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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 christistheway.com.

Questions from Texas about Headcoverings

Questions

... suggested that I email you my questions about (1) "shame/dishonor", and (2) obeying the custom, with regard to the head covering and hair length in 1st Corinthians 11. My questions are underlined below.

For just a bit of background, I do not believe the custom of the head covering/restrictions on hair length are applicable in the society in which I live, but could be applicable in a society where these customs have meaning.

My husband has a longstanding conviction on the head covering and hair length. He believes that the custom mentioned in verse 16 is what "the contentious man is contending for", i.e. men being covered and/or having long hair, and women being uncovered and/or having short hair.

My first issue deals with the words "shame" and "dishonor" in verses 4, 5, 6, and 14. Shame and dishonor can be related to both a custom or a God-given command, but the latter would involve SIN.

I would reason that you cannot prove that something is sinful just because it has shame attached to it, but I lack a good biblical example of that. Would you have any thoughts to share about this?

Also, I have been asked to give examples of where God has ever accepted shameful or dishonorable behavior. If seen from the viewpoint of a custom, the example would of necessity need to be a non-binding behavior that had shame or dishonor attached to it (depending on whether it was done or undone). Would you have any comments to make about this?

Regarding the second issue, would it have to be a SIN if the Corinthians did not follow the custom as laid out by Paul? (men uncovered/short hair, women covered/long hair). I have said that the Corinthians needed to comply with Paul's instructions in chapter 11, but have been pressed as to whether it would have been a SIN for them not to comply.

Answers

A key to the shameful or dishonorable conduct of First Corinthians 11:2-16 is that the apostle teaches that shame or dishonor is properly attached. In Corinth, the man who worshiped with his head covered dishonored Christ; the woman who worshiped with her head uncovered dishonored her husband. The man would symbolically honor another head besides Christ; the woman would refuse to honor the headship of her husband. Paul forbids both, we must obey apostolic commands (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 3:14), thus, to so act dishonorably is sin.

Verse twenty-two of the same chapter reinforces this. It is sinful to "shame those who have nothing."

I conclude that any action that properly has shame attached to it is sin.

As to the second question, yes, the Corinthians would have sinned had they not followed the custom as commanded by Paul (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 3:14).

The Unusual Case Where An Old Testament Verse Is Quoted By Another Old Testament Verse

Pat Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

When we talk about the Bible quoting itself, we are almost always talking about the New Testament quoting a passage from the Old Testament. A very unusual case would be the Old Testament quoting itself. An example of this would be Isaiah 53 twice quoting from the story of the scapegoat in Leviticus 16. Isaiah 53:6c "and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" is an obvious reference to Leviticus 16:21, "all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat," and Isaiah 53:11c, "he shall bear their iniquities," is a quote from Leviticus 16:22, "the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities."

What can we learn from this occurrence? First, the scapegoat is a type of Christ in the normal sense of the word; that is, an analogy / parallel is being made between the two by God's word. Second, the way Jesus bears our sins is in the sense that our sins were laid on Him. We know this because that is the sense in which the scapegoat (the parallel) bore the Israelites' sins; their sins were put on the scapegoat (in type).

In light of this type, how can so many gospel preachers deny Isaiah 53:6c that in reality God "laid on him the iniquity of us all"? What does that mean? I hesitate to say because Christians need to learn to accept what a verse plainly says even if they don't understand its full import. But the just previous verse provides ample explanation: "The punishment for our well-being was laid upon Him" (**NASB**). "The punishment that brought us peace was on him" (**NIV**).

So You Want to Be a Preacher:

Larimore and Tant

F. Yater Tant (deceased) | "Gospel Guardian," September 22, 1955

In the 1890s the beloved T. B. Larimore held a six-month meeting at Sherman, Texas, and baptized something like 250 people. His prestige there and his influence were almost comparable to Paul's in Galatia at the time the Galatians "would have plucked out their eyes" and given them to the apostle.

