, and are indeed ministers of Satan. Some of these modern day Pharisees teach their followers and insist that they must obey many of the laws of Moses, which was impossible for people to do when the Law was given, and even more difficult now!

2 Corinthians 11:13 For such (ministers) are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

For instance, they teach others to 'keep the Sabbath' which is impossible in this day and age (and no longer necessary anyway!). The watered down, partial observance of the Sabbath they teach ignores many of the rules as to how it should really have been kept. By insisting on their form of observance they are actually aiding and abetting people to break the actual laws concerning the Sabbath!



Matthew 23:4 For they (the false ministers of churchianity) bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne (like 'tithing' which is asking for money under false pretences, in fact fraud, and against the law of God!!), and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

Jesus Christ the Firstborn Son of God was given the task by the Father to keep the Law perfectly, which He did. His sacrifice was made so that we would not have to attempt to keep the rituals of the Law, and strain to keep it to the letter.

Of course, though, we should strive to avoid sin as best we can. One word for sin in Hebrew is 'chattah' which means 'to fall short of the target'. We fall short every day in our lives, and thankfully the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ washes away all the sins of human kind on a continuous basis.

Understanding the context is possibly the most important key. What is the subject of passage? Not just a verse or verses, but read enough of the passage or passages to be able to clearly determine the theme.

## **5. TO WHOM IS THIS VERSE OR VERSES ADDRESSED?**

- a. Does this verse or verses apply specifically to those to whom it is addressed, or does the principle also apply universally?
- b. If relevant, at what time and place were these scriptures written? So we can also use the interrogative words: Who? What? Where? When? How? and Why? to help clarify the context and learn more about the circumstances of the passage.

## **6. DOES THIS APPLY TO US TODAY IN THIS CHRISTIAN ERA?**

Is this God talking to me, today, in this era, telling me what to do? Or does it refer to precise statutes, rules of life, details that applied to other people at another time, but no longer apply today? In many cases the specific details of the ritual law do not apply to us any longer, but usually the enduring spiritual **principle** of such statutes does still apply to a Christian in this era.

For instance, the ritual laws regarding sacrifices and of circumcision instituted 'forever' no longer apply since Christ's sacrifice.

Here is an example of something that does not apply to us today in the letter of the law. This law concerns the manner of how we should treat what we defecate when we have a bowel movement.

Deuteronomy 23:13 And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:

Clearly this applied in the living conditions of the time, but does the detail of this verse apply to us now and do we have to take it literally?

No! We do not need to have a weapon with a shovel attached so we can bury our faeces!

Clearly this does not apply in our modern environment where sewage is properly taken care of and processed, but the principle certainly does still apply in countries which do not have sewers. In those areas people do have a responsibility to ensure that the product of our bowel movements is properly taken care of by burying it, or otherwise disposing of it so that others are not fouled by it.

This is an example of “rightly dividing” a verse to extract the meaning and understanding the principle in it for us today.

### **Past, present, or future, or all three?**

It is important to understand a principle God uses in His “other tongue” in His inspiration of the scriptures. In many cases in His Word, how the tense of a verb is used can lead to great confusion.

Sometimes events that are described in the past tense are actually referring to things that are also going to happen in the future. Also in certain verses, the subject can be referring to what is happening in the present, but also what happened in the past, and still yet have a future fulfillment.

Only a careful study to “rightly divide” the Word will lead to clarity.

### **Progressive revelation.**

In the Bible God clearly presents “**progressive revelation**”. What God reveals to, and expects of different people at different times is a most important principle.

Anyone who thinks that if it is in the Bible, therefore it applies to all types of people for all time since creation, is woefully ignorant of “**progressive**

**revelation**". This rigid approach to the scriptures hold many groups riveted into doctrines and concepts that are incorrect.

It is nothing short of tragic that so many are stuck in what Jesus says "**what was said of old time**", and stubbornly refuse to move along with the times as Jesus clearly wanted his followers to do when He says, "**But I say unto you**" ... here is a new way of looking at it!

Thousands or millions of pages have been written on the subject of "law and grace" and the relevance today of the Mosaic Law for Christians, when all we have to do is to respect what Jesus taught, and what the disciples and Paul taught and enlarged upon as revelation continued to progress after Christ died and was resurrected.

If we just simply take the sayings of Jesus Christ, in the 'sermon on the mount' He makes the principle of this part of His "**progressive revelation**" very clear indeed.

The passage in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, often called the "Sermon on the Mount", was addressed privately to His disciples. Jesus had been thronged with massive crowds wanting healing and His attention, so He went up into a mountain to get some privacy. He got there first and sat down, and when His disciples caught up with Him, He began to teach them the "beatitudes" or "blessed are they..." Then He said:

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. 18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

This is what many ministers read out, and they stop there, saying, "There you are, the Law of Moses is still in effect, so you have to keep it". Many ministers of churchianity use these words of Christ as evidence that the Law of Moses still applies because Christ said so. But is that what Christ is saying in the "Sermon on the Mount" to us today? No! This is not what Jesus is saying at all.

