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Articles

Many are Called, Few are Chosen (Copyright 2010) by James Summerville (Gretna, Louisiana)

I'm a regular guy. I like sports, particularly football. I enjoy action movies and silly sitcoms. Occasionally I watch cartoons, giggling like a kid at the antics of Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Yosemite Sam. I'd like to posthumously punish whoever invented suits and ties. When I visit McDonald's and Wendy's, I don't order the salads. If you give the remote to me, I won't return it until I flip through 100 or so channels at breakneck speed, twice.

Yes, I'm a channel surfer. Every so often, I stumble upon broadcasts of religious services in cavernous auditoriums, led by charismatic preachers, such as Joel Osteen, TD Jakes, Fredrick Price, and Robert Schuller. They're preaching to thousands of people, in all likelihood about Christian living; nothing wrong about that. However, as I pause to watch their shows, I can't help but recall the following statement by Jesus: "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Are the thousands of people in those auditoriums the "many" or the "few"?

There are over 2 billion Christians in the world. Christianity is the world's largest and fastest growing religion, due mainly to charismatic movements in Africa and South America. Are the 2 billion Christians among the "many" or the "few"?

Well, that's a self-righteous question. For years we've been encouraged (conditioned, perhaps) to think of ourselves as special. While true—for some unknowable reason, God has opened our eyes to glimpses of His eternal truths—this feeling has bred a touch of arrogance in some of us. After all, the implication is that while we're special, others are not.

I've been around long enough to learn a few truisms: intelligence is sometimes overrated; wisdom doesn't automatically increase with age; and religious arrogance is the worst type of arrogance. With respect to the latter truism, it's sad but true: I've met more haughty people inside the Church than outside it. No, I'm not bashing the Church. Most brethren are indeed humble. But I've met self-important, not-so-nice brethren who believe that God is on their side, no matter what. Therefore, it becomes impossible for them to work and fellowship with others who don't share every iota of their beliefs.

On the other hand, I've met so many humble, nice people outside the Church. Moreover, many of the historical figures we admire, such as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Winston Churchill, and Thomas Jefferson, were not Christians per se. They were deists (Washington, Franklin), agnostics (Churchill), or undeclared atheists (Jefferson).

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Therefore, who am I to question someone’s calling? And why should I care? As Paul advised the Philippians, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

While we shouldn’t self-righteously question the calling of others, the Bible does encourage us to question our own calling: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith” (II Corinthians 13:5). Here, the Apostle Paul used the poetic term “in the faith” to mean a system of beliefs shared by an assembly of believers. A modern-day, albeit dull, translation would be “in the church.”

Thus, we should ask ourselves a simple but profound question: are we among the “many” or the “few”?

The Church

Jesus said to Peter, “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades [Greek for “grave”] will not overpower it” (Matthew 16:18). Though Jesus was speaking to Peter, the rock to which He referred was Himself: “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ” (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

The Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, in 31 AD. In response to the miraculous events of that day, and as a result of Peter’s stirring sermon, many people were converted: “So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:46-47).

The word “Church” derives from the Greek word ekklesia, which means assembly. In other words, Jesus built an assembly of like-minded brethren. The author of Hebrews equates this assembly of early Christians with the Church of God: “to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23).

Because this assembly was the “church of the firstborn registered in heaven,” they must’ve been doing something right. Obviously, they were among the “few,” not the “many.” What did they believe? When and how did they worship?

In short, we need a portrait of the first-century Church. First, a brief history of early Christianity.

Early Christianity

Originally, all Christians were Jews. “The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity.”^[1] In his magisterial history of the decline of the Roman Empire until the fall of Constantinople in 1452, Edward Gibbon included a succinct and insightful history of the early centuries of Christianity. He affirms what most scholars believe, and indeed, what the Bible states: early Christians were considered a sect of Judaism.

“The origins of modern Christian diversity, biblical scholars contend, can be found in the early Christians’ ties to Judaism. Despite the drama of Pentecost and the missionary fervor that followed, it was actually some time before the first Christians thought of themselves as having started something altogether new.”^[2]

Gibbon records that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were Jewish. They presided over congregants identified as Nazarenes, who “united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ.”^[3] However, unlike Judaism, Christianity was an inclusive religion. With relish, the early Christians, especially the apostle Paul, proselytized among the Gentiles (or non-Jews). The gentile converts, however, brought their pagan beliefs into the early Church. During the next few decades there was a struggle between two sets of Christians: those who kept “the commandments of God and [held] to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17) and those who discarded any trace of Judaism, especially its adherence to Old Testament law and theology. “The Jewish converts, or as they were afterward called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of polytheism inlisted (sic) under the banner of Christ.”^[4]

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In the ensuing centuries, Christians engaged in a long process of self-definition in relation to Judaism. The breach between early Christianity and Judaism (as expressed in the Old Testament) was hastened by the disastrous consequences of the 1st and 2nd Jewish revolts in Palestine, from 66-70 AD and in 135 AD. The Romans quashed these revolts and subsequently persecuted the Jewish religion. Most Christians, therefore, dared not to associate themselves with Jews, and consequently discarded laws, customs, and ideology inspired by Old Testament theology. In short, after these revolts, many Christians decided not to be tainted by association with the persecuted Jews. Shorn of Judaic or Old Testament influences, this emerging Christianity had to invent or adopt new customs, laws, and theologies.

The men who succeeded the Church leaders of the apostolic era (31 AD to the 90s AD) grew up in a world infused with paganism and Hellenism (Greek ideas): “The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business and pleasure, of public or private life; and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind.”^[5]

Because they did not want to be associated with the persecuted Jews, and because they wanted to accommodate the pagan converts, these men sought to replace God’s laws, Holy Days and Festivals with pagan substitutes. For example, “The Roman Catholic Church chose December 25 as the day for the Feast of the Nativity in order to give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals. For example, the Church replaced festivities honoring the birth of Mithra, the god of light, with festivities to commemorate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bible calls the light of the world. The Catholic Church hoped to draw pagans into its religion by allowing them to continue their revelry while simultaneously honoring the birthday of Jesus.”^[6] The early Roman Catholic Church might have had good intentions in trying to convert the gentiles by Christianizing pagan rituals. But in doing so, they undermined the truth of God.

Moreover, many of the so-called Church fathers were infatuated with Hellenistic ideas and philosophies. Hellenism refers to Greek culture and its diffusion. Greek ideas were first propagated throughout the Mediterranean world by the conquering armies of Alexander the Great, in the fourth century BC: “The conquests of Alexander the Great spread Hellenism immediately over the Middle East and far into Asia. After his death in 323 B.C., the influence of Greek civilization continued to expand over the Mediterranean world and western Asia.”^[7]

The Romans adopted Greek ideas, and Plato was an icon. The Church fathers were by and large citizens of the Empire and thus shared this great respect for Plato and Platonism. For example, “The theologians Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and St. Augustine were early Christian exponents of a Platonic perspective. Platonic ideas have had a crucial role in the development of Christian theology and also in medieval Islamic thought.”^[8]

Even the Catholic Encyclopedia admits Plato’s influence on early Christian theology: “Nevertheless, the great majority of the Christian philosophers down to St. Augustine were Platonists. They appreciated the uplifting influence of Plato’s psychology and metaphysics, and recognized in that influence a powerful ally of Christianity in the warfare against materialism and naturalism.”^[9]

Why were many so-called church fathers (e.g., Clement, Origen, and St. Augustine, arguably the most famous and influential Christian theologians) devoted to Platonic ideas? These men were products of their time. They were pagan converts who had previously embraced Hellenic ideas. And because they discarded most Old Testament theology, they needed replacements. They found several replacements in the teachings of Plato.

The “Greek apologists recognized also elements of truth in Hellenic literature, especially in the Platonic and Stoic philosophy, and saw in them, as in the law and prophecies of Judaism, a preparation of the way for Christianity. Justin (Martyr) attributes all the good in heathenism to the divine Logos (Jesus), who, even before his incarnation, scattered the seeds of truth...and incited susceptible spirits to a holy walk. Thus, there were Christians before Christianity; and among these he expressly reckons Socrates and Heraclitus. Besides, he supposed that Pythagoras, Plato, and other educated Greeks, in their journeys to the East, became acquainted with the Old Testament writings, and drew from the doctrine of the unity of God, and other like truths....This view of a certain affinity between the Grecian philosophy and Christianity,

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as an argument in favor of the new religion, was afterwards further developed by the Alexandrian fathers, Clement and Origen.”^[10] Furthermore, “even Augustine acknowledges the Platonists approach so nearly to Christian truth that with a change of some expressions and sentences, they would be true Christians.”^[11]

Are you still awake?

I hope so, because history can seem boring at times; its relevance to modern-day life isn’t readily apparent. For example, who cares if the early Church had “united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ”? Answer: not many people do care, but you should. After all, these same first-century Christians comprised the “general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). They were among the “few” chosen by God to perform His Work. Therefore, our goal is to emulate them. As stated earlier, we need to draw their portrait. Afterward, we should compare our 21st century church (of whatever denomination) to the portrait of the 1st century church. If your church resembles that portrait, great! If not, well, you might have something to think about.

Appearances are deceiving

“Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.’ With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:38-41).

The Church got off to a smashing start: on that first Pentecost, thousands of Jews converted to what was later called Christianity. In fact, the day’s euphoria moved some brethren to create what might’ve been the world’s first commune: “All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:38-47).

However, despite the best efforts of the apostles, especially Paul, the euphoria eventually subsided. Indeed, the Christian growth rate increased slowly throughout the first century:

“Progress must have seemed terribly slow during the first century—the projected total is only 7,530 [Christians] by 100 [AD]. There was a greater increase in numbers by the middle of the second century, but still the projection amounts to slightly more than 40,000 Christians. This projection is in extremely close agreement with Robert L. Walker’s estimate of ‘less than fifty thousand Christians’ at this time—‘an infinitesimal number in a society comprising sixty million’...the survival of Christian archeological evidence would have been roughly proportionate to how much there could have been to start with. The lack of anything surviving from prior to 180 [AD] must be assessed on the basis of the tiny number of Christians who could have left such traces. Surely it is not surprising that the 7,535 Christians at the end of the first century left no trace.”^[12]

Before we dismiss this quote as scholarly nonsense designed to debunk our intuition of a dynamic first century church, we should consider the opening chapters of the book of Revelation. These chapters include divinely-inspired letters to the churches located in Asia Minor, today modern-day Turkey. They provide a glimpse of the state of Christianity in the closing decade of the first century. These Christians were unenthusiastic, to say the least: the Ephesians had “lost” their “first love”; although the Sardinians had a “reputation of being alive,” they were “dead”; the Laodiceans were “lukewarm, neither hot nor cold.” The churches at Pergamum and Thyatira were no better: they had regressed into paganism and hedonism.

