

THE MOST
MISUNDERSTOOD
BOOK OF ALL
TIME



The Bible is the most misread and misinterpreted Book ever written. Much of what you may think the Bible teaches is probably not even close to the truth. You just might be stunned to discover what's been hidden for 2,000 years.

Have you ever wondered why so many different Protestant denominations exist, each with contradictory teachings? Some say the total is as high as 33,000 worldwide, each claiming to teach the same Bible, yet unable to reconcile their doctrines and understanding with other denominations.

One cause for the confusion is that the Bible, which teaches about man's salvation and how to attain it, is both the world's all-time bestseller and the least understood book in existence.

An effort to correctly harmonize all of the Bible's teachings has been ongoing for centuries. More than 90 English translations of the Bible are in print, each with a goal to present the Scriptures better and more accurately than any other. So why is there so much disagreement about what it teaches? And why are so many traditional doctrines and practices difficult to prove from the Scriptures?

Are You Serious?

You may be astonished to learn that the Bible never deviates from its Hebraic foundation, nowhere promises eternal life in heaven or endless suffering in sulfurous flames of hell. Nor does it command or teach the observance of the most popular holidays like Easter, Christmas, or even worship on the first day of the week.

We could hardly get away with such provocative statements if they weren't true. Make no mistake. These are verifiable facts from Scripture itself and we challenge you to confirm everything written in this brochure by simply looking it up in your own Bible. Don't let anything go unproved.

Increasingly rare is the church or ministry that encourages its members to study the textbook of their faith, let alone take along a Bible to worship services and prove what the minister is saying. This pervasive malpractice is one of the reasons that popular error continues to go unchallenged and uncorrected.

What is offered as scriptural teaching today is light years away

from what was taught only 100 years ago in the name of biblical truth. Many are sitting in their pews without the slightest idea that key doctrinal statements they hear week after week have nothing in common with scriptural teaching. Just hearing a tired string of platitudes interrupted by a touching story in a 20-minute sermon is not going to cut it, either.

If you are serious about what you believe, if you care about your eternal salvation, then it is time to dig into the Word. It is time to learn the facts from the Scriptures alone.

To understand the textbook of your faith you must first read the book. You cannot rely on someone else to make the effort for you. Don't leave to the "experts" something as important as your personal salvation. The Bible says you are entirely accountable for yourself: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," the Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 2:12.

You are responsible for your own understanding and what you do with it. You can't look to someone else to answer for your beliefs or the way you lead your life.

In the spirit of this biblical command we will detail some of the more startling truths presented in both Old and New testaments. These are facts that have been hidden for centuries – some of which may absolutely shock you. And remember, don't accept anything you hear or read without proving it first from your own Bible.

Hebraic New Testament

Is the faith of our Savior and His apostles Greco-Roman or did they remain true to their Hebraic roots? Scripture is clear that they never deviated from the foundation that was



delivered by the patriarchs of Old. The faith given to Abraham was the same faith practiced by the Messiah and His disciples in the New Testament.

What's amazing is that most biblical scholars recognize this truth today. They realize that Christianity developed from the Hebraic or Jewish faith, based on the Old Testament. Author Earle E. Cairns in his book, *Christianity Through the Centuries* states, "Christianity may have developed in the political milieu of Rome and may have had to face the intellectual environment created by the Greek mind, but its relationship to Judaism was much more intimate. Judaism



may be thought of as the stalk on which the rose of Christianity was to bloom.... Judaism provided the heredity of Christianity and, for a time, even gave the infant religion shelter.... The Jewish people still further prepared the way for the coming of Christianity by providing the infant Church with a sacred book, the Old Testament. Even a casual study of the New Testament will reveal [Messiah's] and the apostles' deep indebtedness to the Old Testament and their reverence for it as the Word of [Yahweh] to man.... The books of the Old Testament and the books of the New Testament, given under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, were to be the living literature of the

Church” (1954, pp. 44-46).

Even though the early church developed in the Roman world, its relationship is most closely tied to Judaism. The fact is, without Judaism or the Old Testament, there would be no New Testament or Christianity today. In this way the Old Testament made the New Testament possible.