"one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law", when? "till all be fulfilled." What does it mean 'till all be fulfilled'? God sent Jesus to Earth to perform a set of tasks to 'fulfill' or complete. As Jesus died, He said, "It is finished." Or fulfilled. Christ ascended to the Father and presented Himself for judgment, His sacrifice was accepted by the Father, and that was the

moment when the carnal physical ritual Law of the flesh was “finished” and the new Spiritual Law of the Heart was instituted.

Verse 19 starts a new subject. If Jesus was going to go on in Matthew 5 and verse 19 to speak in reference to the Mosaic Law, He would have said, “**those** commandments”, but He did not. In this verse He was introducing a new subject when He said, “**these** commandments”. He goes on to explain privately to His disciples some of the major changes in the Law that He is introducing!! So what is Jesus really saying when He says:

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these (‘new’ not those ‘old’) least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the (future) kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the (future) kingdom of heaven.

When Jesus says: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments”. Which commandments is Jesus talking about? When is He talking about now? Does He mean the “old time” jots and the tittles he just mentioned, or is he referring to those “new commandments” which He is now going to explain?

Matthew 5 Verse 19 is clearly referring to what Christ is going to say next, not to what He just said!! The context He is talking about now **is the future**, in the Kingdom of God!

Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that **it was said of them of old time**, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 **But I say unto you**, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Jesus is making it abundantly clear by saying: **You have heard this in the Old Testament Law, but I am now telling you about the changes in the new testament Law that I am bringing.** I am transposing them from physical laws to a physical people who in many cases got physical punishment and even death for breaking them, into spiritual laws of the heart. Circumcision and our relationship with God is now of the heart!

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that **it was said by them of old time**, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 **But I say unto you**, That whosoever looketh

on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

It is no longer only the actual act of adultery that is against Christ's law, which of course it is, but it is against the law to even think about it in your mind and heart!

Matthew 5:31 **It hath been said**, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 **But I say unto you**, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Matthew 5:33 Again, ye have heard that **it hath been said by them of old time**, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34 **But I say unto you**, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

Matthew 5:38 Ye have heard that **it hath been said**, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 **But I say unto you**, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that **it hath been said**, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 **But I say unto you**, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

Why is it that people who claim to be Christians will not read, learn and inwardly digest and then accept what Jesus had to say to His disciples about the changes He was making in the Law? He clearly says, this was the legal situation in the past, **But I say unto you, this is the way it has to be from now on!**

Christ of course kept the Mosaic Law perfectly prior to His death in order to fulfill the mission He had been given by the Father. But it is nowhere recorded in the New Testament that Jesus ever taught the disciples the Mosaic Law.

So when Jesus was commanding His disciples after His death and resurrection how they should spread the New Testament Gospel, he said:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all

nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:** and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Notice, Jesus told His disciples to teach all things **whatsoever I have commanded you**, the new commandments, the new law.

We now have the Holy Spirit, we do not need the stick of physical punishment or death to induce us to keep the old law. We Christians now keep the new law the best we can in Spirit and in Truth because we WANT to, because we love and appreciate God and Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

## **7. WILL OTHER VERSES HELP GET THE FULL MEANING?**

Concordances, commentaries, and other works are an absolutely invaluable aid to arriving at a balanced view of any subject in the Bible. Using books like Strong's Concordance to find related verses is easy, but due to their sheer size they can be somewhat cumbersome and time consuming to use in practice. The time and effort is very worthwhile however.

Concordances enable one to compare the statement in any verse with other verses or many other passages talking about the same or similar topics. This will often throw more light on the subject and clarify what the Bible is teaching us in any regard.

And using the Internet there is now an easier way to access the information about any subject, or find any verse or group of passages in the Bible instantly. They also offer easy comparison of many other translations of the Bible.

One such site is at: <http://www.biblegateway.com>

There are several other concordance sites to choose from so we can find one that works for us.

## **A SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE**

- 1. God's will and the Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth.**
- 2. By careful study, rightly divide the Word of truth.**
- 3. Appreciate 'the here and there a little' structure of scripture.**
- 4. Remember the vital importance of considering context.**

5. To whom is this passage addressed, when, what, where, etc.?
6. Does this apply to us today in this Christian era?
7. Will other verses help arrive at the full meaning?

## PRIME EXAMPLES OF MISUSE/ABUSE OF BIBLE SCRIPTURES

### Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling.

This is a favourite verse used by many ministers when they are emphasizing what you need to do to gain salvation. They speak with forked tongue. Quoting Philippians 2:12 out of context, they are actually getting the story backwards! They are actually putting the cart before the horse.

On the one hand they say that you are no longer under the works of the law but under Grace, but then they quote this verse in Philippians which says you have to work out your own salvation. Nothing could be further from the truth!

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

When they quote this verse, they stop there. In order to make their point, they are taking a statement, actually only half a statement out of context giving you the force of only part of a statement.

Remember that punctuation in the King James version is not necessarily inspired! Verse 12 and verse 13 are really one statement, and verse 13 is actually the key to our relationship with God regarding salvation and works in one sentence. We do not work out our salvation, God does.