By the close of the first century, the true Church was small, lackluster, meandering, and driven by controversy. In this context, we understand Jude’s admonition: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (verse 3).

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Some scholars have estimated that, by the end of the 4th century, Christians had comprised about half of the Roman Empire. Nonetheless, appearances are deceiving. According to Jesus' prediction, many are called, but few are chosen. Despite their burgeoning numbers, there were relatively few Christians (in the most complete sense of the word; more on that later) by the end of first century, and probably even less by the end of the fourth century.

Back to the future

[Dr. Emmett Brown](#): Then tell me, "Future Boy", who's President in the United States in 1985?

[Marty McFly](#): Ronald Reagan.

[Dr. Emmett Brown](#): Ronald Reagan? The actor? [Dr. Brown chuckles in disbelief]

[Dr. Emmett Brown](#): Then who's VICE-President? Jerry Lewis?

I love the first Back to the Future movie, released in 1985. A teenager (Marty McFly) of the 1980s “travels back in time to the 1950s, where he must arrange for his mismatched parents to meet—or else he won't exist.”^[13]

Though it's a zesty comedy that doesn't take itself seriously, Back to the Future's subtext is provocative. In short, can we understand the present and predict the future by delving into the past? For the purposes of this article, what can we learn of the current and future Church of God by analyzing its past?

Jesus commanded His disciples (later apostles) to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus gave them a worldwide commission. However, earlier He predicted that His disciples will not have achieved that worldwide mission before He returns: “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel...for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:6, 23, emphasis mine). Although Jesus commanded His disciples to preach to all nations, here He predicted that their success will be limited to the “cities of Israel.”

Although the goal is worldwide conversion, the disciples, and their spiritual descendants, including you and me, won't succeed. According to Jesus' prediction, by the time He returns, the Church will be limited to sections of the cities of Israel (“you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel...”). Therefore, should we book the next flight to Israel to find the Church of God? No. Why not? Well, the answer resides in the history of biblical Israel.

A necessary, brief history of biblical Israel

For the sake of brevity, a short, selective history of biblical Israel: after the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites (comprising 12 tribes, one of which was Judah, whose members were called Jews) eventually formed a confederacy under King Saul, around 1000 BC. Sometime after Saul's death, the 12 tribes of Israel formed a kingdom under King David. The kingdom remained intact for about 100 years, until it split in two. The northern 10 tribes rebelled and seceded from the southern tribes, which were led and represented by the tribe of Judah. After the split, the northern tribes became known as the “house of Israel” and the southern tribes as the “house of Judah.” The northern tribes were eventually conquered by Assyria, its inhabitants deported into regions of the Assyrian Empire. Thereafter, they became lost to history.^[14]

“For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’ ‘Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths’” (Hosea 2:5-6). Here God used poetic and symbolic language to describe the sins of the house of Israel. (Hosea was a prophet to the house of Israel.) God said He will “build a wall against her [the house of Israel] so that she cannot find her paths.” In other words, the house of Israel (comprising the northern ten tribes or nations) would become so oblivious of their identity that, even if they tried, they will be unable to discover their origin.

Jesus referred to the house of Israel as lost and sent His disciples to them. And they (the Church) will remain there until Jesus returns: “you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.” In which direction did His disciples travel after receiving this command? It's obvious that Christianity spread westward from Palestine. And Christianity today is found largely in the Americas and Europe, and in Australia (originally, a British

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colony). A majority of Asia is Buddhist and Islamic, northern Africa is largely Islamic, and sub-Saharan African religion is largely a combination of Christian and pre-Christian animism.

What’s my point?

Simple: as predicted by Jesus, the Church never expanded to the four corners of the globe. According to the 6th chapter of Matthew, by the time of Jesus’ return, the Church will be planted only in the cities of Israel. No, not the Israel in the Mideast; rather, in the cities and towns founded by descendants of the ancient Israelites who had migrated into Europe and eventually North America-[\[15\]](#)

Furthermore, as Jesus said, “many are called, but few are chosen.” In other words, the Church, then and now, is small. Its extent is limited to the “cities of Israel”; again, then and now. Thus, the portrait of the first century Church is small. And despite modern Christianity’s size (over 2 billion Christians; the largest, fastest-growing religion in the world), as predicted by Jesus, the Church remains small.

Well, that’s disappointing. Almost two thousand years have elapsed since Jesus’ resurrection, and the Church—in the most complete sense of the word—remains small.

A paradox

Thus far we’ve determined the size and location of the first century Church: small and located throughout Europe. The paradox is this: Christianity grew, slowly but inexorably, to reach today’s status as the world’s largest and fastest-growing religion. Nonetheless, Jesus predicted that the Church would continue to be small, even to the time of His return. Therefore, the conclusion is inescapable: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matthew 7:21-23)-[\[16\]](#)

It’s not our job to (judgmentally) determine who is saved and who is not. Rather, as Paul admonished the Corinthians, we should examine only ourselves. One method of examination is to compare ourselves to our spiritual ancestors, that is, to the earliest Christians, who were called the “church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” What were their attributes? Why were they special?

A woman, a dragon, and you

“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (Revelation 12:17).

The book of Revelation symbolically portrays Satan as a “dragon.” In the cited scripture, the “woman” symbolizes both Mary (in the past tense) and the Church (in the future tense). For some reason, Satan is murderously enraged at her offspring—in other words, the brethren of the Church. Why is he so angry? Because they’re the saints of God: “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Rev 14:12). They will “inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). They will be “kings and priests to our God;” they “shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10). Therefore Satan, who would like to remain the “ruler of this world” (John 12:31), wants to destroy these saints.

What are the defining characteristics of these saints? What makes them special? Easy; the answer is found within the scripture itself: “here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.”

Earlier I referred to “Christians” in the “most complete sense of the word.” I also referred to the “Church” in the “most complete sense of the word.” It’s obvious that “saint” and “Christian” are synonymous. Moreover, these saints/Christians are members of God’s Church, spiritual heirs to the first-century “church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). The 12th and 14th chapters of Revelation describe them as those who keep God’s commandments and hold to the faith of Jesus. Just one attribute is not enough. Christians—again, in the most complete sense of the word—should hold to the testimony of Jesus and obey God’s laws, as defined in the Old Testament. Furthermore, the Church, in the most complete sense of the word, should teach both the necessity of holding to the

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testimony of Jesus and obeying God’s commandments.

The two crucial Christian attributes

“Holding to the testimony of Jesus” is the sine qua non of Christianity. In other words, believing that Jesus is your Savior is the bedrock of Christianity, the definitive Christian attribute. However, according to the Bible, just believing isn’t enough: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19). Just faith in Jesus isn’t enough: “But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20).

Early in His ministry, Jesus dispelled the notion that He advocated the irrelevance of God’s law, as defined in the Old Testament: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Despite the clarity of Jesus’ statement, because He didn’t leave behind any written statements, there was a struggle to define Christianity in the decades after His death and resurrection. The Gospels, composed decades after His death and resurrection, were written to portray the definitive Jesus.

Roughly speaking, two viewpoints prevailed in the earliest centuries of Christianity. On one side were the Jewish converts, many of whom believed that strict adherence to God’s laws was necessary for salvation. On the other side were the pagan converts, many of whom believed that salvation depended only on the belief in Jesus as our Savior; they taught that Jesus had nailed God’s commandments and laws to the cross.

Paul’s letters demonstrate that both sides were right and wrong.

A synopsis of Paul’s teachings

The apostle Paul was once a Pharisee who persecuted Christians (Acts 26:2-5; Acts 9:1). However, after his famous Road-to-Damascus conversion, Paul began to preach as a Christian to the Gentiles and Israelites. He continuously emphasized justification and salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus, the prophesied Messiah. Nowhere in his epistles did he teach that Jesus nailed the Law of God to the stake. On the contrary, Paul called the Law of God holy and good, and he obeyed it: “I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14).

Paul obeyed the Law of God. He observed the Sabbath and Holy Days and Festivals, which are described in the Old Testament, and urged others to do the same: “Therefore let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:8). Here, Paul was urging the gentile Corinthians to observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Paul did not claim that this Feast belonged only to the Jewish people. Moreover, this Feast is one of God’s Festivals and Holy Days, as is the Sabbath.

Paul took exception to the claim that strict observance of the Law can save people. First, everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23), so it’s foolish to claim salvation by obeying the Law of God. Secondly, if you can obtain salvation by strictly observing the Law, then you don’t need Jesus. That’s heresy.

The Law of God leads us to Jesus: “Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). By realizing that we’re sinners in need of God’s mercy, we thus acknowledge the necessity of accepting Jesus as our “sin offering” (Romans 8:3)

We’re sinners when (not if, but when) we break God’s Law, including the seventh-day Sabbath (4th commandment). Therefore the Law cannot save us; only Jesus can. Our faith in the saving grace of Jesus leads us to salvation: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2). And “knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified” (Galatians 2:16).

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Paul did not criticize the Law itself but rather the self-righteous belief that people can obtain salvation solely by obeying it. Salvation cannot be obtained, said Paul. Strict observance of the Law, Sabbath, and Holy Days and Festivals (if it were possible) will not save you. Rather, we’re justified by faith in the saving grace of Jesus. It’s a gift from God.

