

# December 2016

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- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

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Finally, brethren

**WHATEVER  
THINGS**

are true  
are noble  
are just  
are pure  
are lovely

**PHILIPPIANS  
4:8**

are of good report  
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE  
IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –  
**meditate on these things.**

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at [christstheway.com](http://christstheway.com).

A seven year old boy I know received \$100 for his birthday. Of his own volition he donated all his birthday money to purchase Bibles for Africans. "Even a child is known by his deeds, whether what he does is pure and right" (Proverbs 20:11)

Brother Patrick Farish is in the hospital recovering from surgery, so we do not have one of his excellent articles on Ephesians.

## Same Work

(excerpt from "Belizean Reports XXI")

Bobby L. Graham | Athens, Alabama, USA

**Same Work:** If it seems that all we ever do is preach publicly and teach from house to house, at least our efforts put us in good company, that of Christ and the apostle Paul. The Lord's work is to teach the gospel

wherever, whenever, to whomever, and by whatever means possible: Preach the word, teach the Gospel. There is no greater work; there is no other work. That is all that any congregation or any individual has the right to do to advance the gospel of Christ. No gimmicks, no frills, no pep rallies for Jesus, no games, no entertainment, no feedings (all of which draw a crowd), no missionary societies to coordinate all evangelistic efforts, no organizations linking local churches to oversee the work of the local churches, no schools established to supplement the church's work! If this sounds simple, it is! If this sounds narrow, so be it! Teach the gospel and establish local churches! That was all which first century churches or apostles ever attempted. This is our only work, because this is all that the Lord teaches that we are authorized to do (Matthew 28:19-20; John 6:44-45)! If you don't believe me, then believe the Lord. Believe the teaching of the Gospel. Where do you find the authority for any of the practices disavowed above? Send me the passage if you know one.

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## Question on the Role of Women in the Church

### Question

Could you please clarify for me your last paragraph on women speaking in church? Early on, you say, "Women may not rule over (help make decisions for) men in the church (1 Timothy 2:12)." Yet, you later say, "All members of the church (including women) have the right to have their opinions and needs considered ... and have their approval sought. This could be in a congregational business meeting or another arrangement." How could women have their opinions and approval sought, even in a congregational business meeting if, as you said earlier, their helping men to making decisions would constitute ruling over men? What am I missing? Particularly, do you think churches may have congregational business meetings with women present and contributing to the decision-making process with their oral statements (if they do so in a submissive manner)?

### Answer

Thanks for the input and the good question. I can understand your confusion at my answer. In Acts 6:1-4 a complaint came from the Hellenistic disciples to the ears of the apostles concerning widows among them. There is no limitation in the passage stating that the complaint only came from males. The apostles decided what to do about it. Then they called the entire church together and announced their decision. The entire church, men and women alike, were pleased. They had to have some way to know this. I am one of the two elders of the church where I preach. We have business meetings with the entire church. Anyone may express an opinion. Then the elders decide what to do, and we inform the entire church of our decision. We also seek their feedback. When I preached in Northern New York, the entire congregation met to discuss business once a month. Then the men withdrew apart and made decisions. The decisions were announced to the entire church. I make the decisions for my wife and myself, but I seek her input and approval on my decisions. Sometimes if she disapproves, I carry through with the decision anyway, since I am still convinced it is best.

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## Another Question about Feminine Submission

### Question

Briefly, is it wrong for woman to teach "over a man" in non-spiritual circumstances, as a school teacher, or politician, or TV personage?

### Answer

The New Testament applications of the submission of the woman (1 Corinthians 11:3; 14:34-35; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Peter 3:1-6) are applied to spiritual situations (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12) and to her husband in the home (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1-6). The Old Testament had the same requirement for feminine submission that the New Testament does (1 Corinthians 14:34; Genesis 3:16). Deborah judged Israel (Judges 4:4-5), and she commanded Barak to deploy troops to the Kishon River (Judges 4:6-7,14), and Queen Esther gave commands to her uncle and guardian Mordecai,

which he obeyed (Esther 4:15-17).

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## Question from Sri Lanka about the Lord's Supper

### Question

Matthew, 26:26 - And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

Did Jesus select that who are suitable for take bread and vine?

And,

please explain me the deep meaning of this verse, sir.