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is God the Father that motivates us and creates the desire in us to want to study His Word and thereby draw closer to Him. Remember Jesus said: John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Everything to do with our **gift** of salvation, which was ours before the foundation of the world comes from God and Jesus Christ, and before we were born as a human being. Our salvation was planned for each one of us before we existed!

Yes there are works involved with being a Christian, repentance, belief and faith, but God gives us all these as a gift too, to each person at the time God had planned for that person, but we need to get the concept straight, we need to get the horse before the cart!

Repentance is a gift to Jew and Gentile alike. Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Faith is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Yes works are required for salvation but they are Christ's works, and God working through us causing us to want to do good works like taking care of others, looking after our families, helping those in distress, and so on. Ephesians 2:9 Not of (our) works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his (God's) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

So it is not up to us to "work out our own salvation" because God has worked it out for us. We need to get the horse in front of the cart, and give God the praise and the credit for it all. We could not repent, believe, have faith, be raised from the dead, or anything else without God working in and through us.

## **Prosperity and health**

Here is another example of a verse in the Bible that is used by thousands of Christian ministers to make a statement about God's wishes for us. It is in the Bible so it MUST be true, yes, but is it true in the way they use it? The verse is in 3 John which states:

3 John 2 Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Ministers might say, "If you give your heart to the Lord today, He will prosper you and keep you in health. God wants you to prosper. God wants health for you." But is this what this verse is saying?

The writer has frequently rested on this apparent promise for years, believing that is what God wants for us. But is it?



When we look around, do we see that everyone who becomes a Christian is prosperous, or are many poor? Are all Christians healthy? Or are many of them seriously sick and ill, and do some even die?

If God is really saying to each of us, “I wish above all things that you prosper and be in health”, and this scripture is speaking to everyone? If so, then why are there so many poor Christians? Why are there so many sick Christians? This makes it look like God is not really taking care of His people as He said He would! Reading the verse this way, it looks as if God is not being true to His word.

Friends, be sure of one thing: If God wants something to happen, it WILL happen! So since prosperity and health are not universally happening according to this verse, perhaps we should look at why they are not happening. If we apply the rules of “rightly dividing” we will quickly see why it is not happening as some ministers suggest it will.

What is the context? To whom is this addressed? Is God saying this to me here and now? We need to look first at the passage in which this verse appears:

3 John 1 The elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.

In this third epistle, John, the elder, is writing specifically to his very well loved friend Gaius. He is not writing to an ekklesia, or a group of people, and certainly this letter is not addressed to the public at large.

If someone sends you a personal letter enclosing a cheque made payable to you, would the contents of that letter apply to everyone? Hardly!

Is Paul saying that this is what God wants for us? No! Or is Paul saying that this is what God will do for us?? No! Is Paul saying that we can apply this principle to ourselves? No! Is Paul suggesting or claiming that prosperity and health is a promise from God? No, he is not, not at all! So to apply the intent of this greeting to every Christian is a misuse.

John is saying to Gaius his friend, “I wish above all things that **you** (Gaius) may prosper and be in health”, just as we might send similar greetings to any friend of ours in a letter or card, which if we did, the greeting would apply to the person to whom we addressed it, and not necessarily to anyone else!

So for any minister to state or even suggest this verse is a promise to all from God is not true, and if it was, then clearly God is not carrying out his

promise, and that makes God a liar. God is not a liar. Satan is a liar and the father of lies! Ministers who use this verse falsely are Satan's tool.

Let us look at a couple of other verses to see if it helps our understanding about what the Bible teaches about prosperity and health.

Ecclesiastes 7:15 All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.

Ecclesiastes 8:14 There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity.

Solomon the wisest man says: good, just, righteous people have bad things happen to them, like poverty and ill health, and they perish; yet wicked people seem to get the benefits of the righteous, and enjoy a long healthy prosperous life. The devil does seem to look after his own! If we look around this world we see this happening in abundance today.

Paul tells us about his colleague Epaphroditus. He worked so hard supporting Paul, he got sick, and nearly died. Why did Paul not anoint him, and see him immediately well? We do not know.

2 Timothy 4:20 Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

Why did Paul leave Trophimus sick in Miletum? We do not know, but the principle we can draw from this is that not all Paul's diligent workers were prospering and in radiant health!!

Philippians 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Paul had an affliction. Why did God not heal Paul of his afflictions despite his asking God three times to heal him?

2 Corinthians 12:8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it (the affliction) might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

God does allow His servants, and indeed all human beings to experience trials, tribulations, poverty, suffering and sicknesses in the process of bringing us into His family. That is just part of the way it is. God is love, and wants us to enjoy our lives, and clearly He does not remove every trial from us, but He does support us and gives us strength in our trials that we can bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation (test, illness, financial disaster etc.) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

So the truth of the matter is clear, prosperity and good health are not promised to all in the Bible, and to suggest that is the case is a misuse and an abuse of scripture.

Let us examine another couple of badly abused and misused scriptures.

### **Will Christians do greater works than Christ?**

John 14:12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

Does this mean that all Christians will be able to do greater works than Christ did? Here is the acid test. What is the context? To whom was this statement made? Does it apply to us today? Is God and Christ saying that Christians will be able to do greater things than He did?