Jesus did not redeem us from the Law, but from the penalty (death and eternal separation from God) incurred by breaking it (Galatians 3:13). Furthermore, Jesus, Paul and the other apostles obeyed the Law of God. They observed the Sabbath and God’s Holy days and Festivals, as identified in the Old Testament. By the way, there was no “New Testament” in the days of Jesus, Peter, and Paul. As stated earlier, the Gospels were written many decades after the death and resurrection of Jesus. And the New Testament, as a whole, wasn’t put together until centuries after the earliest Christians had died. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures to which Paul referred is the Old Testament: “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Timothy 3:14-16). Here, Paul portrayed the Old Testament, with its laws, holy days, and feasts, as relevant for Christians.

Therefore, Jesus did not nail God’s laws to the cross. Instead, He emphasized their permanence (Matthew 5:17-19). As Paul said, “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).

An incomplete portrait of the first-century Church

The first-century Church—the “church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven”—believed in Jesus as their Savior and observed God’s laws, as defined in the Old Testament. Thus, we’ve defined four crucial attributes of the first-century Church:

1. Its small size;
2. Its extent or location;
3. Its faith in Jesus;
4. Its adherence to God’s laws, as defined in the Old Testament.

Furthermore, we’ve learned that, according to Jesus’ prediction, the Church would remain small, even to the time of His return. And at the time of His return, the Church will be planted only in the modern-day “cities of Israel.”

Belief in Jesus as our Savior requires no explanation. One scripture will suffice: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). However, the 4th above-listed attribute—adherence to God’s laws, as defined in the Old Testament—requires further explanation:

God’s laws and commandments

The law is a mirror to a society’s soul. The law and its fair application speak volumes about what a society values and doesn’t value. For example, capitalist societies, such as ours, value private property. Therefore, we have a copious amount of law that defines property and regulates property transactions (e.g. buying and selling, title searches, deeds, etc.).

Moreover, the “legal system of any society is a mirror that reflects, necessarily, the structure of power in that society. If we understood exactly and completely how the legal system of some society worked, we would also have insight into who counts in that society, who has the power and the influence and the authority; and who does not.”^[1]

Applying these purposes to biblical law: God designed His law to teach us how to act toward Him and each other. Therefore, the law teaches us about what’s important and what’s not. And the law serves as a reminder that God is in charge.

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Law in the Bible

The definition of sin is the transgression of God’s law: “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). With the exception of Jesus, everyone has sinned. Solomon said, “for there is no one who does not sin” (I Kings 8:46). Because “sin” is the transgression of God’s law, and because everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23), God’s laws have thus been around since the Garden of Eden.

After the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites gathered at Mt. Sinai to hear God’s laws. God began by delivering His guiding principles, codified as the Ten Commandments: (1) No other gods; (2) No idols; (3) Don’t take God’s name in vain; (4) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; (5) Honor your father and your mother; (6) No murder; (7) No adultery; (8) No stealing; (9) No lying; (10) No coveting.

With respect to how mankind should govern itself, the Ten Commandments should be our guiding light. In ancient Israel, they were the Commandments around which all other laws, judgments and statutes revolved. These Commandments are timeless. Each one is reconfirmed in the New Testament: (1) No polytheism: Acts 14:15; (2) No idolatry: I John 5:21; (3) No taking God’s name in vain: Matthew 7:21-23; (4) Observe the seventh-day Sabbath: Mark 2:28; (5) Honor your parents: Ephesians 6:1; (6) No murder: I John 3:15; (7) No adultery: I Corinthians 6:9-10; (8) No stealing: Ephesians 4:28; (9) No lying: Colossians 3:9-10; (10) No coveting (no lust): Ephesians 5:3.

Moreover, the Ten Commandments highlight behavior that, if not stopped, would tear a society apart. The first four Commandments proscribe behavior that would necessarily lead Israel (and by extension, us) away from the true God. The next six Commandments proscribe behavior that would destroy civil society. Murder cheapens the value of human life; adultery tears apart marriages, the bedrock of society; stealing destroys the sanctity of private property; lying destroys trust between neighbors; and coveting implies that nothing is safe (your property, your spouse, your job, etc.) from the lustful eyes of others.

The Ten Commandments were the bedrock of Israel’s legal system, which also included other laws, judgments, and statutes. According to Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, law is “a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority; and the whole body of such customs, practices, or rules.” Judgments are formal utterances “of an authoritative opinion, or an opinion so pronounced, or a formal decision given by a court.” And statutes are laws “enacted by the legislative branch of a government.” The sources of biblical law are found primarily in the books of Exodus (chapters 20 through 34), Leviticus, and Deuteronomy:

Exodus 20-34 and the book of Deuteronomy: mostly criminal and civil laws.

Leviticus: addresses the role of the Levites in Israelite society. They performed duties (e.g., taking care of the Temple, administering sin, burnt and other offerings, etc.) that demonstrated how the Israelites should worship God. This book also includes the most complete description of God’s holy days and festivals (chapter 23, more on that below), and His dietary laws.

God’s holy days and festivals

God’s law books (the first 5 books of the Bible) contain commandments about His prescribed feasts and holy days. “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies’” (Leviticus 23:1-2). What follows in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus are descriptions of God’s holy days and festivals, including the seventh-day Sabbath.

The purpose of the seven holy days and festivals (Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks or Firstfruits, Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles and the Day immediately following the last day of such Feast— enumerated in Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16 and elsewhere) were educational. They reminded the Israelites that:

God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt (Passover & the Feast of Unleavened Bread);

God had blessed them (the Feast of Firstfruits, or Weeks);

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God will protect them when they're in battle, and has provided them with special events throughout the year, announced by the blowing of shofars or trumpets (hence the Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets);

God will forgive them when they repent of their sins (Day of Atonement); and

God provided for them during their forty-year trek in the wilderness, and will continue to do so (Feast of Tabernacles and the Day immediately following this Feast, commonly referred to as the “Last Great Day”).

By forcing the Israelites to do the same things (e.g., provide offerings, refrain from working, etc.) on the same days, and worship in the same manner with the same people, the holy days and festivals also reminded them that they shared a common heritage, destiny, and God. Thus, the holy days and festivals (and the egalitarian laws) created a sense of collegiality, and of nationalism and patriotism, three necessary ingredients for building a nation-state. In essence, the holy days, and festivals (and the laws of God) were the social glue that God used to bind the Israelites into a nation.

The holy days and festivals also provide a prophetic glimpse of the future.

The Holy Days and Festivals: their prophetic significance [\[17\]](#)

People could not have understood the prophetic significance of the Holy Days and Festivals before Jesus' sacrifice in 31 AD. Only then did the apostles realize that, for example, the ancient Passover foreshadowed Jesus' death: hence Paul's designation, “Christ our Passover.” They also realized the prophetic significance of the other Holy Days and Festivals. In fact, they reveal God's sequential seven-step plan for man:

1. Passover: Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (I Corinthians 5:7);
2. Feast of Unleavened Bread: In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened “bread from heaven,” that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to “keep the feast (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. Pentecost, anciently the Feast of Firstfruits: Those who have God's Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23, James 1:18, Revelation 14:4), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits. Pentecost is also the birthday of Christianity and God's Church, which is the collection of God's saints or firstfruits.
4. Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets: The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16).
5. Day of Atonement: What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in an ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus' sacrifice in the first century and foretells Satan's banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be “at one” with God.
6. Feast of Tabernacles: After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth.
7. The Last Great Day immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

The Sabbath ^[18]

The seventh-day Sabbath, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, enjoys a special distinction, as it is mentioned prominently throughout the entire Bible. For instance, the Sabbath is the only commandment with a promise (Ex. 20:8-11); Jesus specifically healed on the Sabbath to teach a lesson (Mark 3:1-6; Luke 10:13-17; Luke 14:1-6); God calls the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13-14); the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people (Exodus 31:12-17); and the Sabbath symbolizes the future Kingdom of God (Hebrews 4:1-9).

A portrait of the first-century Church

As demonstrated above, the first-century Church believed in Jesus as their Savior. Moreover, they obeyed God’s law, as defined in the Old Testament. They also observed God’s Sabbath, Holy Days and Feasts, both in the educational and prophetic sense. Because they kept God’s laws and observed His Feasts, they likely observed other Old Testament commandments, such as God’s dietary laws (the 11th chapter of Leviticus).

There are other attributes. Nowadays, religion is a big business. Consider the many multi-million dollar best-sellers with religious themes. However, the first-century Church did not sell God’s truth (Matthew 10:8). And they focused on the entire Bible, including prophecy, which is a large part of the Bible.

In short, the portrait of the first-century church includes the following attributes:

1. Its small size;
2. Its extent or location;
3. Its faith in Jesus;
4. Its adherence to God’s laws, as defined in the Old Testament.
5. Its special, and nowadays unorthodox, adherence to the seventh-day Sabbath;
6. Its special, and nowadays unorthodox, adherence to God’s Holy Days and Feasts;
7. Its proscription against selling God’s truth;
8. Its insistence on keeping God’s dietary laws;
9. Its focus on the entire Bible, not just the New Testament;
10. Its emphasis on prophecy, as it looked forward to the glorious return of Christ.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery

As amply demonstrated in this article, the first-century Church wasn’t perfect. Even Paul admitted to sin (the 7th chapter of Romans). Nonetheless, this same flawed first-century assemblage of believers was called “church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23). Therefore, despite their flaws, they must’ve done something right to enjoy that distinction. Obviously, they were among the “few,” not the “many.”

This article described at length the attributes of the first-century Christians. The list of first-century Christian attributes described herein is not exhaustive. These were fully-formed men and women who can’t be reduced to a few descriptions here and there. Nonetheless, the attributes described above represent, in total, a good portrait of the first-century “church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.” It’s our job to emulate these first-century Christians, to find a Church that embodies their attributes, and thus to become one of the “few,” not the “many.”