### Answer

The bread Jesus took was unleavened (flat) bread, because He was eating the Passover (Luke 22:7-20). At the Passover, no leaven could be in the house (Exodus 12:1-27), because leaven represents sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-7). The Passover of the Old Testament has been fulfilled in the Lord's Supper of the New Testament (Luke 22:15-16). Obviously, Jesus did not mean that the bread was literally His body or that the fruit of the vine was literally His blood, for He was still alive with them in the flesh, and His blood was coursing through His veins. Rather, He used a common figure of speech, a metaphor, an unstated comparison, in which one thing is said to be another (cf. John 10:7). The bread represents His body, and the fruit of the vine represents His blood. Christians come together on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7) to eat the Lord's Supper in memory of the death of Christ on the cross (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-34).

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## Where Love and Justice Meet

Jefferson David Tant | Roswell, Georgia, USA

Two of God's attributes are Love and Justice. The Scriptures affirm this. "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You" (Psalm 84:19). "The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

While we accept this as true, some wonder how these two attributes co-exist, as there might appear to be a conflict in some situations. This is a legitimate question, but not without answer.

Sarah had just graduated, and received a new car from her parents as a reward for her excellent record. Soon she wanted to "try it out," got on the open interstate and "flooded it." She reached 124 m.p.h. when she spotted the flashing blue lights in her rearview mirror. And you know what happened—a ticket!

At her court date, she appeared before the judge with a sheepish look on her face. "What is your plea, young lady?" he asked. "Guilty, your honor," she quietly replied. "Well, this is serious, and the penalty is \$500 or 30 days in jail." Sarah didn't have \$500, which meant 30 days in jail. Then the judge stepped off the bench and paid the court clerk \$500. Why? Sarah was his daughter, and he didn't want her in jail.

Love and justice met here. The law required justice to be meted out, thus the penalty had to be paid. The penalty was paid, so justice was done. But because the father loved his daughter, he paid the penalty himself.

Sometimes I ask those whom I am studying the Bible: "Why did Jesus have to die?" The usual answer is, "To save us from our sins." I reply, "That's right. But why did he have to die?" The student often is puzzled, not able to give a definitive answer.

In fact, we are all sinners, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Therefore all are under the sentence of death, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). And what can I do to

remove sin from my soul? Not a thing! I am powerless, for all the good deeds I may do in my lifetime can never remove even one sin. Therefore I cannot be in God's presence, for God is holy, and sin cannot be in his presence.

Suppose I murder someone. I am arrested, tried, convicted and electrocuted. When I die, I have paid the penalty for my crime, but I am still a murderer, for the person I killed is still dead. Thus while I paid the penalty, I did not remove the stain of sin. I had nothing with which to repay, for I was spiritually bankrupt.

Then Christ comes into the picture. He stands beside me as my advocate, as John declared: "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1). Paul gives the same thought:

*"Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us" (Romans 8:33-34).*

An "advocate" is an intercessor, as in Romans. In other words, we have one who pleads our case, a defense attorney, if you will.

Back to Sarah. The law demanded justice, and justice was done when the penalty was paid. But love met justice when the father paid the penalty. Now, Sarah could have refused to accept her father's offer. She had the right to choose. If she had chosen jail, it would not have been for the failure of love to act, it would have been because she refused to accept the gift.

With respect to our spiritual situation, since we are unable to do anything to remove our guilt, Jesus came and lived a perfect, sinless life. In doing so, he, as my advocate, says "I paid penalty for you." Since the wages of sin is death, when he died on the cross, he paid for me and for all mankind. The law demands death, and justice was served in his death. But love met justice in that act, which enables me to have the hope of heaven.

Then why will some go to hell? Because they have freedom of choice. God does not force anyone to accept the gift of salvation. We accept that gift when we give ourselves in obedience to the will of God. "And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation" (Hebrews 5:9). In one sense, God does not send people to hell. They go there in spite of all he has done to keep them out—the giving of his Son and the Holy Spirit's work in recording God's plan for us in the Bible. Satan works to deceive people, but the choice is ours. Choose life!