Friend, do not try to call a dead person out of a grave! Do not attempt to feed thousands with a few loaves and a couple of fish! Do not attempt to get a blind man's sight back with some clay and spittle you put on his eyes!! (John 9:6)

Clearly, Jesus had special powers to establish his authority and power as the Son of God that we do not have. He also gave special powers to His disciples to be able to perform their commission.

Now here is another scripture that religious individuals trot out at the slightest opportunity, and what a statement it is!

### **Will any prayer we ask be granted?**

John 14:13 And **whatsoever** ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If ye shall **ask any thing** in my name, I will do it.

This is repeated in John 16:23.

John 16:23 And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.

So all you have to do is to pray for absolutely anything, and it is yours, Christ said so. Did Jesus Christ really make this promise to all human beings, or just to Christians? Is it your experience? Do you always get what you pray for? I don't think so. So what does this scripture mean? Jesus Christ is not a liar, He does not make false promises that He does not keep.

Let us apply the acid test. First, what is the context? To whom is Jesus talking? When and where does He say it? Does it apply to us today??

When was this said? Just before the Passover, Jesus was having supper with the disciples. Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Peter resists, but then goes overboard, and wants to be washed all over. Christ said, your feet will do!

When Judas had left the room, it was night time.

Jesus then addressed the eleven disciples and explained some things to them about the specific commission they were being given. The commission was given to the eleven disciples, not to us. It is to them that He is saying God will answer their prayers in the pursuit of the work they were going to do. Jesus' discourse to the eleven disciples goes on through chapters 13, 14, 15, 16.

Luke is describing the same event in chapter 22 of his Gospel.

Luke 22:29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Is Luke telling us that Christ is talking to his disciples, or is He saying we, everyone, will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. No, He is talking to them.

These chapters in John's Gospel contain a private discourse to Christ's disciples, those who will be scattered, yet will perform the work Jesus has given them to do. It is not addressed to us. Of course there are principles in those chapters we can learn from, but can we take any or all of them out of context and apply them word for word to ourselves? No.

Especially in the matter of their asking in prayer for **anything** and that they could expect to receive it. Christ was explaining that they had His backing, and the Father's reassurance that they would be taken care of in the course of doing the Father's work, the mission they had been given, and that their prayers would be answered.

Christ also knew that after being with Him for three and a half years, they would not be asking for frivolous physical or even spiritual things in their prayers that were not appropriate to ask.

There is a modern counterfeit of the principle suggested by those who teach "The Secret", that you can have absolutely anything you want in life, all you have to do is to bring it into your life using the "Law of Attraction". Patently, this is untrue.

Now there is some truth that we do to an extent 'attract' certain circumstances into our lives, but to extend that to mean we can attract anything we like is a completely false premise.

Then in chapter 17 begins what could well be called the real "Lord's Prayer".

**Is it legal to tell people they must tithe?**

Another really sad misuse and drastic abuse of scripture is when churchianity ministers try to frighten, blackmail, or otherwise pressure people to pay tithes to them to avoid “robbing God”.

They quote a verse in Malachi completely out of context and apply it to anyone they want to get money from for what they claim is “God’s work” which invariably in reality is not God’s work at all.

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

To whom is God speaking here? He was talking to the leading Jews who had been given the commission to rebuild the Temple. Instead, after their return to the homeland, for eighteen years they first began to build nice houses for themselves.

Haggai 1:3 Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, 4 Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? 5 Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

But did they consider their ways? No, they argued and argued with God, grumbled and complained that they had not received blessings. When they finally did build the Temple, they failed to fill the storehouses of the Temple with tithes, but diverted the money to their own purposes. Like today, ministers build expensive buildings, use jet planes, fine cars, and tailored suits all out of people’s tithes.

In fact, it is against the law for anyone to ask a person to pay them tithes. Tithes were only to be paid to Levites who were servicing the Temple. Since there is currently no Temple and no Levitical priesthood, it is impossible for it to be lawful for anyone to collect tithes.

Ah! They say, but it is for the “church”, the only “true church”, to finance “the work of God”. But this is an abuse of the scriptures they are wresting to their own destruction. It is an attempt to get people to part with their money under false pretences and that is fraud.

2 Peter 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things (even including tithing Hebrews 7:5); in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Let us apply the acid test. First, what is the context? To whom is God and Jesus talking? When and where does He say it? Does it apply to us today??

The context of the whole short book of Malachi is God talking to Israel, more specifically to the priests, the Levites, about a serious problem, They had neglected to build the Temple of God in proper due time as they had been told, and to service God's house using tithes to provide the necessities for food to be available and prepared for those who worked and worshipped in it.

Instead they had built their own nice 'ceiled houses' for eighteen years first before they set to and started to build the Temple after God had asked them to start building it!

So to whom are these verses in Malachi addressed? They were written to the Levitical priesthood who were commanded to take tithes of the people. It was they who were robbing God! They were not using the tithes to service the Temple.