^[1] Friedman, Lawrence. **Law in America: A Short History**, pg 17

- [1] Gibbon, Edward. *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, pg 451
- [2] U.S. News & World Report, “Mysteries of Faith: Exploring the Bible with New Insights and Discoveries”, pg 20
- [3] Gibbon, vol. 1, pg 453
- [4] *Ibid*, vol. 1, pg. 453
- [5] *Ibid*, vol. 1, pg 460
- [6] MSN Encarta Encyclopedia, article on “Christmas”, web edition
- [7] Columbia Encyclopedia, article on “Hellenism”
- [8] MSN Encarta Encyclopedia, article on Plato
- [9] Catholic Encyclopedia, article on Plato
- [10] Shaff, Philip. *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, pg 114
- [11] *Ibid*, pg 114
- [12] Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity*, pgs 7, 9
- [13] Leonord Maltin’s *Movie and Video Guide 1993*, pg 66
- [14] Lost but found—at least some of them; see our publication, *The Divine Destiny of America*, by this same author
- [15] Refer to the *Divine Destiny of America*.
- [16] Ironically, the kingdom of heaven will be on earth after Jesus returns. See our publication, *Destination Heaven or Destination Earth?*
- [17] For more on the significance of these holy days and feasts, see our publications: *Passover or Easter—Which is Biblical?*; *Pentecost & the Meaning of Life*; *The Feast of Trumpets and the Return of Jesus*; *The Day of Atonement & Satan’s Fate*; *The Feast of Tabernacles, Christmas and the Kingdom of God*.
- [18] For a greater discussion of the Sabbath, see our publication, *Why Have Christians Abandoned the Sabbath?*

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Did Paul Really Say, “Let the Women Keep Silent in the Churches”?

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"Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says. And if they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church." (NASB, 1 Cor. 14:34-35)

First Corinthians 14:34-35 presents the reader with three interpretive options.

First, are verses 34-35 a declarative statement written from the pen of the apostle Paul with the intention of forbidding women to speak in church? If so, what do these verses mean for the church today? Does Scripture prohibit women from speaking in the church forever or was this only a temporary and cultural prohibition?

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Second, are these verses an interpolation, meaning a later addition or alteration to Scripture not written by the apostle Paul but by an uninspired writer? If so, then verses 34-35 should be rejected by all Bible readers because they were not written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Third, are verses 34-35 a Corinthian slogan or rabbinic saying that Paul repeats for the purpose of rebuking? Paul rebukes the oral saying beginning with verse 36. If so, then verses 34-35 do not prohibit women from speaking in church. Whether one concludes these verses are a slogan or an interpolation of Scripture, the effect is the same. They do not prohibit women from speaking, teaching or preaching the word of God in church.

This article provides objective evidence that verses 34-35 do not represent the inspired writings of the Apostle Paul or any other inspired writer. These verses are best understood as a slogan or rabbinic saying based on the Jewish "oral law," not the written word of God. Therefore, these verses cannot be used to prohibit women from pulpit ministry within the church.

Significance of Resolving These Issues

Resolving these issues is essential for a proper understanding of how ministry in the church was intended to be carried out. First Corinthians 14:34-35 has traditionally been linked with 1 Timothy 2:8-15 by leaders in the Church to systematically deny women the right to utilize their God-given gifts in ministry. However, according to D. A. Carson, selectively linking certain verses together creates fallacies and "affects the interpretation of other texts." Carson points out that disputes in Christianity, including the issue of women in the Church, "revolve around inconsistencies, errors, and fallacies in this area." [1]

Another problem arises from the fact that verses 34-35 appear in every English Bible translation as a declarative statement. The issues relating to authorship or that these verses might be viewed as a quotation are non-existent in most Bibles. The average Bible reader is generally unaware of these interpretative possibilities. Only by examining this text in its immediate context, applying sound rules of biblical interpretation, and looking at the cultural and historical backgrounds will the original author's intent be made evident.

The purpose of this article is to help Bible readers to better understand what Scripture intends to convey in this passage. Differences in Christianity about the extent of women in ministry remain to this day. However, the historical evidence reveals that both men and women were active participants in all areas of ministry in the early Christian church. Scripture, the external writings of church leaders, historical and archeological records, and church artifacts testify that women served as ministers, deacons, church leaders, apostles and even bishops.

Historical Background and Literary Context

Corinth was a city of Greco-Roman culture whose inhabitants had a reputation for sexual immorality and depravity. The Corinthian church was characterized by divisions. First Corinthians was written to correct a number of problems and to answer a series of questions that were raised by the church members. Paul answers questions concerning marriage and divorce in chapter 7, food sacrificed to idols in chapter 8, two questions regarding worship in chapter 11, and the proper use of spiritual gifts in the church in chapters 12-14. Conduct in worship is addressed in chapter 14 where Paul describes and contrasts the proper use of prophecy and tongues. He concludes that things be done in an orderly manner (v. 40).

ARE VERSES 34-35 A DECLARATIVE STATEMENT?

Those scholars who believe that the apostle Paul is making a declarative statement exhibit a wide range of thought about the applicability and why Paul may have written these verses. Following are examples reflective of such diversity of opinion of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35.

Women must never speak, prophesy or speak in tongues in church. One 19th century Bible commentator holds this extreme and minority view that denies the right of women to speak, prophesy or speak in tongues by saying: "This rule is positive, explicit, and universal ... women were to keep silence ... take no part in speaking foreign languages and of prophecy." This commentator's dogmatic statements are totally unjustified and without merit. He disregards Scripture's declaration that women will prophesy (Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17-18) and have already done so in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11:5). He believed the phrase, "as saith the Law" in 1 Cor. 14:34 was linked to Gen. 3.16 but offered no scriptural evidence in support of his opinion. [2]

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Women may pray, prophesy, teach or speak as long as they do so in an orderly manner. J. D. Douglas, editor of the New Commentary on the Whole Bible admits the statement Let your women keep silence in the churches is difficult because Paul had previously spoken about women praying and prophesying in church. He writes that, "Women should not teach or speak in any way that causes disturbance in a church meeting. But we cannot dogmatically say that women did not and could not pray and/or prophesy in church meetings." This commentator suggests that the apostle Paul is concerned about what is proper in the church meetings and rebukes the Corinthians for their pride beginning in verse 36. Additionally, he believes the reference to the "law" refers to Genesis 3.16 but offered no support for his belief. [3]

Some married women need to exercise self-control. David Lowery, a professor at Dallas Seminary, acknowledges the difficulty in determining the exact meaning of 1 Cor. 14:34-35. He acknowledges that women did participate in worship services by exercising the gifts of the Spirit. He suggests that Paul wrote these words because "church members needed to exercise self-control," not only in the context of tongues and prophecy but that some women were causing a disturbance. He writes: "Paul then wanted silence on the part of married women whose husbands were present in the assembly, but he permitted the participation of other women when properly adorned (1 Cor. 11:2-16). Such silence would express their subordinate (but not inferior) relationship to their husbands." The real issue, he said, is one of self-control. This commentator makes no attempt to account for the expression just as the Law also says. [4]

Married women were uneducated and had nothing of value to say. Leon Morris, author of The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, also recognizes a problem with a natural reading of the passage as Paul had already encouraged women to pray and to prophesy. He reminds us that women were uneducated in the first century. In that context, he states that the "Corinthian women should keep quiet in church if for no other reason than because they could have little or nothing worthwhile to say." He reasons that Paul is telling the wives to ask questions of their husbands at home and not disturb the assembly. [5] He apparently assumes this passage applies only to married women. Women were basically uneducated in the first century as were many of the men. He does not discuss single women or what "law" is being referenced.

Married women must not interrupt the proceeding by asking questions. F. F. Bruce in The New Century Bible Commentary I & II Corinthians also notes that Paul had already recognized a woman's right to pray and prophesy in the church. Therefore, the imposition of silence and forbidding women to speak is only in the context of interrupting the proceedings by asking questions of their husbands. Asking questions should be done at home. Bruce carefully notes that the expressions they are not permitted to speak (v. 34) and it is shameful for a woman to speak in church (v. 35) is limited in application and refers only to the interrupting of proceedings. In commenting on the phrase, "as even the law says," Bruce believes the appeal to Gen. 3.16 is unlikely. He thinks the reference to which Paul is alluding to is Gen. 1:26 and 2:21 but offers no support for his opinion. [6]

Summary Discussion of Scholars' Comments

The vast majority of scholars who claim that Paul is making a declarative statement limit this prohibition regarding speaking to only those instances where such speech causes a disturbance in the church. Women, they say, did speak, pray in tongues, and prophesy in the early church. The apparent prohibition based on women being uneducated was a cultural reality in the first century. This condition no longer exists. The issue of self-control and not causing a disturbance in church applies equally to men and women and appears more related to the excesses of speaking in tongues and prophecy than in anything else in chapter 14. Basically, all commentators agree with Paul's emphasis that all things be done properly and in an orderly manner (v. 40) in the church. Most also assume that the "law" somehow refers to a specific Genesis passage. But does it?

WHY THE LAW DOES NOT REFER TO SCRIPTURE

The testimony of the Old Testament. The phrase, "just as the law also says" is not supported by the Old Testament. It is the major weakness of the view that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 represents Paul's declarative statement that women are not permitted to speak. None of these commentators have adequately discussed or resolved how the words, Let the women keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak are supported by the Old Testament verses they cite. The Genesis citations quoted by these scholars (Gen. 1:26, 2:21, 3:16) have nothing to do with denying women the right to speak in church. The reason given in verse 34 that women are not permitted to speak relates directly to the phrase, "just as the law also says." Only the phrase: "but let them subject themselves" is a possible allusion to Gen. 3:16. But the subject phrase, "just as the law also says," contradicts Paul's known teachings that we have been liberated from the law (Rom. 3:28; 6:14, 7:16, 8:2; Gal 3:11, 13, 4:5, 5:18, etc.).

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We have been liberated from the law. Since Paul claims that we have been liberated from the law, how could he appeal to it? Paul also fought against the religious zealots of his day who tried to impose the requirements of the Old Testament's written and oral laws on New Testament believers in Christ. These verses cannot represent the apostle Paul's inspired words. Why? The reason is there is nothing written in the canon of Scripture from which Paul could have quoted to support such a declaration. Such an appeal would also contradict Paul's previously stated position in 1 Corinthians that women can pray and prophesy in church.