The concept that the early church arose from a Grecian faith is far from the truth. Historically, as time went on the church further strayed away from its Hebraic roots and progressively adopted a more Grecian faith. Much of the reason for this was due to the fact that many of its new converts were non-Jews or gentiles. So as the church grew, Greek thought also grew and changed its core beliefs and foundations. This is precisely how Easter, Christmas, and many other modern traditions were adopted into the church.

Does “Old” Imply Obsolete?

Is the Old Testament obsolete and does all instruction now reside only in the New Testament? Hebrew 8:13 reads, “In that he saith A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.” The NIV states, “. . .he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.” From the word “obsolete” many will make the astonishing claim that the Old Testament is without relevance and merit, barring the Psalms and a few other inspirational stories. This is especially true in regard to the commandments.

The word “obsolete” is derived from the Greek *palaaioo*. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* provides two definitions from the word: (1) “to make ancient or old” and (2) “to declare a thing to be old and so about to be abrogated.” While both definitions imply that the Old or first covenant is growing old, neither one states that it’s obsolete!

According to *Early Christian Doctrines* by J.N.D. Kelly, “For the first hundred years, at least, of its history the Church’s Scriptures, in the precise sense of the word, consisted exclusively of the Old Testament,” page 52. The fact is, the Old Testament is alive and well. Except for a few changes in the priesthood and sacrificial system, our Father’s moral laws are as applicable today as they were when

the commandments were first given to Moses.

Yahshua made many references to the Old Testament and its laws. Authors Johnson and Webber in their book, *What Christians Believe*, state, “In [Yahshua’s] attitude toward the Old Testament one can glean a considerable range of information on his understanding of the nature and authority of the Bible. He either quotes or alludes to the Old Testament more than 150 times in the Synoptic Gospels alone. He thus exhibits a deep respect for the Bible.”

In John 5:39 Yahshua directly commanded us to study the Old Testament, the only Bible in existence: “Search the Scriptures; for in them think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me.”

Authority of the Old Testament

It is very important that in Matthew 23:2-3 Yahshua said the scribes and Pharisees had the authority of the Old Testament commands when it came to teaching what you must observe. “Moses’ seat” is a euphemism for the Old Testament and its laws. The authority to obey Old Testament commands and laws comes right from Yahshua’s own mouth!



Let’s just look at a few of the many Old Testament truths that Yahshua taught:

- In Matthew 22:37-40 Yahshua referred to a fundamental precept in the Old Testament on which to base His teaching about the law: love Yahweh and love your neighbor, which He quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5; 10:12; 30:6 and Leviticus 19:18.
- Yahshua deferred to the Old Testament in matters of divorce

(Matthew 19:8).

- Yahshua deferred to the Old Testament in matters of the law (Matt. 5), saying that not even the smallest part of the law would be done away until heaven and earth themselves pass away, verse 18.
- Yahshua deferred to the Old Testament regarding salvation (Luke 16:29). In this reference Yahshua was telling the parable of Lazarus and the rich man. He ended it by saying, verse 31, that if they won't listen to Moses and the prophets, then it won't matter to them even if one rose from the dead (meaning Himself).

His lesson is clear – if they are not grounded in Yahweh's laws and have no concern for the prophets' warnings about sin, then Yahshua will have no influence in them either. They won't listen to Him, because His message is virtually the same as the Old Testament message brought by Moses and the prophets.

Some might argue, yes, but this was before Yahshua's death changed everything and switched the focus from the Old Testament system to the New Testament. However, many years after Yahshua was come and gone, Stephen launched into a speech before the Sanhedrin that highlighted Yahweh's covenant with Abraham, how Moses was born to fulfill that covenant, and how the plan was continually obstructed by the people who refused to obey and listen to the prophets, Acts 7. Why would Stephen use the Old Testament as the context for their present rebellion unless it were still alive and in force?

When Paul commended the New Testament Bereans for diligently searching the Scriptures to see whether what he was preaching to them was true (Acts 17:11), he referred to their study of what we call the Old Testament: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

But to them it was not the "Old Testament." As far as the Bereans were concerned, they were merely searching Yahweh's Word, which included the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, to confirm that what they were hearing from the New Testament apostles was true.

Remember, the Old Testament was the only Bible they had. It was the foundation of their faith and belief, and Paul even applauded them

for double-checking with the Old Testament first before believing anything they read in the New Testament writings! All of which screams one especially important fact: the New Testament does not contradict the Old Testament.