Hebrews 7:5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham:

Malachi 2:8 But ye (Levites then, and ministers today in our era) are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts.

So in Malachi, it is the Levitical priesthood to whom this book is addressed back in that time, not to Christians now!

Malachi 2:1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.

God is talking to these self-seeking, God despising Levites. Because you have insulted me, I will curse you. I will spread dung on your faces, the dung of YOUR solemn feasts. They were holding feasts they said were

God's Holy Feasts, but they were idolatrous filthy debauched feasts, just like Easter and Christmas and other so-called Christian practices are today.

Malachi 1:6 A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

God says to His priests that everyone knows that a son should honour his father, a servant his master, but where is Mine honour from you? Not only do you not honour me, but you even insult me by putting polluted bread on my table in my Temple!

Malachi 1:7 Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.

Try offering lame, blind and diseased offerings to your human boss or earthly father, would he be pleased with you?

Malachi 1:9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. 10 Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

These greedy avaricious Levite priests would do nothing unless they were paid extra for it, not so much as shutting the doors of the Temple buildings, nor lighting a fire on the altar. They wanted money for everything, just like many ministers of today do.

Malachi 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

God says. Return to me, and the disrespectful Levites say with a sneer, "Wherein shall we return?" This type of arguing with God is characteristic of the Israelites and the Levites in particular, and is mentioned many times in the Minor Prophets. So these amazingly disrespectful Levites again argue



with God, saying “How have we robbed you God?” God says you have not put the tithes to proper use!

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

This is clearly not talking to the general population. It is talking to the Levites. It is especially not talking to Christians today. Since today's ministers are not Levites and there is no Temple, no minister has the authority to ask for tithes, which is actually against the Law! God is cursing the Levites for robbing Him.

Malachi 3:9 ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

So what should they have done? They should have brought the tithes, which were in the form of animals and produce, (NOT money) into the storehouses which were part of the Temple buildings, so that there was food in God's house. If you will do this, says God, I will pour out a blessing on you.

Tithes were of the increase of crops and the tenth animal that passed under the rod. Employees were not required to tithe their wages! Those who extract money from people today, when there is no Temple, under the pretext of financing “God's work” need to repent of their sins in this regard.

The priests did not do as God asked, so they (Israel) did not receive the blessings they were expecting. Nor will they (Israel) be blessed until they repent of their disrespect and idolatry towards God. And when will that be?

Modern Orthodox Jews have many practices today, even those while bobbing at the Wailing Wall, which are still blatantly idolatrous. When will they be blessed? Not until just before Christ's return will Israel be blessed! This is the clear message of the book of the Minor Prophets.

Malachi 3:10 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough (in the Temple storerooms) to receive it.

Ministers of churchianity use this verse to suggest that if parishioners tithe to their organization, they will receive so much in terms of blessings from God that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Assuredly, thousands of hapless individuals who tithed year after year until it hurt, knew poverty, not limitless monetary blessings from God as they watched their ministers build lavish buildings, drive nice cars, even fly in their own aircraft, or swan around the globe with their credit cards.

That is not what is being said at all. The context is the Temple and its storehouses which had limited capacity, but God would bless them with animals and crops so that they overflowed, but only if they obeyed Him.

Malachi 3:11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.

So what is Malachi 3:8 all about? Is that verse there in the Bible for unscrupulous and avaricious ministers to use illegally to extract money for their Rolls Royce's, Cadillac's, private jets, extravagant buildings, or to pay radio and TV stations to broadcast their false gospel under the guise of doing God's work? No! No! No!

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

God says: Those tithes should have been for My House!!

No wonder some religious individuals in the future will claim to have been farmers when asked if they were once ministers!

Here is yet another much used example of the misuse of scripture.

### **Should Christians be keeping the Mosaic Law?**

Ministers who want to persuade people to follow their instructions will tell you that Jesus kept the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and all the Law perfectly, and therefore so should we. But is that true? No.

The truth of the matter is that Jesus put Himself under the law and kept it perfectly to fulfill His mission given to Him by God the Father, but only until

He sacrificed His one life for the redemption of all, and introduced Grace so that we would not need to be under the penalty of the ritual Law.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are (attempting in any way to be) justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Attempting to keep the Law of Moses disqualifies you from receiving Grace! You cannot pick and choose which parts of the Law to keep, if you undertake to keep the Law, you have to keep it all.

John 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

We are no longer 'under the law', that is we are not obliged to keep any part of the Mosaic Law to stay in God's good books! We cannot keep it anyway, it is impossible for human beings to do so, so we break the law, and in doing so merit the wages of sin which is death. But since Christ died for us, and we are in Him, we are already 'dead', as we 'died' when Christ died. As humans our physical bodies still have to die, but nevertheless we live!

The Law is not 'done away', it was changed from physical rituals to heart spiritual by Christ. Circumcision is now of the heart not of the penis. The sacrificial slaying of animals was rendered pointless after the death of Christ. Why is it that religious people cannot allow the fact that the keeping of the old physical ritual Law passed into history when Christ fulfilled it, and gave us much stronger spiritual laws, and ushered in Grace?

Romans 6:15 What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.