Some months after the great Larimore meeting, the digressives moved into Sherman and literally swept the church off its feet. Of the people Larimore had baptized, something over 200 joined the digressive church. The loyal brethren, trying desperately to stem the tide sent for J. D. Tant, and worked up a debate between J. D. Tant and a leading digressive preacher of the day (we believe it was A. D. Rogers, but would have to check the records on that before saying for certain.) The debate attracted wide attention. Tant stayed in Sherman for nearly a month; he told this writer (his son) that he made more than 500 personal calls during the time he was there, talking with those who had gone astray, pleading with them to return to the truth, pointing out the error of digressionism. He made as many as six or eight calls on some families, staying in some places until three o'clock in the morning, reading the Bible, teaching, and praying with them.

When the time came that he had to leave all except about thirty of the 200 or more who went to the digressives had returned to the truth. Tant wrote Larimore that so great was the affection in which he was held in Sherman that it was his (Tant's) judgment that one simple statement from Larimore to the effect that he believed instrumental music in Christian worship to be sinful would be sufficient to cause the entire number of those still in digressionism to return to the church.

Brother Larimore replied that he had wept much over the divisions which were developing among his brethren, that he knew there were godly men and women on both sides of these questions, and that he had made up his mind "not to take sides" with either the one group or the other. He did not write the statement Tant had asked for.

Long before his death, however, Larimore realized that it was impossible to be "neutral" in a fight between truth and error. He did make the statement Tant had asked, and many, many others pleading with his brethren to remain true to the Book. He repented of his long years of indecision and "neutrality" and wrote Tant that he deeply regretted his unwillingness to declare himself during the Sherman crisis. He had made a grievous mistake, and he wished it were possible to repair the damage his silence had done.

We find a few good brethren over the country now who are attempting to walk the same tight-wire of neutrality between truth and error on the present issues before the church. One preaching brother declared he was going to "stay in the middle of the road" on current questions; another thinks it best not to use men in the congregation where he preaches if they have been "prominent on either side" of the current controversies; still another declares that he "is neither for nor against" such cooperative arrangements as Herald of Truth and institutional orphan homes and church support of colleges.

It all has a familiar ring. There were many such men in the days when the digression developed sixty to seventy-five years ago. They were determined to stay "neutral." They preached for churches that had the organ and for churches that did not have it. Most of them finally went with the digressives. A few, a very, very few, followed Larimore's course and publicly renounced the errors of the Christian Church.

When the truth of God's word is at stake there is neither time nor place for "neutrality." If centralized evangelistic cooperatives are permissible, then brethren ought to push vigorously for them, promote as many as possible; and perhaps finally develop one fine eldership which could take the "oversight" of all the foreign mission work of all the churches in all the world. This was the frankly avowed desire of one of Broadway's (Lubbock) missionaries who stated such to this writer some four years ago. If these cooperatives are not "according to the pattern" as set forth in the New Testament, then the gospel preacher who will not oppose them is either ignorant of God's word, or else is too cowardly to oppose that which is popularly received. In either event, he ought to take stock of himself, and "set in order the things that are lacking."

(Incidentally, the Sherman brethren paid Tant \$40.00 for his work with them and promised to send him \$60.00 more "when we pick the cotton this fall." In the mid 1930's Tant wrote them a letter, telling them he did not want to press them unduly, but something like forty years had gone by, and he was wondering if they had picked their cotton yet. If they had, he was sort of hard pressed, and could use the money!)

Editors Note - I'm not any expert on what's going on in the brotherhood, nor do I aspire to be. I see sermon topics announced for gospel meetings and hear what brethren say about preaching where they are. Clever little sermons with funny anecdotes and syrupy stories tickle the ear and leave brethren ripe for damnable error. The history of Old Testament Israel and church history overwhelmingly testify that a falling away (apostasy) occurs on a recurring basis in virtually every generation. The responsibilities of preachers and elders is clear.

"Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God. Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:26-31).

Preacher, instead of saving your job, save your own soul and theirs (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

"By This Time You Ought To Be Teachers"

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12).

The author of this book is rebuking those to whom he is writing for their failure to grow. It is quite apparent from this verse plenty of time had been given to them to become teachers, yet they were still in need for someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God. Just as obvious is the fact that they had the talent or ability to become teachers, or else the writer would not be holding them responsible.

Growth is a necessary and required part of being a Christian. The apostle Peter commands us to grow. "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18). This is not an option but a prerequisite so we can please our God. This same apostle tells us how such development can take place. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). When we hunger and thirst for spiritual food and satisfy our cravings by feeding on the word of God day by day our progress will be evident.