Paul does not refer to written Scripture in this manner. In the entire epistle of 1 Corinthians, whenever Paul quotes from and specially uses the term "law" (meaning written Scripture) he does so with specific intent, focus, and stylistic writing. For example, in 1 Cor. 9:8-9 Paul writes, Does not the law also say the same? For it is written in the law of Moses: "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." After referring to the law as saying something, Paul tells us that it is written and immediately quotes Deut 25:4 verbatim. Also, in 1 Cor. 14:21 after Paul writes, "In the Law it is written," he immediately quotes from Isaiah 28:11-12. Again, in 1 Cor. 4:6 where Paul generally refers to Scripture, he tells the Corinthians to learn through us the meaning of the saying "Do not go beyond what is written." In every case when Paul specially refers to Scripture, he says it is written (1 Cor. 1:19, 1:31, 2:9, 3:19, 10:7, 15:45) and consistently quotes from the Old Testament to prove his point.

However, in 1 Corinthians 14:34 the passage simply states just as the Law also says without reference to it being written. Why would Paul suddenly change his consistent writing style in this verse only? Why doesn't Paul even say it is written or even quote from the Old Testament as he has previously done in every instance throughout this epistle? Why? The reason is more likely these are not Paul's words. Either Paul was quoting a non-biblical source, such as a slogan or rabbinic saying or verses 34-35 represent an interpolation, an alteration of Scripture. In either interpretive option, these words did not originate with Paul.

Problems with Inconsistent Quotation Marks.

Bible translators have been inconsistent in the way they translate and present verses throughout 1 Corinthians. Some Bibles put quotes around certain verses to indicate that Paul is quoting another source, and other Bibles don't utilize any quotes. For example, in 1 Corinthians we read: "All things are lawful for me" (6:12; 10:23) and "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" (6:13). These verses are marked as quotations in the *NCV*, *NIV*, *NLT*, and *NRSV*; but they are not shown with quotation marks in the *ASV*, *KJV*, *NASB*, and *NKJV*. In this instance, the *NCV*, *NIV*, *NLT* and *NRSV* correctly indicate that Paul is quoting a slogan that the Corinthians used in order to justify their immorality.

Another example of where Bibles could use quotation marks and do not is 1 Cor. 7:1. Paul writes: Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. The second underlined phrase should be placed in "quotes" since Paul is alluding to one of the questions posed by the Corinthians. He is quoting them.

Origen, an early Church leader (ca. a.d. 200) considered 1 Corinthians 7:1 as introducing a slogan. [7] Bible translators present 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 without quotation marks, which does not mean that verses 34-35 must be read as a declarative statement. *The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)* does enclose 14:33b-36 in parentheses to characterize it as a parenthetical comment meaning that it does not fit in smoothly with the surrounding texts. Unfortunately, most Bible readers are unaware of the significance of such comments. They generally read these verses as a declaration forbidding women from speaking in church.

Paul is not writing a declarative statement. Since Paul is not making a declaration, then how are we to interpret verses 34-35? Only two choices remain. These verses either represent an interpolation of Scripture or a slogan that Paul immediately refutes.

ARE VERSES 34-35 AN INTERPOLATION?

Defining an Interpolation. An interpolation means a manuscript textual problem exists. The verses were added later by a scribe. Therefore, these verses are not the inspired writings of the apostle Paul and are to be disregarded. Additionally, some Bibles, such as the *NLT*, *ISV*, and *NRSV*, include a footnote stating that some ancient manuscripts put verses 34-35 after verse 40. However, such footnote disclosures are of no practical use to the average Bible reader. Most readers would not fully understand the implication of such statements. If these verses represent an interpolation of Scripture, then any discussion of what verses 34-35 mean is a meaningless exercise since they represent a later addition to

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Scripture by an uninspired writer. However, since these verses do appear, then all Bible readers need to consider whether these verses are an interpolation.

Examining the Scholars' Comments. The arguments supporting verses 34-35 as an interpolation have been extensively presented in the writings of well-known scholars C.K. Barrett, Hans Conzelman, Gordon D. Fee and others. This section recaps the major points of this view as expressed by Gordon Fee. [8]

Gordon Fee, Professor Emeritus of New Testament Studies, Regent College, Vancouver, B.C. Canada, says: "the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity." On transcriptional grounds, Fee states that all Western manuscripts and a few Latin church fathers place verses 34-35 after verse 40. Fee follows Bengel's rule that the preferred reading is the one which best explains the origin of the other readings. He concludes that the shortest reading best matches Bengel's principle and that verses 34-35 were subsequently written in as a marginal gloss in two different places.

Fee challenges proponents of the authenticity of verses 34-35 to explain how the Western manuscripts came into existence. He notes that "all the surviving evidence indicates that this was the only way 1 Corinthians appeared in the Latin Church for at least three hundred years." Fee states that proponents of authenticity "must at least offer an adequate answer as to how this arrangement came into existence if Paul wrote them originally." [9]

On intrinsic probability grounds, meaning what the author is most likely to have written, Fee argues these verses are not authentic for at least three reasons. First, verses 34-35 impede the flow of Paul's guidelines concerning tongues and prophecy. Second, these verses stand in obvious contradiction to Paul's teaching in 11:5 where women are permitted not only to speak but to prophesy. Third, the usage of certain terms "seem quite foreign to Paul." [10]

Gordon Fee also argues for an interpolation based on the internal biblical evidence. He says the real problem lies with the phrase, "even as the Law says." Fee goes on to say that Paul always cites a text to prove his point, but nowhere does he appeal to the Law to support Christian behavior. [11]

Carroll D. Osburn, Professor of New Testament at Abilene Christian University, notes that Gordon Fee is correct on transcriptional grounds in following Bengel's rule and is correct on intrinsic grounds that the flow of thought is important to the resolution of the problem. Osburn states that the text "does make sense if vv. 34-35 are removed from the context." However, according to Osburn, the problem with accepting the view that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 represents an interpolation is the lack of enough textual evidence to support this claim. He claims the evidence for the entire Western text is overstated and is limited only to manuscripts from northern Italy and Irish monastics. [12]

Osburn also suggests that Paul is not really contradicting his statements in 1 Cor. 11:2-16. He states two different issues: praying and prophesying by women in contrast to "some wives continually 'piping up' in the assembly in chap. 14." Furthermore, Paul is dealing with a particular problem in Corinth, and 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36 neither teaches nor suggests anything regarding patriarchalism or female subjection. According to Osburn, it is not the extent that women may participate in the work and worship of the church but the manner. Paul does not ban women from speaking but only stops the verbal misconduct of certain wives who are disrupting the assembly. [13]

David W. Odell-Scott, Professor of Philosophy at Kent State University, offers a possible solution to the interpolation debate. He suggests that the editors of the Western manuscripts deleted the verses from their normal location between verses 33 and 36 and moved them in order to shield the verses from Paul's rebuke that begins in verse 36. He suspects "the editors shrewdly manipulated the text to serve their purposes," and that they "sought to render the text in such a way that it would be consistent with what the editors expected to find in scripture," meaning that the editors of the Western text did not view Paul's rebuke of the silence and subordination of women as a "viable possibility" given the historical culture and society's norm of that day. [14] Odell-Scott actually views verses 34-35 as a quotation that Paul repeats word for word in order to rebuke.

Summary Discussion of Scholars' Comments. Gordon Fee is correct to say Paul did not write these words as a declarative statement and that an interpolation of Scripture occurs. Carroll Osburn is correct to say that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 does not support patriarchalism or female subjection, and the interpolation theory is not sufficiently supported by a wide

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range of manuscripts. David W. Odell-Scott offers a plausible explanation as to how and why this interpolation came into being and offers support for the preferred quotation view.

VERSES 34-35 ARE A QUOTATION

This interpretative view states that verses 34-35 are meant to be understood as a Corinthian slogan or quotation that Paul is repeating. These verses are not a declarative statement that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write intending to silence women from speaking in church. The arguments against these verses being Pauline have been previously presented.

The Holy Spirit did inspire Paul to include this quotation for the purpose of rebuking them and their words. Paul's rebuke begins in verse 36. The Holy Spirit also inspired Peter on the day of Pentecost to quote the prophecy of Joel 2:28 which says that men and women shall prophesy (Acts 2:18). Perhaps the obvious must be stated: In order to prophesy or speak in tongues you cannot be silent, but you have to open your mouth and speak! In 1 Corinthians 12-14, Paul speaks to his audience at great length about the proper use of spiritual gifts; and he expects that such manifestations of the Spirit be done in an orderly manner.

The Cultural Background. The writings of Greek philosophers provide external documentation informing us of the mindset that permeated the ancient city of Corinth. In Greek society, women were clearly held in low regard. For example, Plato (424-347 BC) ascribed to the inferior status of women by stating: "It is only males who are created directly by the gods and are given souls." Aristotle (384-322 BC) added, "women are defective by nature" because "a woman is as it were an infertile male," and males command superior intelligence. [15] Under existing Roman family law, the father had complete household authority. A husband could punish his wife in any way including killing her, and he could make love to other women with impunity. [16]

Therefore, it is not unreasonable, given the Greek cultural background of Corinth, to see how various derogatory statements about women permeated that culture and society. Also, by the time of the first century, the Jewish system of traditions and oral sayings were well established.

Examining the Scholars' Comments and Evidence

Based on a detailed examination of Greek manuscripts, Dr. John Gustavson states, "Paul never wrote these words as a 'commandment of the Lord' but was simply quoting what the Judaizers in the Corinthian church were saying." He goes on to say that "there is not one trace from Genesis to Malachi of any such prohibition of women to literally keep silent in the church nor is there a single word in the whole 'law of Moses' dealing with the subject." [17] So what "law" is the author referring to or quoting? Gordon Fee says this "law" refers to an external source, meaning "an oral understanding of Torah such as found in rabbinic Judaism." [18] Gustavson agrees and points out that the Jewish Oral Law taught the silencing of women and cites the Talmud that states it is "a shame for a woman to let her voice be heard among men." He also notes that Paul never appealed to the "law" for the guidance of the Church of Christ. On the contrary, he declared that believers were dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4) so that they might serve in newness of spirit and not the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6). [19]

Adam Clarke (1762-1832) represents one of the earliest post-reformists biblical scholar who said that 1 Cor. 14:34-35 "was a Jewish ordinance" because "women were not permitted to teach in the assemblies or even to ask questions." He noted that "The rabbis taught that 'a woman should know nothing but the use of her distaff.'" Clarke quotes the harsh and misogynist "sayings of Rabbi Eliezer, as delivered, Bammidbar Rabba, sec. 9, fol. 204, as both worthy of remark 'Let the words of the law be burned, rather than that they should be delivered to women.'" [20]

Dr. Katharine C. Bushnell (1856-1946), a physician, missionary, and Bible scholar fluent in Hebrew and Greek notes that vv. 34-35 refer to some external rule separate from Scripture. Bushnell quotes the great 19th century German lexicographer Schleusner who said the expression as also saith the law "refers to the Oral Law of the Jews" noting that "in the Old Testament no precept concerning this matter exists." Additionally, Vitringa, an 18th century scholar, said that it was "forbidden by Jewish tradition for women to speak in the synagogue." Bushnell also comments that the Talmud remanded women to keep silent because according to Rabbi Eliezer "the voice of a woman is filthy nakedness." [21] Bushnell points out that Scripture supports the exact opposite of what verse 34 is claimed to prevent. She rhetorically asks: "what is to be done with the hundred and one other 'laws' in the O.T. opening the mouths of women?"