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## **The Wise Man's Three R's To The Young**

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

The book of Ecclesiastes is written by Solomon, one of the great kings of Israel, who was the son of David (Ecclesiastes 1:1). He was known for his wisdom, granted to him by God, when he had asked for "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9; read also verses 10-14). He gives great counsel to those who are young in Ecclesiastes 11:9 – 12:1. Notice three things he tells them to do in their youth, each beginning with the letter R.

Rejoice. "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). The word "rejoice" is defined as "A verb meaning to rejoice; to be joyful, to be glad; to gloat" (The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament). God certainly does not begrudge one the joys of being young. I remember a few years ago, there was a young lady whose faith lead her to be baptized into Christ. After a few months, she came to me stating that you could be a Christian and still have fun. An individual can be young and a Christian and can still rejoice.

Yet also notice there is a warning attached. The Lord will hold you accountable for the choices you have

made in your youth. Far too many young people make a mess of their lives, the balance of their life is spent reaping what they have sown. One will never regret living a pure life while serving God. Enjoy your youth and make wise choices. When standing before the judge of all the world the words you want to hear are, "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matthew 25:21).

Remove. "Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, And put away evil from your flesh, For childhood and youth are vanity" (Ecclesiastes 11:10). This seems to me to go hand and hand with the warning just sounded about judgment in the previous verse. The word "remove" is defined as "A verb meaning to turn away, to go away, to desert, to quit, to keep far away, to stop, to take away, to remove, to be removed, to make depart" (The Complete Word Study Dictionary – Old Testament). To avoid sorrow in life as one gets older, put away the sinful practices of the flesh. How many times has it been said, "I wished I had never done this, said that, or if I had it do over"?

Notice this comment by Warren Wiersbe, "The phrase "childhood and youth are vanity" does not mean that these stages in life are unimportant and a waste of time. Quite the opposite is true! The best way to have a happy adult life and a contented old age is to get a good start early in life and avoid the things that will bring trouble later on. Young people who take care of their minds and bodies, avoid the destructive sins of the flesh, and build good habits of health and holiness, have a better chance for happy adult years than those who "sow their wild oats" and pray for a crop failure" (**The Bible Exposition Commentary – Wisdom and Poetry**).

**Remember.** "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1). The wise man gives all a good reminder, God is our Creator and He is worthy of glory, honor and praise from those whom He has made (Revelation 4:11). It is so easy for one to become entangled in the affairs of this life and forget about the Lord. What better time to remember Him than when one is young? A friend of mine made this observation, "Life is a habit; we either form good ones or bad ones." How true that is. There are three great dangers from not remembering Jehovah in one's youth: (1) Might die young and be lost (2) one's heart can become hardened by sin so the truth cannot penetrate it (3) a person who has fulfilled the lust of the flesh, might not find any real joy now in serving the Lord. The allurements of the world have a stronger appeal to some than one's service to God (Hebrews 11:25). Much like Lot's wife when she looked back to Sodom (Genesis 19:26).

What great advice to all of those who are young. Rejoice, remove and remember. Youth is fleeting, life is short and eternity is long. May we all serve our God acceptably!

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## Why I Believe The Church Is Essential (3)

Tommy G. Thornhill | Etna, Arkansas, USA

I started this series to show the church to be an essential part of God's plan of salvation (Ephesians 3:10-11). The text shows that the church was established to fulfill God's purpose, to proclaim the plan of salvation to a world full of people, dead in trespasses and sin, walking according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, by nature the children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

Even though some deny the essentiality of the church in God's plan, I pointed out in the last lesson, from the text of Ephesians 3:8-11, that the church was in the mind of God from eternity. But people say, if that is so, why don't we read about it in the Old Testament? The reason is that the church is a New Testament entity, just as Jesus Christ. Neither of them were mentioned directly in the Old Testament, but there were plenty of prophecies that foretold and prefigured the coming of Jesus Christ to become the sacrifice for our sins and the church that was to come into existence with the advent of the Messiah.

People might wonder why they were not mentioned directly in the Old Testament. The reason is that God

was not ready to reveal them, until He prepared the world for the advent of His Son. The sending of His Son, and what He would do to save man, and the church's place in His plan remained a mystery until God decided it was time for these things to be revealed (1 Corinthians 2:9-13; Galatians 4:4-7).

Let's notice some entities in the Old Testament that prefigured the church. They help show that the church was no accident, but was definitely an important part in God's scheme of things.