One of the things that God expects from our maturation is that we become teachers. I have seen very few churches through the years since I've been preaching that have enough Bible teachers. I certainly don't think it is because of a lack of ability on the part of the members. Many have simply failed to take the time and exert the energy necessary to become properly acquainted with the Scriptures to be teachers. You can't teach what you don't know. The prophet Hosea said,

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (Hosea 4:6).

Not only would the priests be destroyed for their rejection of the knowledge to be gained through the word, but those who were not taught by them would suffer as well.

We are taught so that we might teach others. The Lord's apostles were told to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Then they were instructed

to teach those disciples to observe all things commanded them (the apostles) by the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20). In essence what He was saying, teach those which were converted to teach others. Paul told Timothy, the young evangelist, "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

Not only do we need those who can teach the lost, but we also need teachers to give instruction to those who have been saved so they can grow. Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-12, speaks of those that the Lord had placed in the church, apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers, so the saints could be equipped to do the work of the ministry, edifying the body of Christ. For churches to achieve their full potential in reaching the lost and strengthening the saints, good teachers are sorely needed.

May each member of the Lord's church do all he can to grow strong in the knowledge of God's will, faithfully following those instructions and become teachers of the oracles of God. There is much we each can do in the kingdom. Let us be about the Lord's business.

Immortally Young

Mike Thomas | Bowling Green, Kentucky, USA

It is possible to be a child for life. Can you believe it? It happens. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that he wanted to discuss deeper, more meaningful aspects of Christianity with them, but he could not because they were spiritually immature. He wrote, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). He later told them to "not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature" (14:20). If we were to translate Paul's statements into everyday language, he would be saying things like: "Stop fighting between yourselves. Quit the bickering. Put away your selfish tantrums. Be more patient with one another and not so impulsive. Stop looking for ways to be offended. Don't wear your feelings on your sleeve." In short, he would say, "Grow up!"

It is a shame when we do not mature like we should as God's people. The writer of Hebrews had to address this deficiency when he referenced how his audience was still too young spiritually. He said, "For by this time you ought to be teachers you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12). This verse proves God expects more of us than just obeying the gospel. As great as it is that we had the courage, faith, and integrity to believe and conform to the truth, that act alone does not sum up our walk with God. We must continue to grow in our commitment to Him and denial of self if we are to continue to please Him. Jesus said, "By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:8).

Have you ever wondered why some Christians depart from the truth or fail to remain faithful to God's will? Or why some Christians are so brazen in their treatment of others, especially over petty matters? (I once read of brethren being at odds over which color the new carpet should be in the church building.) Why do Christians divide over the silliest things? One reason is a failure to grow. They have not developed properly in their understanding of God's character. They have yet to grasp John's statement: "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8). Anyone can think of themselves and place their opinions before others. The real test is when we crucify our will for God's and when we yield our will to others. Therein is found the real servant of Christ. Paul said, "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). If we have trouble getting along with others, it could be because we have misinterpreted that verse to say "esteem yourself better than others." How childish!

As painful as it is to serve instead of being served, we must maintain that mindset if we are to mature in Christ. Being an old Christian and growing old in Christ are not the same thing. And we must not assume

that we are advancing spiritually just because our outer man is perishing.

Not all who are grown in years are tracking at the same pace spiritually -- nor are all who are young in looks immature in Christ. True growth is a matter of faith. We have to want God's word more than anything, "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). But we must also be willing to apply it in how we treat others and in how we view God. Namely, "In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:10).

One of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible is described in Psalm 92:14, "They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing..." So let it be from our journey here. Let us grow up in the Lord as we grow old in the flesh.

Do Not Be Overly Righteous

IS THAT REALLY WHAT IT MEANS?

William Stewart | Odessa, Ontario, Canada

In the midst of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon, Israel's wise king made a statement that may strike us as rather odd. Ecclesiastes 7:15-18 reads:

I have seen everything in my days of vanity: there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise: why should you destroy yourself? Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: why should you die before your time? It is good that you grasp this, and also not remove your hand from the other; for he who fears God will escape them all.