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Bushnell reminds us that Scripture declares: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so and let everything that hath breath praise the Lord." How could Paul command Let the women keep silence immediately after exhorting the congregation of women and men to covet to prophesy in the context of the church (14:1) and then immediately conclude with an exhortation to covet to prophesy and forbid not to speak in tongues (14:39)? [22]

Sir William Ramsey (1851-1939), Professor at Oxford and Aberdeen, was the most widely accepted authority on Paul in the early 1900's. He writes: "we should be ready to suspect Paul is making a quotation from the letter addressed to him by the Corinthians whenever he alludes to their knowledge, or when any statement stands in marked contrast either with the immediate context or with Paul's known views." Ramsey's point is clearly applicable to vv.34-35. [23]

Pastor Grace Ying May asks the question: "How could Paul, having made such an exhortation in 1 Cor. 11:5, suddenly change his mind and forbid women in the very same congregation from speaking in church? Such an interpretation makes Paul not only a confused writer but also an uninspired one and would flatly contradict what Paul says about women prophesying in church in 1 Corinthians 11:5." [24]

David W. Odell-Scott, Professor of Philosophy at Kent State University, argues that the grammatical structure and content of the text indicates that verses 34 and 35 were quotations from a Corinthian letter to Paul, which he immediately rebukes. "Paul replies in verse 36 with a two-fold negative rhetorical query: What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?" [25]

Sharyn Dowd, Professor of Religion at Baylor University, in a 1991 article said: "This interpretation of verses 34-35 as a Corinthian slogan which Paul rejects has been gaining ground in recent years." Those who have made this argument in various forms, include the following in chronological order: Katharine C. Bushnell, (1889); Jessie Penn-Lewis, (1919); Helen Barrett Montgomery (1924); J. A. Anderson, (1933); Joyce Harper, (1974); Walter C. Kaiser, (1976); Guy B. Dunning, (1977); N. M. Flanagan and E. Hunter Snyder, (1981); David W. Odell-Scott, (1983, 1987, 1989); Chris U. Manus, (1984); Charles H. Talbert, (1984, 1987); Gilbert Bilezikian, (1985); Gordon D. Fee, (1987); Robert W. Allison, (1988); Linda McKinnish Bridges, (1989, 1990).[26]

The Biblical Rebuke of Verse 36. Some modern commentators who view 1 Cor. 14:34-35 as a declarative statement note that Paul, beginning in verse 36, rebukes the Corinthians for various reasons, including their pride. Verse 36 does begin with a rebuke, but Paul is rebuking the "slogan" (vv. 34-35) that was being used to prohibit women from speaking in church. This reason certainly seems to be why verses 34-35 appear in Scripture.

Perhaps Paul's reason to include this quote was obvious to the Corinthians. However, it has been correctly observed that no one today has independent access to Paul's mind. The only record available for our consideration is that of the historical written text and writings of others. Paul writes to correct the error of the Oral Law of the Jews or anyone else who wants to prohibit women from speaking in church. Paul's immediate and strong rebuke beginning in verse 36 can be viewed as a correction to those men who held to the Oral Law of the Jews. Bibles have variously translated verse 36 as follows:

What! Came the word of God out from you or came it unto you only? (KJV)

Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? (NIV)

Do you think that the knowledge of God's word begins and ends with you Corinthians? Well, you are mistaken! (NLT)

A footnote of the Spirit-Filled Life Bible says of this passage: "One other view sees vv. 34, 35 as Paul quoting from the Judaizers' letter to him in beginning a new paragraph. Proponents of this view then see v. 36 as his rhetorical answer, essentially saying, What? Men only? Nonsense! (p. 1742).

Summary of the Evidence Favoring the Quotation View

A substantial body of internal and external evidence exists to conclude that verses 34-35 could not have been authored by Paul. Internally, there is not one verse in the Old Testament that Paul could quote to support such a declaration. Nor is Paul alluding to any general Genesis passage to support a view opposite from his stated declaration in 1 Corinthians that women can pray and prophesy in church.

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As previously discussed, Paul is quite specific when referring to the Old Testament to prove his point. The extensive, eternal evidence points to the fact that Paul is quoting a saying from the Oral Law of the Jews that prohibited women from speaking in the synagogue.

Oral Jewish laws do not constitute Scripture and are not authoritative for the body of Christ. **Scholars also point out that Paul never appeals to the "law" as guidance for the Christian Church.** Scripture tells us that God calls and uses anyone to minister regardless of gender. Paul has just finished telling the Corinthians that women can pray and prophesy in church. In verse 36, Paul corrects the Judaizers' error. Therefore, interpreting verses 34-35 as a quotation with an immediate rebuke remains a contextually viable and the preferred option.

CONCLUSION

Verses 34-35 do not prohibit women from speaking in the church in either pulpit ministry, teaching, preaching, praying, prophesying, or any other speaking function. These verses represent a quotation, which is the most plausible and correct interpretation. Paul is quoting a saying from the Oral Law of the Jews which is not intended to be understood as the writer's original declaration. The evidence is compelling, diverse, and objective. This view also allows for the natural flow of thought to remain uninterrupted with verses "34-35" noted as a quotation and a rebuke beginning in verse 36. Paul also has no need to specifically address women as the only cause of "interrupting the service" as some scholars suggest. Paul's conclusion in verse 40 is more than adequate to tell the Corinthians that both men and women must be careful to minister in the gifts of the Spirit in an orderly fashion.

The focus of Chapter 14 is on the proper use of spiritual gifts, tongues and prophecy. Paul's closing exhortation, beginning in verse 39, is a fitting conclusion: Therefore, my brothers and sisters, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak in tongues. But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.

A PERSONAL OBSERVATION

It is a travesty that men have systematically denied women the opportunity to utilize the full extent of their gifts for God's glory. This denial is based on a few highly problematic passages in Scripture, such as 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:12. Perhaps the obvious must again be stated: Sound hermeneutical principles warn against drawing unwarranted inferences from passages fraught with numerous interpretive issues. Yet, despite this knowledge, scholars, church leaders, and lay people continue to utilize such passages to deny or limit women the full exercise of their God-given gifts.

Scripture teaches us that the gifts and callings of God are given to all members of the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:7-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). None of these gifts or offices is the exclusive prerogative of men. I believe this oppressive behavior against women grieves the Holy Spirit and hinders the Spirit's work in the Church. Much confusion in the church today over "women in ministry" results from Bible scholars and others who fail to rightly divide and present God's truth.

Many evangelical scholars have boldly attempted to break down traditional assumptions and biases that prevent women from speaking and ministering in churches as pastors and teachers of the Word. A tremendous obstacle still remains. Bibles generally do not present alternative interpretive options of many "problem passages." First Corinthians 14:34-35 illustrates this point.

Most people read these passages as a declaration without knowing about the quotation option. Bible translators should be more diligent in presenting all views on particularly difficult passages. Someday all Christians will stand before God to give an account of their lives and actions. We may be asked: What have you done with the women I have anointed to minister in My Church? Did you hinder or accept these women? My prayer is that more Christian leaders and lay people not hinder the move of the Holy Spirit in the lives of women called to ministry. Then, and only then, will God's work go forth with greater effectiveness and power to accomplish His purposes.

NOTES

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- 5 Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 198.
- 6 F.F. Bruce, *The New Century Bible Commentary I & II Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 135-136.
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- 9 Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament, the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 699-700.
- 10 Ibid., 701-702.
- 11 Ibid., 707.
- 12 Carroll D. Osburn, "The Interpretation of 1 Cor. 14:34-35," in *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity: Volume 1*, ed. Carroll D. Osburn (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Company, 1995), 223-224.
- 13 Ibid., 241.
- 14 D.W. Odell-Scott, "Editorial dilemma: the interpolation of 1 Cor 14:34-35 in the western manuscripts of D, G and 88," *Biblical Theological Bulletin*, (July 22, 2000). Also available from http://articles.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0LAL/is_2_30/ai_94332323.
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- 16 Women Priests Catholic Internet Library, "The Rights of Women According to Roman Law," [doc. on-line]; available from http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/infe_rom.htm; accessed 20 May 2003.
- 17 John Gustavson, "Part 2: Women in Christ: A Study in New Testament Principles," [doc. on-line]; available from <http://www.ncinter.net/~ejt/women2.htm>; accessed 24 May 2003.
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- 19 Gustavson, "Part 2: Women in Christ: A Study in New Testament Principles."
- 20 Adam Clarke, *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Old Testament* (Cedar Rapids: Parsons Technology, Inc., 1999), electronic edition.
- 21 Katharine Bushnell, *God's Word to Women* (Oakland, CA: K. Bushnell, 1930), para.201-202.
- 22 Ibid., para. 210-211.
- 23 Ibid., para. 205.

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24 Grace Ying May and Hyunhye Pokrifka Joe, "Setting the Record Straight: A Response to J. I. Packer's Position on Women's Ordination" Priscilla Papers 11, no 1 (Winter 1997), 1-10.

25 D. W. Odell-Scott, "Let the Women Speak in Church: An Egalitarian Interpretation of 1 Cor. 14:33b-36," Biblical Thinking Bulletin 13 (1983): 90-93.