Why did Paul not say, “Listen people, don’t bother with those old writings that are now out of date. Just read my letters and do what they say and forget that Old Testament. I am all the Bible you need now.” He knew that teaching such a thing, which churches everywhere believe and teach today, would be an enormous falsehood. He himself based Truth on the Old Testament Scriptures.

Note how Paul supported and taught the law and the Old Testament:

- In Acts 24:14 Paul adamantly maintained that he believed “all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Old Testament).
- To prove that he lived “in observance of the law,” Paul agreed to undertake a ritual purification at the temple, at which time he proved that he kept the law (Acts 21:24-26). Born a Benjaminite, he was instructed by Gamaliel “according to the perfect manner of the law,” Acts 22:3.
- In diametric opposition to what most clerics teach today, Paul said he was not against Old Testament teachings and did nothing to violate them, Acts 28:17.
- As a matter of fact, Paul taught the people about Yahshua from morning to night “out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets,” (Old Testament) Acts 28:23.
- In Acts 25:8 Paul maintained that he never broke any laws of the Jews or the temple.

All the books of the Old Testament except Esther, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon are quoted in the New Testament.

That Old Testament that is used only occasionally for a children’s Bible lesson or for reading of an infrequent Psalm or Proverb is a lot more important than most people think. Yahshua, the apostles, and the earliest converts relied on the Old Testament as the basis for their teachings. They constantly alluded to it and defined their faith in light of what it said.

Once you have all the facts, then you are prepared to make informed, correct choices. People urgently need this truth about the Old Testament so that their worship can be corrected and aligned with the same Truth the prophets, apostles, and Yahshua the Messiah followed.

Sadly, most don't want the truth of the matter. They love darkness rather than light (John 3:19) for fear of what they might discover that could alter their beliefs and impact their lifestyle. They are comfortable and satisfied in their traditional beliefs no matter how erroneous.

Identity Theft of the Father and Son

Imagine a baby boy born to a typical American family in Iowa being given a Russian name like Vladimir. It just wouldn't happen! But think about this: Your Savior was born a Hebrew of Hebrew parents. Yet the Hebrew Name they gave Him was eventually stolen away and replaced with a Greek name (Jesus) that He never knew the whole time He walked this earth.

Look up the letter "J" in a comprehensive dictionary or encyclopedia and you will discover that the J is only 500 years old. It was the newest letter to join the alphabet – any alphabet. We must conclude that with no J in existence the name "Jesus" did not exist either – not in any language – prior to the time of Christopher Columbus.

The Book of Matthew tells us that an angel told the Hebrew Miriam (Mary) and Yowceph (Joseph) what to call their newborn son. "And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Yahshua: for He shall save His people from their sins," 1:21. This Hebrew Name, Yahshua, means, "Yah Is Salvation" (Yah-shua). In spite of this fact most Bible translations continued to promote a Greek name He never knew, which has led millions to believe it is genuine. But scholars everywhere know better, as do most ministers from their seminary training.

A good study Bible like the Companion explains that His Name is the same as Hoshea, prefixed with the word "Yah" – hence Yahoshea or Yahshua as it was pronounced at the time of His birth. (The "o" in Hoshea began to be dropped after the Babylonian captivity.) If you saw The Passion movie you will recall that the Savior was known

and called exclusively by the Hebrew-Aramaic name “Y’shua.”

The *Anchor Bible* explains His Name Yahshua in a note on Matthew 1:1: “The first element, Yahu (=Yahweh) means ‘the [L-rd],’ while the second comes from shua ‘To help, save’” (vol. 26, p. 2).

In Hebrew all names have meaning. Recall that the angel said that the Son would be given a specific Name because He would “save His people from their sins.” The last part of His Name in Hebrew means just that – “salvation.” But that is not all.

The Bible also quotes the Savior Himself saying that He came in His Heavenly Father’s Name. “I am come in my Father’s name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive,” John 5:43. The prefix “Yah” in His Name Yahshua comes directly from the Father’s Name Yahweh. He literally and truly came in His Father’s Name!