The Old Testament tabernacle or temple was a physical type of the church, as can be seen in Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 6:12-13; Amos 9:11-12; Malachi 3:1). After the church was established, it was known as the temple of God (Acts 15:14-19; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:19-22). But I also want to note that the figure denoted singularity. There was only one tabernacle, one temple, one place where God's name was recorded and His glory dwelt (Exodus 40:34-38; Deuteronomy 12:5; 1 Kings 8:10-12).

The Old Testament temple was also called the house of God, another Old Testament designation that prefigured the church (1 Chronicles 29:2; 2 Chronicles 23:3, 5-6; John 2:16; 1 Timothy 3:15; Hebrews 12:22-23). God had prophesied the church to send out the message of salvation in the last days from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3; Zechariah 1:16). "The mountain (the seat of authority) of the house of God" was Jerusalem (Zechariah 8:3). The house of God is the church. The law was to go forth from Jerusalem "In the last days" (Daniel 2:28; Joel 2:28 - last days Acts 2:17; 3:24 - afterward Hebrews 1:2). In Acts 2 we learn the church was established in Jerusalem, on Zion (where the temple was located), in the last days, when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16f. In First Peter 2:5-6, 9 we have both concepts, house and temple. Again let me emphasize the oneness. There was only one temple, only one house.

Let me note something here about the church's beginning in temporal Jerusalem. While the church had been prophesied to begin in Jerusalem, it was never God's intention for the church in Jerusalem to become the mother church or headquarters for the church. The church of Christ that Jesus built has no earthly headquarters. The church/kingdom is a spiritual entity (1 Peter 2:4-5; John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21). Its head, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), is in heaven, and the pattern and ordinances by which the church functions comes from heaven, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit who inspired men to write the inspired book we know as the New Testament. The Lord's church has no earthly headquarters, and each local congregation receives its guidance from the New Testament. Not understanding this concept is one of the reasons for the apostasy during the first century and why many local congregations depart the faith for human ideas.

Another figure of the church found in the Old Testament is that of a sheepfold (Jeremiah 13:17; 23:2). When we come to the New Testament we find God's people referred to as a flock of sheep or sheepfold (Acts 20:28-29; 1 Peter 5:2-4). But there is only one shepherd (John 10:14-16), which means there is only one flock, made up of Jew and Gentile.

We also find God's people in the Old Testament referred to as "the Way" (Psalm 1:6; 18:30; 25:9; 77:13; Proverbs 10:29; Jeremiah 6:16). This term is used prophetically of the church (Isaiah 35:8; Jeremiah 32:38-39; Acts 9:1; 2; [8:3 the church]; 19:8-9, 23). But again there is only one way (Jeremiah 32:39; Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6).

God wanted His people to be His Holy Nation or purchased possession. Of all the nations of the world, God chose and separated Israel to become His peculiar or purchased possession. They were to be a holy nation because of their identity with Him (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:31-34; Ezekiel 37:22; Psalm 135:4). They were the only nation to wear His name, "IsraEL." "EL" is the Hebrew name for God. The name was first given to Jacob (Genesis 32:28; 35:10-12). His descendants were to become His chosen people, the only nation with whom He made a written covenant. This shadow or type is fulfilled in the church today. It was the nation, "born at once" (Isa.66:8; Malachi 3:1), "sudden coming," the strong nation over which the

Lord would reign (Micah 4:1-7). The church today is God's chosen generation (race), royal priesthood, holy nation, peculiar people (1 Peter 2:9). The one nation prophesied of in Ezekiel 37:22. It is the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16; Isaiah 49:3, 6). Again, notice the singularity. (to be continued).

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## Instrumental Music in the New Testament

William J. Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

We have in previous articles looked at instrumental music in the book of Revelation and in the Old Testament. This week, we focus on the occurrences of instrumental music in the New Testament, from Matthew through Jude, to investigate the manner of music to be used in New Testament worship.