26 Sharyn Dowd, "Helen Barret Montgomery's Centenary Translation of the New Testament Characteristics and Influences" [doc.on-line]; available from [click here](#). See Sharyn Dowd's footnote #38 for a more comprehensive list of source material and writers who support the view that 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 is a quotation or oral rabbinic saying, not a scriptural command.

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7 Herbs for Pain

(Copyright 2023) by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

Some very useful medical information for treating pain naturally, which I have taken from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUyk1sZu82Q> a 68-minute video by Doc Jones, a veterinarian and a Clinical Naturopath. He is well educated, easy to listen to and a funny man. He has many videos on herbs on YouTube. These herbs can either be found where you live in many cases or can be purchased individually on Amazon.com, eBay.com or other places that sell natural herbs or tinctures. Doc Jones has many *formulas* available on his website shown below. Reports are very recently coming out that medicine of many kinds are becoming hard to find or non-existent and many hospitals are closing. It may well pay to be prepared! I encourage you to watch what Doc Jones has to say. He LOVES using tinctures *topically* (on the body) which is not very prevalent in the herbal community at this time. Find a lot more here:

<https://www.youtube.com/@HomeGrownHerbalist>

I like to make tinctures by chopping up the parts of the herb being used or macerating them in a blender, then placing it in a glass bottle (brown or blue if possible) and pour 70-80% Vodka or other strong alcohol over it; enough to cover it by once again the volume of the herbs. Tightly cover the jar (maybe even using some thin plastic wrap under the cover to keep the alcohol from evaporating over time) and place in a cool dark area or cupboard for up to two weeks or more, trying to remember to shake it every day. If alcohol is not something you want, you can use organic apple cider vinegar, although it won't be as effective in drawing out the good parts of the herbs).

If an emergency, you may find some help in as little as three hours of making a tincture. For amounts to take? It could be anywhere from a few drops to a teaspoon or two. If not sure, start out small and increase as needed. You may want to try a little on your skin to see if you get a rash or irritation. Use your own good judgment. Read up on it and get educated; remember, it *is* medicine! I have compiled a list of ailments at the bottom that were included in the first link above.

SKULLCAP - (not Chinese skullcap but the American one) It is in the mint family. *Helps calm nerves, used for insomnia, anxiety, panic attacks, rabies (does not kill the virus), very good for pain internally and topically particularly if its nerve pain as in pinched or aggravated nerves, joint pain, arthritis or any pain.* Can be used in a tea (put a lid on it while making it or boil the water & take off the stove and put the powdered herb in and throw a lid on it). It can be made into a tincture (used a lot topically) or into capsules. If using the bark or roots then yes, boil it (as in making a decoction), but if just using dry powdered herb put in hot water and drink as soon as cool enough. [minute 1 - 10:20]

HOPS - (H. humulus used the most, but H. Neomexicana H. Neoamericanus also is used). The medicine on hops is the strobile, pine cone like part; harvest in late summer to early fall; the strobile starts changing from green to a yellowish tint,

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they get a yellow powder on them. Do not harvest in the 1st year as they are establishing themselves. Hops can be used to *treat anxiety, its calming & sedating, insomnia, ADHD, arthritis, osteoarthritis, irritability, tension and nerve pain. Inflammatory type of pain. Hops is full of phytoestrogen. Those who use CBD Oil for pain can use hops also. Hops internally as a tincture is good for guts, enteritis, bellyache, diarrhea, colitis and has some good antimicrobial effects to kill pathogens without beating up the good bacteria. Good for digestive issues. Sore thumb or knee? Spray tincture of hops on it, relief could be in a couple of minutes. Can use hops as an alternative for yeast in making bread.* [minute 10:21 - 20:20]

CLOVES - Has good antibiotic, antiviral, antifungal properties, it stimulates the immune system, decreases inflammation, but mostly it's an anodyne (a plant that eliminates pain topically on the mucous membranes); gums for a sore tooth or dental pain - put on a cotton ball & place next to sore tooth or area, throat, stomach, bladder, any surface inside the body). Use whole cloves and grind them up just before making a tincture or using the powder as much stronger than using old clove powder. If making an essential oil of cloves dilute with a carrier oil such as organic olive oil as undiluted clove oil will be too strong. It can irritate your tissues. [minute 20:21 - 26:45]

TEASEL - (dipsacus - also known as Xu Duan, Fuller's Thistle, Fuller's Teasel, Card Teasel, Venuscup Teasel); [the root is the medicine. Best is a plant at start of its 2nd year in spring before it starts to bolt and die. or, fall of 1st year]; Lyme's disease; seizures associated with Lyme's; Chinese use it for broken bones and wounds; weird nerve pain – he uses tincture mostly topically but also often internally for old pain ; old chronic pain (often in one week pain is gone); Multiple sclerosis or MS - start out with 1 drop tincture 3 X day, then the next day 2 drops 3 X day etc. up to 30—li40 drops 3 X day. It is possible some might get a rash from teasel but starting with a small tincture amount likely would eliminate this chance. One lady got up to 14 drops 3 X day and then really felt better getting off her pain meds. [minute 26:46 - 43:35]

CRAMP BARK (also known as Snowball Bush, European Cranberry, Guelder Rose, Swamp Elder or Water Elder; this is NOT Hydrangea) – An anti-spasmodic herb. An ornamental shrub. Medicine is the inner bark (greenish cambium); not the outer thin brown bark. Harvest in spring before flowering. Use a very sharp knife to strip bark off a branch that is at least the size of a pencil shrub. Make a poultice, put in capsules, tincture or make a tea. Red berries are edible but do not taste good. Dry bark for at least three weeks before grinding into a powder. Can be used internally and/or externally. Helps muscles relax, helps spasms, headache, backache, menstrual pain, uterine cramps (safe to give during pregnancy, it helps muscles relax its not a hormone), can be used for preterm labor; can help some pain in passing kidney stones, can reduce pain caused by poor circulation in the extremities. Can help the pain from a rib that pops out in the back. (Can be used with the herb lobelia also). Has very, very mild sedative properties. It is hypotensive, helps lower blood pressure. [minute 43:36 – 55:20]

WEeping WILLOW TREES – (Any species) Analgesic, Antipyretic, Anti-inflammatory; It is more potent in the spring but can be used anytime. Use the small whippy ends of branches. Make a tea or tincture. Contains aspirin-like salicylates useful for pain anywhere in the body; treat fevers, joint pain. It's an aspirin on a stick. Use internally (can be used topically but may cause irritation for some). Useful for arthritis or any kind of pain. [minute 55:21 – 100:20]

WHITE SAGE – (salvia apiana also known as Bee Sage, Sacred Sage, Wild Sage, White Sage. etc.) Grows on the West Coast in warmer climates. It is a member of the mint family. Parts used are those above the ground. If it is flowering just cut the top third and use that. A 'rock star' for pain. It is Anti-bacterial, Anti-inflammatory, Adaptogen, Diuretic, Diaphoretic, Antibiotic, Anti-fungal, Astringent, for cold sores, canker sores, gum & tooth infections, gingivitis and sore throats. Soothes digestive upsets like heartburn, ulcers, gastritis, flatulence, phenomenal for diarrhea, bloating. It also binds with the cannabinoid receptors just like hops does; it makes you not hurt. Try spraying it on topically. [minute 100:21 – 108]

HEALTH PROBLEMS - HERBS TO HELP FROM ABOVE LIST

ADHD – S, H

Anxiety – S, H

Arthritis – S, H, WWT

Backache - CB

Bacteria – H, C, WS

Bellyache – H

Bladder – C

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Blood pressure. High – CB
Bloating - WS
Bones, broken – T
Canker sores - WS
Circulation, extremities poor – CB
Cold sores - WS
Colitis - H
Diarrhea – H, WS
Digestive issues – H, WS
Enteritis – H
Fever – WWT
Flatulence - WS
Fungus – H
Gastritis - WS
Gingivitis - WS
Germs – C
Gums, sore – C, WS
Guts – H
Headache – CB
Heartburn - WS
Immune System - C
Insomnia – S, H
Inflammation – WWT, WS
Irritability – H
Kidney stones - CB
Knee, sore – H
Lyme’s – T
Menstrual pain - CB
Muscles - CB
Mucus membrane – C
MS - T
Multiple Sclerosis - T
Nerve pain – H, T
Nerves - S
Nerves, aggravated - S
Nerves, pinched – S
Osteoarthritis - H
Pain, any – S, WWT, WS
Pain, chronic - T
Pain, externally – S
Pain, inflammatory - H
Pain, internally – S
Pain, joint – S, WWT
Pain, rib out - CB
Panic attacks – S
Pregnancy, preterm labor - CB
Rabies – S
Seizures – T
Spasms - CB
Stomach – C
Sweat, inability to - WS
Tension – H
Thumb, sore – H,
Throat, sore – C, WS
Tooth, sore – C, WS

Ulcers - WS
Urine flow - WS
Uterine cramps - CB
Virus - C
Wounds - T

What is Mammon? (Copyright) by BibleStudy.org (Farmington, Michigan)

What is mammon? What warnings did Jesus give regarding its use and abuse? Can it be utilized as a training tool for righteousness?

The Greek word for mammon, which appears four times in the King James New Testament, is *mammonas* (Strong's Concordance #G3126). It can mean money, material wealth or the personification of riches as a false deity (idol) worthy of our time and devotion.

The first time Jesus mentions mammon is in Matthew 6:24. He briefly referenced it as part of his expansive Sermon on the Mount given shortly after Pentecost in 27 A.D. The audience for his message, gathered at Mount Eremos, was a large number of people interested in hearing him speak.

The second time the Lord referenced mammon is in early 30 A.D. He used the word three times after visiting his adopted hometown of Capernaum. Although his followers were the primary audience of his words (Luke 16:1), there were also religious leaders like the Pharisees who heard him (verse 14).

Two masters

No one is able to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24, HBFV).

Jesus reveals that it is impossible for humans to dedicate themselves to both the Kingdom of God (eternal spiritual wealth) and the pursuit of money (temporary earthly wealth). We cannot fully pursue an intimate relationship with the true God while also serving mammon as if it were a deity.