What religious organizations who preach that Christians ought to keep all or parts of the Mosaic Law do not understand is that the moment that Christ died on the tree of crucifixion and was resurrected from the dead, the mechanics of the Old Testament Law became redundant.

Churches that preach keeping the Mosaic Law do not realize that in a sense they are rendering Christ's perfect keeping of the Law for us, and sacrificing His life for the redemption of our sins, in vain.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if (any type of) righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

2 Corinthians 3:14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ. 15 But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart. 16 Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away.

So reading the Old Testament and applying the Mosaic Laws in this era automatically blinds those who seek to apply it with a veil that obscures the amazing changes which Christ brought, which vail Paul clearly says is done away in Christ. Christ brought a conclusion to the physical ritual aspects of the Law as He ushered in a new and expanded spiritual law of the heart.

### **Should Christ's life be our example in every detail?**

In the very verse itself, the context tells us what Peter is referring to.

1 Peter 2: 21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

The context of this verse is Christ's suffering for righteousness sake being an example to us. Some ministers say that we should want to follow Christ's example in every way. Jesus was here on a mission for the Father, to perform a very specific task. Do we have that commission too? No! Christ did many things we cannot do and we should not attempt to follow, including dying on a tree!

Here is another indication how we should follow Christ. Note the context, it is suffering for righteousness sake which Christ did and we should be prepared to do.

1 Peter 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, **suffering wrongfully**. 20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. 21 For even hereunto were ye called: **because Christ also suffered** for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Verse 19 gives us "suffering wrongfully" as the context of this passage.

Does that excuse us from obeying spiritual laws, no of course not. What it does **not** mean is that we have to be under the old physical laws.

This whole context is not about keeping the laws of Sabbath or Holy days, or clean and unclean meats, it is about suffering. Christ was under the law for 33½ years, and did indeed keep the law perfectly, but He kept it so that we would not have to!

This scripture has been used a million times to put pressure on people to keep the law, but it says if we put ourselves under Christ then we have to put ourselves under the law. But that it's not what it says.

Sometimes people, even sincere people look at the Bible, but do not always understand what they read, or pay attention to what it is really saying. That is one thing, but it is another to force or coerce others to obey what a person or organisation thinks the Bible is teaching us.

### **What examples did Christ give us that we should follow?**

Paul says: 1 Corinthians 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

But in what respect is Paul telling us to follow him as he follows Christ? So what is the context, is it about doctrine or religious practices? Is it about following Christ as He kept the Sabbath, the Holy days, and all the ramifications of the Mosaic Law?

If we start looking at this passage in the previous chapter, the context will show us what this passage is all about. So to understand 1 Corinthians 11 we have to go back into chapter 10.

Remember, the chapter and verse breaks in the King James Version were not in the original texts, and are not inspired.

1 Corinthians 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. 24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

Eat what is set before you, just tuck in and enjoy the meal, you don't have to ask where it all came from!

1 Corinthians 10: 28 But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof:

Go ahead and eat, unless your host makes a point that the food has been sacrificed to idols, or to Santa Claus, or any other pagan god. If they do, then do not eat it! For their sake and for yours.

1 Corinthians 10: 29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

This is how we are to follow Christ, do everything to the glory of God. Here is the clear statement of the context of the whole passage, do not give offence.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Then Chapter 11:1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

What is this passage 1 Corinthians 10:27 – 11:1 all about? It is about consideration for others. It is about not offending others whether Jews, Gentiles or the assemblies of God.. It is about putting others needs and feelings before our own.

So is it about the Law, doctrine and religious practices? No. Not at all. It is explaining that if we want to follow Christ, we will not go around offending people, especially not unbelievers, unnecessarily or without thought and consideration for them.

Paul is saying to follow Christ, we must avoid offending others, treat others as you would want to be treated, live the law of love for God, our fellow man, and have self-esteem for ourselves.

Remember Christ's severe warning about offending others, especially 'little ones' in the "Sermon on the Mount".

Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Offending others is a serious business, to be avoided wherever possible. Paul is teaching us how to follow him following Christ in matters of courtesy, and avoiding giving offence!

### **Beware of false prophets, ministers, and churches.**

Satan's churches are headed by ministers, bishops, evangelists who may appear to be holy men, when in reality they are hungry ravening wolves who want to control and 'devour' you.

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Christ warns very clearly:

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Luke 21 7:7 And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? 8 And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them.

Note Christ's words carefully, "take heed that you be not deceived". Here is a somewhat frightening thought:

### **Anyone who is deceived does not know they are deceived!**

Does the average 'Christian person' know how to check whether the church they attend is truly a church of God? Absolutely not! They take what they think is the genuine article on faith. Faith is an essential and a wonderful thing, but blind faith is not!!

### **How do you know when something is a counterfeit?**

The chances are you won't unless you have some expert knowledge. Counterfeits are designed to deceive. They are made to look like the real thing as humanly possible. The very essence of a counterfeit is that it is really difficult and often impossible for the average person to tell it is not the real thing. The dictionary gives some additional words which help us understand what a counterfeit is:

Verbs: copy, deceive, fabricate, fake, feign, forge, imitate, impersonate, pretend, sham, simulate

Adjectives: bogus, copied, ersatz, faked, false, feigned, forged, fraudulent, imitation, phoney or phony, pseud or pseudo, sham, simulated, spurious.