The short family name “Yah” is found in many names in the Bible, including IsaYah (Isaiah), JeremiYah (Jeremiah), Yahel (Joel), and EliYah (Elijah). You even use it when you say the word “halleluYah”! Translators pirated away the family Name when they substituted the letter “y” with “i” or “j” in various names and words.

You will find the Father’s Name in the complete form YHWH (Yahweh) no fewer than 6,823 times in the original Hebrew manuscripts that produced the Old Testament. The Teutonic term “God” does not appear in the Hebrew Old Testament. Nor does it appear in the ancient Greek of the New Testament from which most all modern versions are derived. You can confirm this fact for yourself in any concordance. In the ancient Greek New Testament the term used is the Greek *theos* or a close variant thereof.

To whom are you really praying if the two most popular names used for the Father and Son are not even in the original Scriptures? Some may be saying, “Well, it doesn’t really matter. He knows who I mean.” How can the worshiper say to the One he or she worships, “I’ll decide what I will call you”? Especially when the Father is so adamant that we call on His Name! Does He need to reveal His Name more than 6,823 times before we will grasp its importance?

No one can change your name without your consent. Neither is

it an option for us to call our Creator whatever may be traditional or popular – but incorrect.

Isaiah 52:6 equates being a child of His by this specific characteristic: “Therefore my people shall know my name.” That is how important His Name is to Him, just as your name is dear to you. How annoying when someone mispronounces or otherwise misuses your name, especially when they know what your name is. Imagine how the Father in heaven feels when you substitute His Name with something else entirely, especially if that substitute name relates to a heathen deity.

Open a Bible concordance like Strong’s or Young’s to the heading “name” and note how many times the Scriptures command us to honor and glorify His Name. Names show identity. You cannot change names without altering an individual’s identity. Doing so is identity theft.

In Isaiah 42:8 the Father clearly says, “I am Yahweh [“YHWH” in the Hebrew]: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”



Fourth Commandment Upgrade?

The Fourth Commandment tells us to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,” meaning set apart. If there were any question about which day of the week is the Sabbath, the commandment nails it down: “Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of Yahweh your Elohim...For in six days Yahweh made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Yahweh blessed the sabbath day,

and hallowed it,” Exodus 20:9-11.

Common wall calendars show that the week ends on Saturday, the seventh day, while Sunday starts a new week. Nothing we can look to in creation tells us when the Sabbath day is. It was divinely instituted at creation by the Father Yahweh Himself, and the sequence of days has remained the same since.

The Messiah Yahshua kept the same commanded Sabbath that His Father Yahweh rested on. He went to the temple and worshiped on the seventh day of the week, as did all of His disciples all of their lives. Not a single passage of Scripture gives anyone permission to switch the day of rest and worship from the Sabbath to Sunday.

First, He was already gone from the tomb by sunset Saturday evening. Second, nowhere does the Bible say that a resurrection day creates a Sabbath day. This change was made purely on the authority of the Roman Church alone, which it freely admits.

A check of a concordance will reveal that references to the seventh-day Sabbath appear 60 times in the New Testament. But only eight verses out of the entire New Testament speak of the first day of the week – none of them enjoining worship on that day.

Even more questionable, none of those eight “first-day” references is even clearly speaking of the first day of the week. These eight verses could just as easily mean the first part of the week rather than the first day of the week.

A key reference to the Sabbath in the New Testament is found in Hebrews 4:9: “There remains therefore a rest to the people of Elohim.” “Rest” is from the Greek *sabbatismos*, which means “a keeping of Sabbath.” The book of Hebrews tells us that the Sabbath remains the day of rest, and the day that was kept as the Sabbath at that time, as any biblical reference will tell you, was the seventh day – Saturday. The Sabbath had always been Saturday ever since Yahweh established it by resting Himself on the seventh day after creation, Genesis 2:2-3. The seventh day continued as the day of rest among New Testament believers.

As a Jew, Yahshua went into the synagogue on the seventh-day Sabbath to read and teach, Luke 4:16. In His prophecy of the last days He admonished in Matthew 24:20, “But pray ye that your flight

be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day.” He never would have prophesied this if He knew that the Sabbath would no longer be binding.

Following his conversion the Apostle Paul proceeded to keep the seventh-day Sabbath both with Jews as well as Gentiles, Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4. This was many years after the Savior’s resurrection. These New Testament references tell us that we have no authority to change the day set apart as holy by Yahweh Himself. To do so is to make our worship fit our own desires. Prophecy says that in the Kingdom all people will come to worship Yahweh “from one Sabbath to another,” Isaiah 66:23.