Did you know the Bible said, "Do not be overly righteous?" It is a strange statement to find in a book which stresses righteousness. In fact, there are about 1,000 specific references to righteousness (words like righteous, righteousness, righteously, right, upright, uprightly, uprightness) in the Bible. Surely it's not possible to be too righteous, is it? And yet there it is in black and white in Ecclesiastes 7:16.

In fact, he follows it up with the statement "...nor be overly wise..." Let me point out the seeming absurdity or paradox here - Solomon, who was granted great wisdom from the Lord, writing in a wisdom book of the Bible by inspiration of the Spirit of God, cautioned about being overly wise. What is going on here? A book which exalts righteousness and wisdom has warned us about being too righteous and too wise. Let's dig into this text.

Perhaps the first thing we should acknowledge from Solomon's statement is this - extremes tend to beget extremes. When one extreme comes to the forefront, there is often an equal and opposite radical or unreasonable response or alternative. We can see this in many different realms: political views, policies, and actions; economic and social standings; religious doctrine and practice; even in parenting styles ranging from exceptionally strict to outrageously permissive. This is true in regard to righteousness as well. At either end of the pendulum, whether it be over-the-top righteousness or bottom-of-the-barrel wickedness, the end result is destruction and death. We're familiar with seeing the latter - the unfortunate and tragic results of excessive wickedness. Families have lost loved ones due to drunk drivers; innocent lives have been lost because of criminal activities; promiscuous behavior has invited disease and early death. Of course wickedness results in eternal destruction, but many forms of wickedness wreak havoc in lives and invite sorrow, hardship, and premature death.

But how could this be true of righteousness? How can being "overly righteous" invite destruction? A few years back there were videos posted on YouTube of a group of self-professed Christians who went to a Muslim festival in Dearborn, Michigan. It was a foolhardy, self-righteous endeavour which one could easily predict would not end well. It would be akin in some respects to going into a bar and trying to preach Christ

to a room full of drunkards. It is a volatile situation which does not lend itself to calm discussion and honest consideration of Scripture. These men walked through the crowd, denouncing Islam with a bullhorn, declaring their right to free speech, and stirring up a mob. In the end, not a single soul was converted to Christ through their foolishness, and they were escorted away by police after being pelted with bottles, eggs, and other projectiles. Now, I realize the spread of the gospel in the Bible caused riots at times. Paul and his companions were referred to as "those who turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6), and it has been stated of Paul at times that when he went to a town either a church or a riot started - sometimes both. So, what's the difference? Paul and his companions did not go out looking for trouble; they sought opportunities to speak with people about hope and heaven. This Dearborn group did not shine a light on Jesus, but they sure brought a lot of attention to themselves (having recorded and posted their experience). There were times in Paul's work where the pagans were stirred, and we see the apostle moving on (Acts 14) or being restrained by the brethren from engaging (Acts 19:29-31). Being overly righteous (self-righteous) can lead to foolish actions which bring danger and destruction.

Some, seeing "do not be overly righteous" will sadly see it as an opportunity for wickedness. Not too much wickedness, mind you, just a wee bit - you know, don't be too righteous, don't be too wicked - moderation. That is most certainly not the meaning of the text. Solomon was not giving a license to sin. To do so would be to contradict himself, for he wrote, "When the whirlwind passes by, the wicked is no more, but the righteous has an everlasting foundation" (Proverbs 10:25). And again, "The righteous is delivered from trouble, and it comes to the wicked instead" (Proverbs 11:8). And again, "The thoughts of the righteous are right, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful" (Proverbs 12:5). You get the picture (also see Proverbs 20:7; 25:26; 29:27). The Bible has a consistent call for God's people to be righteous, to walk in holiness (Leviticus 11:44; John 5:14; 8:11; Romans 6:1-2; etc.). Solomon's statements, "Do not be overly righteous" and "do not be overly wicked" do not condone sin in any measure. All sin is wickedness, and if unrepented, will lead to destruction.

Ecclesiastes 7:16 reads in the NASB, "Do not be excessively righteous, and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself?" When I read the phrase "excessively righteous" it brings to mind the Pharisees. Not that they were righteous individuals - they were not. But they perceived themselves to be righteous, in fact, excessively righteous. Recall the Pharisee in Luke 18 who "...stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men...' In his arrogance, he considered himself to be exceptional, and God was lucky to have him, or so he thought. Jesus said not many verses later, "...everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14). Exalting oneself is an effort at being overly righteous - it is self-righteous.

In Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18, Jesus warns his hearers about doing things to be seen by men, whether it is good deeds, prayers, fasting, etc.. The Pharisees were a ready example of what not to do, for they sought the attention and notoriety among the people. When we do things to be seen by men we are exalting ourselves - we are seeking the glory of man, and we make ourselves out to be overly righteous.

In Matthew 23, Jesus pointed out several ways the Pharisees exalted themselves and declared themselves "overly righteous." They would lay heavy burdens upon others, things which Paul would say had "...an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (Colossians 2:23). They made sure they were seen by men, wearing their enlarged phylacteries and borders on their clothing. They sat in the exalted places at feasts and in the synagogues. They esteemed religious titles and wore such with pride. They were an arrogant, self-righteous, outwardly holy inwardly corrupt bunch.

We need to be cautious not to make ourselves out to be something great. By all means, be zealous for God's word. Be zealous to keep His commandments. Be zealous for opportunities to share the message with people. However, don't go over-the-top. Don't seek to be more righteous, to look more holy, to display more piety than what God demands. When people do such things, they leave a sour taste in others for it smacks of pride and vanity and comes across as phony and bogus. We are called to be humble servants

saved by God's mercy. As the Lord reminded us, "...when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" (Luke 17:10). May we put our hands humbly to the plow, do our very best in serving the Lord, and declare His righteousness, not our own.

The Covenants (Part 1)

Vinson Hulen | Quitman, Arkansas, USA

In this investigation we will use Bible verses to learn what a covenant is, different covenants God made with people, what covenant we currently live under, and if we can blend or use portions of previous covenants. We will use **only** the Bible to find the answers.

The word "covenant" is first biblically used in Genesis 6:18.

Genesis 6:11-18, 22

11 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

12 And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

13 And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

14 Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.

15 And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits.

16 A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

17 And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and everything that is in the earth shall die.

18 But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons' wives with thee.

Then we read, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Genesis 6:22).

God made a covenant (contract) that if Noah made an ark out of the material, and used the plans and method as God directed, then Noah, his sons and all four wives wouldn't perish.

The covenant was conditional, solely based upon Noah doing what God directed (verse 22). Noah and his family were not going to be saved unless they did what God said, right? What if Noah built the ark out of pine or oak, would that have pleased God? Of course not, because when God is specific, it eliminates everything else!

In Genesis 17:9 we see God making a covenant (contract) with Abraham...

7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

8 And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

9 And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.

10 This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised (Genesis 17:7-10).

Let's reason together! What if Abraham didn't keep this covenant with God; then the covenant would be broken, right? What if Abraham said, "I will not physically circumcise every man child (verse 10), but I will

teach people that circumcision isn't necessary"? Would that have pleased God? Of course not, because when God is specific, it eliminates everything else! So, was this covenant (contract) conditional? YES! It was conditional based upon the removal of foreskin.

In Exodus 34:27 we read about another covenant (contract) being made between God and a specific people.

27 And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with THEE and with ISRAEL.

28 And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exodus 34:27-28).

Who was this covenant (containing the before mentioned ten commandments) made with? Was this covenant for everyone in the world or just Moses and the Israelites? This covenant was obviously made between God, Moses and the Israelites! When God is specific, it eliminates everything and everyone else!

Again, who were the ten commandments for?

Deuteronomy 4:13-14

13 And he declared unto YOU (Israelites) his covenant, which he commanded YOU (Israelites) to perform, even TEN COMMANDMENTS; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach YOU (Israelites) statutes and judgments, that YE (Israelites) might do them in the land whither YE (Israelites) go over to possess it.

Another easily understood example...

Deuteronomy 5:1-3

1 And Moses called all ISRAEL, and said unto THEM, Hear, O ISRAEL, the statutes and judgments which I speak in YOUR ears this day, that YE may learn them, and keep, and do them.

2 The LORD our God made a covenant with US in Horeb (Mt. Sinai).

3 The LORD MADE NOT this covenant with our fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) , but with US, even US, who are all of us here alive THIS DAY.

So, was this covenant (contract) conditional?