Nouns: copy, fake, forgery, fraud, imitation, phoney or phony, reproduction, sham

Antonyms: authentic, genuine, good, original, real, the real thing.

The only way to be able to recognize a counterfeit religious organization, or false religious people dressed up in certain clothes, or any other aspect of Christianity is to be well informed from the only authentic, genuine authority, and that is the Holy Bible written by Christ Jesus.

It is imperative that we go directly to His Word to us, providing you have asked for the help of the Holy Spirit to get knowledge and understanding, and that Christ has opened your mind and heart to receive teaching personally from your Lord and Master.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Christ is building his Church (His ecclesia – His group) in this age. He is not using men or man's religions to do the job. There is only one mediator between us and God, Jesus Christ.

So do not be deceived by men, no matter how sincere they may appear, check out what they teach, and whether it matches the scriptures.

### **What is a 'church'?**

The word 'church' is very misleading to those who speak English. The origin of the word is in paganism. A 'church' is one of two things:



1. It is an organization like the Catholic Church, The Methodist Church, etc., or any other denomination.

2. It is a building on the corner, or on the hill, adorned usually with a 'cross' with or without the body of Christ hanging on it which breaks the commandment not to make any likeness of anything at all in a religious context. The church buildings are invariably filled with pictures representing some aspect of religious worship, statues of Mary or saints.

The very building itself almost always has pagan and idolatrous architectural features like a spire or steeple, entrances shaped like female genitalia, windows representing the Sun god, and other heathen and pagan devices. If only the 'good' Christians knew anything about the history of church buildings, they would avoid it like the plague!

The word in the New Testament in the original Greek was 'ecclesia' which meant a group of people, it never referred to a building.

So when people 'go to church', those people are the 'church' the 'ecclesia', and when the service is over they leave the 'church'.

The New Testament ekklesias did not answer to a central headquarters church. Each area was self governing as Paul explains when some came from Jerusalem with 'letters' from notables like James and John they claimed were suggesting Paul toe the line.

The whole idea of 'government from the top down' does apply. The structure is God the Father, and Jesus Christ and then each of us Christians in His ekklesia, no men are in that 'government' are to be lording it over others.

1 Corinthians 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.

Notice the context, and the declaration of the subject.

1 Corinthians 12:28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

Notice these are 'gifts' not ranks or a chain of command! Organisations with ministers who rule their members 'from the top down' are wresting the scriptures.

Like all counterfeits, ministers and religions can look like the real thing, so much so, that they fool everyone, just like counterfeit money does. Nobody knows the note they get in change is not the real thing unless they are educated to recognize the falsities in the design or it is pointed out to them by someone who does know the difference.

It is the same with religious organizations, they look all right, they may sound all right, but how do they stack up against the actual truth of the Word of God, the Holy Bible? The careful student of the Bible will know when what they are being told does not ring true.

Jesus did not mince words when warning His followers about false religious individuals bringing 'another gospel'.

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

Philippians 3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

"Dogs" in the Bible refers to false prophets, ministers, and the 'officials' of human created and led "churches". The hundreds if not thousands of disagreeing so-called Christian denominations are not only not Christian, but most are idolatrous organizations which embrace all the things that God hates.

We are told by religious dictators who do not understand the scriptures that we should walk as Jesus Christ walked, meaning we should do all the things Christ did before His death and resurrection. How did He walk? He walked perfectly in the Law.

Picture a living room scene, where the minister is explaining to prospective members how Christ did walk? This is what He did, He kept the Law. So this is what we must do if we want to follow Christ! We must keep the Sabbaths, Holy Days, Tithing, etc. But is that what this passage means for us now? No, absolutely not.

The Bible has a continuous thread throughout from Genesis to Revelation emphasizing how human beings have always worshipped their own gods in their own way with their own holy days and their own practices which God hates. Even down to the wearing of "strange apparel", odd looking hats, black robes, or white dresses, adorned with gold and embroidery to impress.

Matthew 7:16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

What are the fruits of too many of these churches all over the world? Avaricious greed, forbidding to marry, supporting same sex marriages; allowing homosexuality, child abuse and paedophilia, in the ranks of their ministries; confusion, disunity, disharmony, and Biblical ignorance to mention but a few.

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

The Sadducees and Pharisees were doing it by abusing the law in Christ's time, and the 'concion' was doing it in Paul's time, and religious people using vain deceit abound in our era. They will tell you that you have to keep and practice the dogma, ritualism, and the practices of Judaism that Christ so faithfully kept before his death and resurrection, but you don't.

What can we do? We can avoid man's religions like the plague. Many thousands have been trapped for decades in the practice of false doctrine, false gospels, and religious counterfeits, and have suffered much misery as a result.