The following five texts represent the occurrences of instrumental music in the New Testament:

- "When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, He said to them, 'Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping.' And they ridiculed Him." (Matthew 9:23-24)
- "But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament.'" (Matthew 11:16-17)
- "And the Lord said, 'To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace calling to one another, saying, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not weep.'" (Luke 7:32)
- "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal." (1 Corinthians 13:1)
- "Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:6-7)

Notice, though each of these texts speak of instrumental music, none of them are in the context of worship. In fact, there is not a single text in the New Testament which associates instrumental music with worship in the New Testament church. Consider what the New Testament reveals about worship in song:

- "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:30)
- "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Mark 14:26)
- "...at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." (Acts 16:25)
- "Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written, 'For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles and sing to Your name.'" (Romans 15:8-9)
- "What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding." (1 Corinthians 14:15)
- "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord..." (Ephesians 5:18-19)
- "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Colossians 3:16-17)
- "For both He who sanctifies and he who is sanctified are all of one, for which reason he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: 'I will declare your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.'" (Hebrews 2:12-13)
- "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms." (James 5:13)

The testimony of the New Testament is that to praise God in song, we are to sing. If our desire is to be God's people, doing things in God's way, then we'll not seek to do above or beyond what God authorized us to do in worship.

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## Is One Beer Okay?

Mike Thomas | Beaver Dam, Kentucky, USA

It is clear that God condemns drunkenness. His word warns, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Regardless of what anyone else says, God says no drunkard is going to heaven without repenting. Thus, "Do not be deceived!"

However, is it wrong to have just one beer at a party or one glass of wine at a business meeting? Does God also condemn moderate, recreational drinking? In answering these questions, let us at least acknowledge what God's word clearly says about alcohol. "Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is lead astray by it is not wise" (Proverbs 20:1). And, "Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper" (23:31-32).

At the very least, we should see He is telling us to not be lured by the pleasure of drinking, right? What else can "not look on the wine" mean? Put it this way, if He had said the same thing about chocolate ("whoever is lead astray by it is not wise"), would we interpret that as an invitation to eat chocolate in moderation? Fortunately, He has not placed that restraint on us (like He has intoxicating drink), but based on how people treat His teachings on wine I am not sure it would matter. I believe there would be Christians consuming chocolate even if God said to not look upon it.

"But what if I don't get drunk? What if I only have one or two beers? Is that still a sin?" Yes, it is. Peter addressed this very thing in 1 Peter 4:3 when he condemned "drunkenness, revelries, and drinking parties." "Revelries" refers to the celebratory use of alcohol (like after winning the game), while drinking parties refers to casual, social drinking without the intent of getting intoxicated. All of these condemn a recreational use of alcohol and drugs. The only exception the Bible gives is when we must use intoxicants for medical purposes ("a little wine for the stomach's sake," 1 Timothy 5:23). Other than that, we have no permission from God to use intoxicants.

Some will use Jesus' miracle of turning water into wine (John 2:1-11) to justify drinking and getting high, but that interpretation places Jesus in violation of other Bible passages. While it is true that wine is mentioned often in the Bible, it is also true that any juice of the grape was referred to as wine (Isaiah 65:10; Jeremiah 48:33). This distinction is seen in cases like Hannah, who had neither "wine nor intoxicating drink" (1 Samuel 1:15). This passage shows that some "wine" could be non-intoxicating drink, which is likely what Jesus made when He turned water into wine. If He did not, and He actually made intoxicating drink for a crowd, He violated the Scriptures. Isaiah said, "Woe to men mighty at drinking wine, Woe to men valiant for mixing intoxicating drink" (Isaiah 5:22). "Woe" is a warning of judgment against ungodly behavior. It is used here of people who mix intoxicating drink for recreational drinking. So, either Jesus violated this passage in creating liquor or He made a wine (beverage of the grape) that people could consume without getting drunk. You can believe what you want, but I choose to believe Jesus was not "valiant for mixing intoxicating drink." I do not see Him contributing to a drinking party.

Besides all this, God tells Christians to be sober-minded (Titus 2:2, 6). There is no way a person is sober after one drink, which is why airlines do not permit pilots to operate a plane after one beer or why school systems do not let bus drivers haul kids around after one glass of wine. These individuals may not be stumbling drunk, but neither are they sober and fully capable of making sound judgment. If such is the case in flying a plane or driving a bus, why would it not also be true for those who are to represent God to a



lost and dying world? How can we commune with Him if we are consuming the very thing He said to not even look upon?