Deuteronomy 4:23-25

23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

24 For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

25 When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

This warning of "forgetting" the covenant by making a graven image is very clear. By "forgetting" the covenant and doing what they think is good, they would anger the Lord.

Did the Israelites break this covenant?

Jeremiah 31:31-32

*31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a **New Covenant** with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:*

*32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant **they brake**,*

although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

But God will make a **new** covenant (contract) with Israel!

Jeremish 31:33-34

33 But this shall be the covenant that I WILL make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Why will they “no more” teach neighbors and brothers saying, “know the Lord”? Because under the broken (old or previous) covenant a child entered the covenant through a physical circumcision at eight days old and needed to be taught to “know the Lord”. But under this new covenant (contract), people will enter it by hearing and understanding God’s word (gospel) as a reasoning and mature people. And it will not be just for the Israelites, but also for the Gentiles!

Isaiah 42:6

“I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles.”

This new covenant (contract) will be unmovable, and no one will be able to change it!

Isa 54:9-10 (starting at verse 3 is really awesome too)

9 For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.

10 For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed (gospel of peace = Romans 10:15 & Ephesians 6:15), saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee.

And these people will be called by a NEW NAME!

Isaiah 62:1-2

1 For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.

2 And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name.

And what was this new name?

Acts 11:26

*And when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called **Christians** first in Antioch.*

What were they called? Christians, and nothing else! Not Methodists, not Baptists, not Pentecostals, not Jehovah Witnesses; just **Christians**!

But let’s get back to the big question, “Does the old covenant (the ten commandments [613 total] given to Moses and the Israelites) continue today”?

Once again, lets reason together! (Isa 1:18)

Jesus makes a profound statement while preaching a sermon on a mountain in Matthew 5, 6 and 7

(sermon on the mount)!

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.”

Just Follow the Science

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Are you as sick of hearing that as I am? As TV commentator Brit Hume inquired, “Which science are you going to follow?” Medical? Economics? Social? Etc. Furthermore, which scientist are you going to believe? If a scientist says it, does that make it true?

No, I’m not opposed to science, but I’m just as opposed to junk science as I am to false teaching about the Bible.

There is no contradiction between real science and real biblical truth. The natural world, which is the realm of science, is the first and general revelation of God to man. “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1). “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead...” (Romans 1:20).

The Scriptures are the second, special, and final revelation of God to man. “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).

God cannot lie (Titus 1:2; et al). Thus, real science, the study of God’s first revelation, does not contradict Scripture, God’s second and only special revelation.

I’m no more impressed by what the majority of scientists say than I am by what the majority of preachers say. Scientists have agendas just as religious leaders do. Most preachers proclaim what will keep their paycheck, and the majority of scientists contend for what will win them a big government research grant. What the Scriptures plainly teach determines spiritual truth (John 17:17; 1 Peter 4:11) whether anyone believes it or not (Romans 3:3-4), and observation and experimentation, the scientific method, determines natural truth, even if only one Isaac Newton, Louis Pasteur, Marie Curie, or Albert Einstein conducted the experiment. **Majority rule is neither science nor Scripture but politics.**

I don’t believe the General Theory of Evolution, that all life on earth arose by purely natural processes. I am well aware that the great majority of scientists, but far from all, believe it, but it contradicts both science and Scripture. For Example, the most basic principle of life science is the law of biogenesis, life only comes from prior life. And, “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). Evolution contradicts both science and Scripture.

The only “global warming” I’m really concerned about is on judgment day.

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” (2 Peter 3:10-12)

“While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, Cold and heat, Winter and summer, And day and night Shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22).

Don’t let junk science on TV or the internet undermine your faith or give you anxiety. Just keep your faith

strong. Both science and the Bible are on your side.

Sojourners and Pilgrims

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"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:11-12).

My first preaching work outside the United States was in Western Canada in 1976. That was a piece of cake. Canadians jokingly call themselves "the 51st state," and I have fallen in love with Canada (well, except for the cold winters).

Next, in January, 1992 I spent a month with three other American preachers in Nigeria. Now that was a whole different ball game! Before we made it from the Lagos airport to the home of our host for the evening, we were stopped at a military check point manned by four drunken soldiers carrying AK47s! I had no rights! I was a "sojourner and pilgrim."