Do not allow men to tell you how to live, or what the Bible says and does not say. Get your inspiration, your instructions for life direct from Christ by careful study of His Word. By all means get some help from someone you respect, someone you know is an earnest student of the Bible, but be very wary of anyone espousing the teachings or the dogma of an organization, or even their own personal views if they conflict with and are inconsistent with the whole Bible. Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth, that is all truth that God wants you to have at this time in your life.

We can follow and walk directly with Christ who is the one and only mediator between God and human beings who is building His ekklesia, His assembly right now as we enter the end times.

### **Want to follow Christ? Walk in the light.**

Follow Christ who is the light of the world by keeping **His** commandments, and walk in the activities He requires of Christians now, which is to love God, and to love others as ourselves, and to be joyful.

John 8:12 Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

Here is another verse in 1<sup>st</sup> John which is frequently quoted out of context to support the doctrine that we should keep the “commandments”. Those who quote this verse, frequently use it to ‘prove’ and enforce the keeping of the Sabbath and the Holy Days and the laws of clean and unclean meats, etc., etc.

1 John 2:3 And hereby we do know that we know him, **if we keep his commandments**. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

Clearly we need to keep the commandments! Whose commandments? His commandments, Christ’s commandments! Were Christ’s commandments different in many respects to the ritual of the Mosaic Law? Yes.

So what is the context in John’s letter, which laws are meant here? Does it refer to the keeping of the Torah, the Old Testament Law, or does the context make it clear that it is referring to the New Testament Laws that Christ gave us to follow?

Bear in mind that Yahweh devised and wrote the Law that He gave to Moses. Yahweh became Jesus Christ, so Jesus would be more than familiar with the Law as He demonstrated in the Temple to the astonishment of the elders present. Jesus knew that the Law of Moses had its place and relevance through time, but He also knew that it was all going to change as a result of His life, death and resurrection. So He started to reveal the new emphasis He wanted His followers to adopt.

Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said of them **of old time**, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: 22 **But I say unto you**, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

Read the Sermon on the Mount and see how many times Christ said, “it is said of old time.... But I say unto you...” Christ brought new commandments.

The commandment 'thou shalt not kill' Christ upgraded to "don't even get angry with people or call them bad names, or relegate them to the status of 'fool'. In Christ's new law we are now required to open our hearts to love our brothers and all other people too.

Remember the principle of "progressive revelation". Matthew, Mark and Luke wrote between around 30-38 A.D. John's writings were probably some of the latest written near the end of his life and before the end of the first century. John's gospel contains information of a more spiritual nature, reflecting the expansion of understanding of the Gospel during the seventy or so years since Christ's resurrection, including the revelation of the 'mystery' to Paul in 63 A.D.

1 John 2:4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his (Christ's) commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to **walk**, even as he walked.

John is introducing the topic of "walking" in Christ, so what does this mean? It is of course a figure of speech, but one that people understand has actual tangible specific meaning concerning our daily conduct in life.

1 John 2:7 Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

John says in essence, I don't need to write the old commandments to you, you know them, but I do need to remind you that Jesus brought new commandments based on the old, but they were expanded into the spiritual realm of our hearts and minds so John went on to say:

1 John 2:8 Again, a **new** commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past (or is passing), and the true light now shineth.

What darkness is past or passing? The darkness of the old Law with its emphasis on the blackness of sin, and the darkness of death is past.

Yes it is appointed to all men for our bodies to die, but that death is nothing to be feared, and the very next thing you will know will be that you have been changed into a Spirit body as a fully fledged member of the God Family.

The whole emphasis of Christ's New Law is on loving others not hating anyone. When we allow ourselves to hate others, we are keeping Satan's commandments not those of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

1 John 2:9 He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10 He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11 But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

The context here is 'walking' in Christ, and it tells us how Christ wants us to 'walk' with Him and in Him now in the New Testament era, keeping His new commandments of love for all people. If we walk in darkness, we do not follow him, but if we walk in the Light, then....

What is the light we are walking in, commandments, yes, but what commandments?

Christ clearly explained to His disciples that He was introducing a new meaning to old laws in Matthew 5, the 'Sermon on the Mount'. As explained above, the physical ritual laws "you have heard of old time", Jesus was replacing with "but I say unto you" the new emphasis of spiritual heart laws. The New Commandments are a lamp, and the Laws of Christ are light.

These words were spoken to, and directly addressed to the eleven disciples just before Christ was crucified, but they certainly apply to all who would be Christians in our era.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. 18 I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. 20 At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. 21 He that hath **my** (new) commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Get your inspiration, your instruction in true Christianity direct from Christ by careful study of His Word. Pray, and ask Him for a continual flow of the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth that God wants you to have at this time.

1 Timothy 2: 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

The key to Bible study is being able to 'rightly divide the word of truth'. To achieve this does involve careful study, much time, and a great deal of assistance from the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 2:16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.

If you are, or have been 'religious', and have done your best to be a 'good Christian', check what you believe and what doctrines you are attached to very carefully directly from the Bible to make sure that you have not been deceived. If you have not had any interest in religion before in your life, be even more careful, as 'babes' and 'children' in the Word are more easily led and deceived.

Pray that God will open your mind to the light of His Truth.