For those who are still looking for ways to justify a moderate use of alcohol and drugs, consider these final questions:

1. Are you setting a godly example in purchasing and consuming intoxicants? As a Christian, you are supposed to be the “light of the world” in glorifying God in “good works” (Matthew 5:13-14). Are you doing that when you are seen drinking at a bar or buying alcohol at a liquor store? If a mother with small children was seen doing these things, she would be viewed with contempt. Would you be viewed any differently if people knew you were a song leader, Bible class teacher, or preacher? Are you an example “in conduct” and “in purity” while visiting these places or in acting this way?
2. Can you take God’s word with you while out drinking, without being an offense? If not, how can you say you represent what it teaches?
3. Would you have one beer before worship or teaching a Bible class? Would you be coming before God with a sober mind if you did? Would other Christians approve of you if they knew you did?
4. Does drinking make you a better Christian? Are you more spiritually-minded and closer to God by having a drink? If so, why are you afraid of certain people finding out that you drink?
5. Are you ready to meet God while drinking?

I have said enough. If these thoughts are not enough to convince you to obey God’s command to “not look upon” strong drink, there is nothing else I can say to change your mind. But know this, one of us is wrong. Either I have misinterpreted the Bible, and God does permit you to look upon and consume the wine, or you have been misled and are justifying sin. If so, what if your conscience has been seared and you have been sent strong delusions because you will not repent of drinking? Either way, until I can be shown otherwise from God’s word, I will encourage all drinkers to repent and be sober minded.

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## **Problems In Ephesus**

Sean P. Cavender | Bald Knob, Arkansas, USA

Perhaps we have read the epistle to the Ephesians and have become impressed they had no obvious problems. After you read the epistle, you do not walk away from it thinking they were overtly carnal. If you compared the church at Ephesus to the church at Corinth, then you’d certainly commend the church at Ephesus.

However, if you study the epistle of First Timothy, then you will get a different picture of the church at Ephesus. Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to try and disarm false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3). This harmonizes with the conversation Paul had with the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20. He warned of savage wolves who would come into the church and seek to destroy the flock (Acts 20:28-29).

Do we ever think about how Timothy must have felt working in Ephesus? Do we know what he had to constantly deal with? We have probably read Second Timothy 4:2, “Preach the word...with all long-suffering and doctrine” without really considering the perspective of Timothy. We praise Paul for these words. However, we rarely consider the context of what Timothy was enduring.

Paul left Timothy in Ephesus because he knew that Timothy could deal with the problems that were going to arise in Ephesus. Paul left Timothy to “charge some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:3). Things were either not well when Paul left Timothy, or he knew that things were quickly going to escalate and problems would soon arise.

The Ephesians were carnally minded. First Timothy 1:4 states that the brethren were contentious, argumentative, and were not focused on things that would edify others unto godliness. The Ephesians did not want to hear the truth (2 Timothy 4:3).

Some in Ephesus were intentionally destroying the faith of church members. We read of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who Paul delivered to Satan. These were men who were denying essential elements of the faith (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:17, 18).

Poor leadership contributed to the problems in the congregation. More than once did Paul warn Timothy in the appropriate manner to rebuke elders (1 Timothy 5:1, 19). Paul told Titus to appoint elders in the churches of Crete (Titus 1:5). No such command is given to Timothy. In Acts 20:28, the apostle warned the elders to take heed amongst themselves first, then the flock second. If faulty leadership exists in the church, you can expect problems in the rest of the congregation.

Christians loved money more than godliness. "For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). Perhaps this was one of the greatest contributors to all of the congregation's issues. Hearts were with earthly treasures, misplacing their love for God for the love and uncertainty of riches.

Timothy was commanded to teach and preach the word (1 Tim 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim 4:2). Dealing with problems is discouraging work. Yet, Timothy was told to continue preaching and teaching. That's what it means to "preach the word" and we should appreciate the hard and difficult work Timothy had as an evangelist in Ephesus.