It is indeed foolish to amass a huge fortune for our own selfish uses instead of being rich toward God (Luke 12:20 - 21). We are counseled, earlier in Matthew 6, to store our "treasure" in heaven where it is safe and does not lose value. Mammon that is accumulating and stored on earth, however, comes with real risks.

Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves break through and steal . . . store up treasures for yourselves in heaven . . . (Matthew 6:19 - 20).

Training tool in righteousness

The three remaining mentions of mammon are found in Jesus' comments given after he spoke the parable of the unjust steward (shrewd manager, unfaithful steward) recorded in Luke 16:1 - 8. His use of the word in Luke 16:13 means the same as what he stated above in Matthew 6:24. This leaves two other recorded uses that are quite interesting.

And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; so that, when you fail, they may receive you into the age-lasting dwellings.

The one who is faithful in the things that are least is also faithful in much; and the one who is unrighteous in the things that are least is also unrighteous in much.

Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? (Luke 16:9 - 11, HBFV).

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Although Jesus calls it "the mammon of unrighteousness," he recognizes his disciples will have regular access to it and therefore encourages them to use it righteously (e.g., helping those in need). He also reveals that it functions as a training tool and a barometer of our character.

How we use mammon or worldly wealth in this life will help determine our future reward in the next. The character we build by being faithful with a few things or in things God considers "least" qualifies us to someday be rewarded with more resources of a much higher value (see Matthew 25:21 - 23, Luke 19:17). Failure to use faithfully what we have been given, however, will lessen our reward.

Conclusion

God is not opposed to worldly wealth (mammon) per se. It was, after all, His idea to make King Solomon the richest person in history though he did not ask for it (1Kings 3:5 - 13). He also decided to double Job's great wealth after he repented (Job 42:10 - 12).

Several Old Testament men remained faithful all their life even though they were exceedingly blessed (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, King David). The Father even arranged for the wealthy Magi to give his beloved Son the riches (gold, frankincense and myrrh) needed to escape Herod's wrath and support his earthly family (Matthew 2:9 - 14).

What God dislikes is the obsessive pursuit of mammon for its own sake. We should, instead, trust in him to provide for our basic needs as we seek his Kingdom (Matthew 6:25 - 34). He also rejects using the blessings he makes possible in a selfish manner such as hoarding it (see Luke 12:16 - 21) or spending it to fulfill our lusts. Our priority should always be the Kingdom of God and on using the resources that come our way in a righteous manner.

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Love is the Fuel for the Christian Life (Copyright 2022) by Zac Poonen (Bangalore, India)

The gospel of the new covenant is essentially this: that we can partake of the Divine nature. God's nature is *LOVE* - and the most important characteristic of love is that it does not seek its own. It was because Jesus did not seek His own that He came down from heaven to earth to save us. God compares His love for us to that of a mother for her nursing babe (*Isa. 49:15*). A mother's love for her newborn baby is the greatest demonstration of love that one can see on earth - for a good mother does everything *unselfishly* for her child, expecting nothing in return. This is how the love of God is too - and this is the nature that we are to partake of. Then we will be able to serve God's people like Jesus Himself did.

"The way of life is the way of giving ourselves utterly to do the will of God alone for our lives, whatever that may cost us."

Love is the fuel that runs the Christian life. A car has to be pushed when the gas-tank is empty. Even so, where fervent love for the Lord has dried up, our labour for Him will become heavy and burdensome, like pushing a car. Then it will also become difficult to bear with the weaknesses and follies of others around us. So, we need to keep going back to the petrol-bunk (gas-station) again and again to fill-up. "*Be filled with the Spirit continuously*" (*Eph 5:18*).

Victory over anger and lusting with the eyes are by themselves only a preparation for the ultimate goal of partaking of the Divine nature itself. Our flesh is utterly selfish, and it is this selfish nature that has to be put to death daily. We are not to seek our own gain or honour or comfort, or anything that is our own - for that is the way of eternal death. The way of life is the way of giving ourselves utterly to do the will of God alone for our lives, whatever that may cost us. We must judge ourselves every day, and many times each day - *not by looking inward, but by looking up at Jesus* - and thus discover the areas where we are seeking our own and not the glory of God. Then we can cleanse ourselves from that self-seeking.

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This is the pathway to perfection. Very few are interested in cleansing themselves so faithfully from ALL filthiness of the flesh and the spirit (2 Cor. 7:1) - and that is why very few grow up to a genuine godly life.

Jesus said that only “*men of violence*” will possess the kingdom of God (Matt. 11:12). What that means is that we must do violence to everything within us that stands in the way of obedience to God’s commandments. It is not by our obedience to the big commandments that we prove our obedience. No. Jesus said that he who obeys and teaches others to obey the *least* of the commandments will be called *great* in God’s kingdom (Matt. 5:19). A little child’s obedience is not tested by his not murdering anyone or by not committing adultery in school. No. It is by his obeying his mother when she calls him to help her, when he himself wants to play. So, it is in our relationship with God as well. It is in the little things of daily life that we are to be faithful. Otherwise, we are disobedient.

In Matthew 13:43, Jesus said that “*the righteous will shine forth as the sun*”. The sun is constantly on fire at millions of degrees. No germs or bacteria can therefore survive on it. That is how the Lord wants us to be too - always on fire for Him, always zealous and fervent for purity, to serve others and to bless them, to humble ourselves, to testify in the meetings, and always on fire to build the church. You should be in the forefront in this matter. In the next three verses (Matt. 13:44 to 46), Jesus explains how we can be on fire always, through two parables (one about the treasure in the field and the other about the pearl of great price). In both of them, we find this one phrase repeated – “*He sold all that he had*”. That is the secret. We have to give up our self-will, our rights, our honour, our privileges, everything. Only then can we be like the sun - always on fire.

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Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)
As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

In regard to: Many are Called, Few are Chosen

Article by James Summerville

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

I thought this was a good article to help people understand why many are called but few are chosen, so great job. The only comments I have are in regard to this paragraph which is more toward the end of the article:

Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets: The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

We believe that scripture shows the resurrection of the elect will take place on Pentecost when the seventh or last trumpet sounds, they will be resurrected at the approximate or same time as the two witnesses and just before the bowls of wrath are poured out. The elect will then go to heaven for the marriage supper of the lamb and to be trained for their new jobs in the Kingdom of God on earth. It will be the Feast of Trumpets when they return to earth with Christ at which time the Kingdom of God will be set up shortly after that.

We have printed many articles and many Iron Sharpening Irons in regard to this speculation. Access “Pentecost” on the side bar menu on our new website and you will find some of them.

In regard to: Did Paul Really Say, "Let the Women Keep Silent in the Churches"?

Article by Dennis J. Preato
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

This is a great article from which we can all learn. There were a few things I need to bring attention to here. Find these points highlighted in yellow within the article itself:

#1- Paul's known teachings that we have been liberated from the law (Rom. 3:28; 6:14, 7:16, 8:2; Gal 3:11, 13, 4:5, 5:18, etc.).

We have been liberated from the law. Since Paul claims that we have been liberated from the law, how could he appeal to it? Paul also fought against the religious zealots of his day who tried to impose the requirements of the Old Testament's written and oral laws on New Testament believers in Christ.

In this passage you can pretty much tell the author probably believes the Law of God has been done away. We see nothing in the Old Testament or the New Testament showing the Law of God has been done away, so on this point we are in disagreement with this author.

#2- He also notes that Paul never appealed to the "law" for the guidance of the Church of Christ. On the contrary, he declared that believers were dead to the law by the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4) so that they might serve in newness of spirit and not the oldness of the letter (Rom. 7:6). [19]

Again, we see the author does not believe the Law of God is to be kept today, so we do not agree with this passage.

#3- Scholars also point out that Paul never appeals to the "law" as guidance for the Christian Church.

And again we disagree with this passage. The entire Church of God is to be guided by the Law of God via the Holy Spirit of God.

Other Items

National Digital ID System: It is Already Here

(Copyright 2023) by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

<https://rwmalonemd.substack.com/p/national-digital-id-system-it-is>

I think we may want to consider the ramifications, what we will be asked or not asked, at the medical places, etc. Is there any way to not sign 'the HIPPA privacy release' sign-up at the reception area and if not, would we still be able to see a doctor? And would it even make any difference? The pressure is building fast. Keep close.

Church Bookstore

We have not read these books, and so do not know what is in them.

In order to list your book or booklet in this category, we will need the following:

.jpg or .gif file of the front cover of the book or booklet.

.jpg or .gif file of the back cover of the book or booklet.

A one or two paragraph description of the book or booklet

If the book or booklet is free we need the link for where it can be downloaded.
If you are selling the book or booklet we need a link to the page where people can buy the book or booklet.

One book or booklet per email. If you do more per email we will dump it in the trash can.

Send it to church-of-god-bismarck@hotmail.com

Where are the Edomites Today? (Copyright) by Craig White (Australia)

Where are
the Edomites
today?



By Craig M White
Version 2.0



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All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Much is said about the peoples of Edom (and Amalek) historically and prophetically in the Bible. Where did their descendants migrate to? Can we identify them in the modern world? (31 Pages)

Found in Church Bookstore.

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<http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/>

Prayer Requests

Prayer Request for M. Srikanth (June 5, 2023)

Sabbath greetings to all. Thanks for your wonderful newsletter. During weekly Sabbath worship service, we deeply prayed for all of you to have peace and healthy of life I hope you are fine there. Once again please forward my request to your Sabbath friends. Due to Corona lockdown the prices of commodities are hiking day by day and we are unable to meet soaring prices. Frankly speaking we are eating half day. I hope you understand our sad plight. Your reward will be great

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in heaven Stay blessed. Prayerfully expecting your kind mail.

Announcements

Announcement from Zac Poonen (June 6, 2023)

MESSAGES

Taking God's Word Seriously about Freedom from Sin

<https://www.cfcindia.com/sermon/taking-gods-word-seriously-about-freedom-from-sin>

CFC Bangalore

<https://cfcindia.com>

Holy Days 2023

Passover – April 6, 2023 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 6-12, 2023

Pentecost – May 26, 2023

Trumpets - September 16, 2023

Atonement – September 25, 2023

Tabernacles –September 30, 2023 to October 6, 2023

Last Great Day – October 7, 2023

Notes