Christians are sojourners and pilgrims in this world. How should we live as aliens in a foreign country?

Loving Plea

The way the apostle makes his plea is an excellent example for preachers. He reminded his readers that he spoke from love, calling them "Beloved." This could be rendered "dearly beloved" (**KJV**) or "dear friends" (**ISV**). He didn't just issue a stern order; he begged them. This could be translated "beseech" (**KJV**), meaning literally, "to call to one's side" (Thayer. 482). It's the difference between a commander who sits safely in the rear and orders his troops into deadly combat and the one who shouts, "Come on boys!", and charges with them into that fray. A preacher must not exhort brethren to live one way, while he lives differently, but show them by example.

Basis of Plea

Peter addressed them as "sojourners and pilgrims." This is also the way he began his letter: "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter 1:1). The "Dispersion" (Greek, "*diaspora*"), "is the comprehensive designation applied to Jews living outside of Palestine and maintaining their religious observances and customs among the Gentiles" (**ISBE**, cf., John 7:35). But Peter's audience had formerly lived in lust through ignorance (1 Peter 1:14; 4:1-2), their former lives had been "aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers" (1 Peter 1:18), they "were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:10), and they had spent their "past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles" (1 Peter 4:3-4). These were Gentile Christians living in their own native homelands.

But they were nonetheless pilgrims and sojourners. A "pilgrim" is a person "residing in a country not one's own, a sojourner, stranger" (Mounce. 1236), "an alien, sojourner" (Vine. 471). Christians in every generation are "the Dispersion" and are "pilgrims" in our own native homelands in that we are just passing through this earthly realm as strangers to the world and its lusts, while our true citizenship is in heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16; 1 Peter 2:11-12; Colossians 3:1-4). A disciple of Christ is a "stranger" to this world, "*a foreigner, one who lives in a place without the right of citizenship*" (Thayer. 490). Just as ancient Jews in the Dispersion were strangers living in foreign lands among people whose beliefs and customs were totally different from theirs, so were these Gentile saints.

And so we must be wherever we live. We must be "in the world" (John 17:11) but "not of the world" (John 17:14). "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

The Plea

Peter pleaded, “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable” (1 Peter 2:11-12).

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:16-17).

The Spirit leads us through His word (Romans 8:2, 14) to turn away from the “fleshly lusts,” or “works of the flesh” (1 John 2:15-17) that arise from our evil desires (James 1:13-15; Ephesians 4:22).

These evil desires “war against the soul.” Our heavenly citizenship brings us into deadly spiritual combat “against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12) who strive to bring us captive to Satan through sin. We must not surrender! We must “fight the good fight of faith to lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:12).

The result will be to “to have your conduct honorable.” The term here translated “honorable” (*“kalos”*) means “beautiful, good” (Mounce. 1179, cf. Titus 3:8), “*excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well-adapted to its ends*” (Thayer. 322).

Our Audience

There are citizens of our earthly nation who are aliens of our heavenly who are watching us, the “Gentiles,” worldly neighbors who walk “in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” and “think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you” (1 Peter 4:3-4; cf. 2:12).

We want to lead them by our conduct to “glorify God.” They do this by coming to Christ and bearing fruit for Him (John 15:1-8).

This is ultimately “in the day of visitation,” i.e., the day when the Lord comes in judgment. The Master used this term “visitation” to denote His coming in judgment on Jerusalem and the nation of Israel (John 19:43-44), and one day He is coming to judge the world (Matthew 25:31-46). Our goal is to lead our alien sinner neighbors to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven by living before them daily a beautiful life, an honorable life, one well adapted to the goal of bringing them and us to glorify God when His Son returns in judgment.

Conclusion

As Albert Brumley beautifully wrote, and we sing:

*“This world is not my home,
I’m just a passing thru.
My treasures are laid up
somewhere beyond the blue;
The angels beckon me
from heavens open door,
And I can’t feel at home in this world anymore.”*

Don’t get caught up in worldly sins, pleasures, wealth, or politics. We’re just sojourners and pilgrims here.

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Colossians 3:2-4).

And while you’re on that pilgrimage to the heavenly land, take as many poor, lost Gentiles with you as you can. Just live a daily, beautiful life as you travel through.

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