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### **Present Truth**

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth" (2 Peter 1:12)

## **What The Bible Can Mean to You**

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*Although it is impossible to obtain exact figures, there is little doubt that the Bible is the world's best-selling and most widely distributed book. A survey by the Bible Society concluded that around 2.5 billion copies were printed between 1815 and 1975, but more recent estimates put the number at more than 5 billion (guinnessworldrecords.com).*

If you live in America, the odds are there is at least one copy of the Bible in your home. But how often do you read it? How much do you know about it? You need to know what the Bible can mean to you.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

### **Subject**

The apostle Paul affirms something of "All Scripture." The word translated "Scripture" "primarily denotes 'a drawing, painting'; then 'a writing'" (Vine. 552). This Greek term is found fifty-one times in the New Testament. Usually it denotes the Old Testament (e.g., 2 Timothy 3:14-15). Twice it is applied to New Testament books (1 Timothy 5:18; cf. Luke 10:7; and 2 Peter 3:14-16). In our text the apostle references "All Scripture," the entire Bible. The beloved apostle's subject is the Bible.

### **Source**

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Inspiration" translates the term "theopneustos." This Greek word is a combination of two terms: "Theos," meaning "God," and "pneustos," which refers to wind or breath. The word literally means "God-breathed" (Vine. 328).

The ancient psalmist illustrates the meaning.

*"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,*

*And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” (Psalm 33:6).*

The Hebrew poet is using parallelism, saying the same thing twice in different words, but reversing the subject and verb. “The heavens” of the first line is “the host of them” in the second. “The word of the Lord” in the first line is “the breath of His mouth” in the second. To say Scripture, the Bible, is “God-breathed” is to affirm it is “the word of the Lord.”

Men wrote the books of the Bible, but they were moved to write the words they penned by the Spirit of God (2 Peter 1:19-21). The Bible came from God and is truly the Word of the living God.

### **Use**

Paul enumerates four ways we should use “Scripture,” the Bible. It is profitable (“useful,” International Standard Version) for “doctrine” (2 Timothy 3:16), that is, “teaching” (New American Standard Bible). In fact, we must not go beyond the doctrine (teaching) of Christ (2 John verses 9-11).

It is also useful for “reproof” (2 Timothy 3:16), that is, “conviction, rebuke” (Arndt & Gingrich. 248). The Bible is a “mirror” (James 1:23) that shows us what we are really like. It is a twoedged sword piercing into our innermost being, revealing even our thoughts, showing us as we are (Hebrews 4:12), and convicting us of our sins (Romans 3:20).

Scripture is also profitable for “correction.” “Correction” is “a restoration to an upright or right state... referring to an improvement of life and character” (Vine. 130). Having shown us our sins, the Bible teaches us how to be restored to an upright life (cf. Galatians 6:1).

Finally, the Bible is useful “for instruction in righteousness.” “Instruction” denotes  
*the whole training and education of children.... 2. whatever in adults also cultivates the soul, esp. by correcting mistakes and curbing the passions; hence a. instruction which aims at the increase of virtue” (Thayer. 473).*

It is the word Paul employs in Ephesians 6:4 to describe everything fathers should do to train their children to fear the Lord, including both instruction and correction. Scripture trains us in righteousness, “the character or quality of being right or just” (Vine. 535). Thus, the Scriptures make us right before God, ready to stand before His Son in the Judgment.

### **Purpose**

Thus instructed, the man of God, the one devoted to His service, is “complete,” capable, proficient”... “able to meet all demands” (Arndt & Gingrich. 110). He is everything God wants him to be and able to do all the Lord requires him to do (cf. Acts 20:32; 2 Peter 1:2-8).

He is thus “thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Thus, anything that is truly a good work is revealed in Scripture, and anything the Scriptures do not authorize is not a good work, regardless of how right it may seem to us (cf. Colossians 3:17).

### **Conclusion**

Thus equipped, heaven will be our eternal home (2 Peter 1:10-11). What a blessed book, the Bible!

*Like a Star of the morning in its beauty,  
Like a Sun is the Bible to my soul,  
Shining clear on the way of love and duty,  
As I hasten on my journey to the goal (H.B. Hartzler, “My Precious Bible”).*

Make it your rule of life and guide to heaven.

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## Haggai

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### Author

Haggai wrote the book named for him. His name means “festive” or “festival.” He was a prophet of God who returned with Zerubbabel to Jerusalem from Babylon (536 B.C.) after Cyrus, King of Persia, issued the decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland following the Babylonian captivity (538 B.C.). Haggai and Zechariah were the two prophets to that generation (Ezra 5:1-2).

### Date

Haggai began to prophesy in the second year of the reign of King Darius of Persia, i.e., 520 B.C. (1:1).