Even scholarship freely admits the unauthorized change from Saturday to Sunday. According to Dr. Augustus Neander in his book *The History of the Christian Religion and Church*: “The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals was always only a human ordinance,



and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a Divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday” (1843, p. 186).

It was Constantine I, also known as Constantine the Great, who issued the first civil edict making Sunday the day of worship. He was emperor of Rome from 306 CE to 337 CE and according to history was the first emperor to convert to Christianity. However, prior to his conversion it is well documented that this man was a sun worshiper and only converted upon his deathbed. According to authors Anthony F. Buzzard and Charles F. Hunting, “Constantine appears to have been a sun-worshiper, one of a number of late pagan cults which had observances in common with Christians. Worship of such gods was not a novel idea. Every

Greek or Roman expected that political success followed from religious piety. Christianity was the religion of Constantine's father. Although Constantine claimed that he was the thirteenth Apostle, his was no sudden Damascus conversion. Indeed it is highly doubtful that he ever truly abandoned sun-worship. After his professed acceptance of Christianity, he built a triumphal arch to the sun god and in Constantinople set up a statue of the same sun god bearing his own features. He was finally deified after his death by official edict in the Empire, as were many Roman rulers" (*The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 147).

In his famous edict of 321 CE, Constantine declared, "On the Venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost."

Think about this — a sun worshiper changed the day that our Father in heaven established in favor of a day that was being honored and observed to the sun. This edict undeniably verifies the paganism of Sunday worship. There is, again, not a single verse in the New Testament confirming that the day of worship changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. This change was only through the pen of man, not through the inspiration of Almighty Yahweh, the one with whom we should be concerned.

At the Council of Laodicea in 325 CE, sixteen years after Constantine's original edict, we find a second attempt to remove the Sabbath. In this decree the counsel of bishops declared, "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ."

Not only did the bishops state here that Sunday was to be observed in lieu of the seventh-day Sabbath, but we find that they also forbade Christians from Judaizing the Sabbath. This provides irrefutable evidence that for 300 years after the death of Yahshua there were

still “Christians” observing the biblical Sabbath. It also confirms the Church’s early desire to move away from its Jewish or Hebraic heritage.

Once Saved, Always Saved?

The doctrine of eternal security or “once saved, always saved” is a widely believed teaching. However, no such terms exist anywhere in the Bible.

A representative passage very popular with those who believe in being forever saved at conversion is John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”

“See,” they say, “Once He saves us we can never perish and no one can separate us from Him. His word is absolute and He cannot lie.” Their statement cannot be denied. The question is, when does He grant us life everlasting? Are we “saved” immediately at our conversion? Is it ever possible to fall from grace? The issue of timing is the crux of the matter.

A companion verse to John 10:27-29 and a key that unlocks it and similar passages is found in Matthew



25:32-34, speaking of the Savior on the day of judgment: “And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

The setting in Yahshua's statement is the earth at His Second Coming. When He returns He will judge the earth and at that specific time will reward the faithful, both living and dead, with salvation. He confirms this in Revelation 22:12, showing the basis on which He gives rewards: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Two verses later He adds, "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

Doing His commandments — obeying His laws — is what makes us worthy for eternal life, symbolized by the tree of life. The implied opposite, then, means that if we don't do His commandments we will not have this special right to everlasting life. However, most who hold to the eternal security teaching believe that Yahweh requires nothing of His people but faith alone. Any hint of the necessity of obedience sends them into paroxysms of distress and incredulity.

Certainly we are not saved by our works. The Scriptures are clear on that. We are not justified by keeping the law, Romans 3:20, but by His grace, v. 24. Justification means "just as if" we had not sinned. Nothing we can do will "earn" us righteous standing in His sight,



because we have all sinned and are nothing but filthy rags, Romans 3:23.

Once we are justified by His grace, however, we are set apart for a holy purpose, which is called sanctification. Through sanctification Yahweh expects His people to live pure and righteous lives. “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of Elohim,” 2Corinthians 7:1. Notice the verse does not say, “Let Yahweh cleanse us,” but rather, “let us cleanse ourselves.” Live purely. Overcome the pulls of sin.