### Background

42,360 Jews traveled from Chaldea to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel the governor (Ezra 2:1,64). Led by Joshua the high priest, they immediately restored Temple worship (Ezra 3:2) and began rebuilding the Temple Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed in 586 B.C. (Ezra 3:8-13).

The Israelites built themselves houses, but, due to opposition from their Gentile neighbors, they ceased work on the Temple (1:2-4; Ezra chapter 4). Since they put their own comfort ahead of the Lord, God did not bless them, and they were in great distress (1:5-11).

### Message

Haggai, as Obadiah and Nahum, had a single message. His cry was, “build the temple” (1:8). Haggai did not use eloquence, but relied on the authority of the Lord. Twenty-six times in the thirty-eight verse book he appeals to the Lord as the source of his message.

As Old Testament Israel, we must put the Lord and His kingdom ahead of our personal comfort and success (Matthew 6:19-34).

### Success

Haggai was eminently successful. Twenty-three days after his first prophecy the people began again to rebuild the Temple (1:12-15). Four years later it was complete (Ezra 6:14-16). Haggai promised great honor for the Temple and for Zerubbabel (2:1-9,20-23).

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## What Is the Kingdom of God?

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No Bible subject is more important than the kingdom of God. The word “kingdom” is found 236 times in the Bible. The substance of the preaching of both John the Baptist and Jesus was “the kingdom of God” (Matthew 3:1-2; 4:17). Righteous Israelites in the days of John and Jesus were looking for the kingdom (Mark 15:43). But, because they misunderstood its nature, the Jewish leaders were shut out of the kingdom of God (Matthew 23:13). What is the kingdom of God?

### Eternal, Universal Rule of God

The word “kingdom” primarily denotes rule (cf. Daniel 2:39), and the kingdom of God is the rule of God (Psalm 45:6). God rules over everything (Psalm 103:19), including the nations of men, giving them “to whomever He will” (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32). His dominion is everlasting (Daniel 4:2-3).

### Old Testament Israel

Old Testament Israel became His special kingdom at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6). God was King over

Israel (Psalm 149:2; cf. 1 Samuel 8:1-7), and the throne of Israel was the throne of God (1 Kings 2:12; 1 Chronicles 29:23). When national Israel killed the Son of God, the Lord God rejected them as His kingdom (Matthew 21:33-46).

### **Church of Christ**

God now rules through His Son, Christ Jesus. When the prophet Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a great image, He concluded by prophesying that during the days of the fourth kingdom (Rome) "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Earlier Isaiah had prophesied a Child to be born to sit "upon the throne of David and over His kingdom ... even forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus the Son of Mary is that Child (Luke 1:30-33). He lived under Roman rule (Luke 2:1-7). When He was raised from the dead He sat upon the throne of David (Acts 2:29-31). He is now "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:13-16). When God raised Christ from the dead, He "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come" (Ephesians 1:15-23).

Thus, in this epoch, the New Testament age, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Christ are one and the same (Ephesians 5:5). This kingdom is also known as the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 13:10-11; Luke 8:9-10).

The kingdom in this sense is the church of Christ. When Christ promised to build His church, He promised to give the apostle Peter "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). He didn't build one spiritual building and give Peter the keys to another. The church is the kingdom. In coming to the "general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:22-23), we "are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:28).

When people believe and obey the gospel, the Lord adds them to His church (Acts 2:36-41, 47). The kingdom of God is within them (Luke 17:20-21), i.e., God through Christ rules in their hearts, and they are in His kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9).

### **Heaven**

But there is a fourth sense in which the phrase "the kingdom of God" is used. The saved will inherit the kingdom, eternal life in heaven (Matthew 25:34, 46; 1 Peter 1:3-5). Thus, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22; cf. 2 Peter 1:10-11). Then, "death will be swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

### **Conclusion**

Thus, there are four senses in which Scripture uses the phrase "kingdom of God": the eternal, universal rule of God, Old Testament, national Israel, the church of Christ, and the heavenly home. If we are to inherit the heavenly kingdom, we must submit to the rule of Christ by faith and obedience. We must be born again by being baptized into Christ (John 3:3,5), become partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:2-11), and endure many tribulations (Acts 14:22). Are you an heir of the kingdom?

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