In the same vein, we are commanded to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” Philippians 2:12. If one is already saved, no fear and trembling would be necessary! Neither would there be a need to work out any salvation.

A sanctified individual not only lives a life apart from sin, but also is obedient to what Yahweh tells Him to do. “For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous,” 1John 5:3. He has commanded His people to keep His laws, including His Feasts and Sabbaths. They do so not because they are earning their salvation, but because they now live for Him and are in the process of taking on His very nature. We reflect His nature when we do what He would do and follow His direction. He is the Father and we His children. We obey Him just as we obey our earthly parents. We don’t obey our parents for a reward, but because they are our parents and they demand obedience. Our love for them makes us want to obey them.

Yahweh is adamant about the failure of those who once accepted Him but now turn back to sin. He will not save them in spite of themselves. He will, in fact, judge them!

Backsliding is as hazardous to the people of Yahweh today as it was with Israel of old. Read it in the New Testament book of Hebrews, 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, And have tasted the good word of Elohim, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they impale to themselves the Son of



Elohim afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

Stark and serious words. To throw away the truth once you know it is as grave as it gets. Obviously such a result leaves no room for being eternally saved.

Missing Rapture

Another misunderstood belief is the rapture. We are nowhere told in the inspired Word to expect to be snatched away to heaven to watch our earthbound loved ones suffer and die agonizing deaths during the worst-ever disasters and conflagration prophesied to engulf this planet. In fact, the word “rapture” never appears in the Scriptures.

Are we any better or more privileged than the prophets of old, who suffered for their faith? James 5:10 says that their lives and experiences are patterns for us, “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of Yahweh, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.”

So what of the idea of a rapture, in which the saints will allegedly be removed from the earth before end-time tribulation? Is there scriptural support?

The rapture doctrine says that the Messiah will return and either secretly whisk away the saints or take them openly to heaven with Him. There they will spend either 3 ½ or 7 years in safekeeping while tribulation rocks this planet.

The rapture teaching rests heavily on 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17: “For this we say unto you by the word of Yahweh, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of Yahshua shall not prevent [go before] them which are asleep [dead]. For the Master himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of Elohim: and the dead in Messiah shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Master in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Master.”

Trying to make this passage refer to a pre-tribulation rapture of protection is incongruous, considering that the dead are said to go first. The dead don't need to be raptured to safety because they are dead. Their souls, according to the rapture teaching, will already be up in heaven. In truth, this passage is speaking of the final day when Yahshua returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, and all the saints, living and dead, will be gathered to be with Him to rule in a thousand-year period on earth.

The timing of the event is critical. Are the saints taken before or after the Great Tribulation? We will find out momentarily.

Other questions that need answering: where is the support for a silent, secret rapture — which some believe will occur — amid “a shout,” “voice of an archangel,” and a trumpet blast? Is there perhaps a “silent” Second Coming and then a Third Coming? If so, where is the scriptural evidence?

In Matthew 24:30-33, Yahshua in His own words reveals what will happen when He returns to earth: “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh: So likewise you, when you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”

Here we see that when Yahshua returns, the final trumpet will sound and He will gather His elect from one end of heaven to another (not huddled all together in one place, as some teach).

Continuing with verses 37-39, we read, “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall



also the coming of the Son of man be.”

Yahshua tells us that people everywhere will be carrying on their lives oblivious to what is about to happen, just as they were before the earth was inundated by water. Noah and his family were the bright lights amid all of the dark, earthly evil. They are called righteous by Yahweh in Genesis 7:1. But notice. We read that the final events will be just like those in Noah’s day. And what happened with righteous Noah and his family? Were they raptured from the planet just before the devastating flood? No, on the contrary, they remained on earth. Yahweh had guided Noah to prepare a place of earthly safety and protection — a giant ark floating on the flood waters.

Now note what happened to the wicked. We read that Yahweh “took them all away.” They were taken and destroyed in the waters and only Noah and his family remained. Yahshua said it will be the same way at the end of the age: “Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.” In the same manner as in the days of the flood, at Yahshua’s coming the wicked will be removed first and the righteous will remain.

The disciples asked Him where these “taken” ones, meaning the wicked people, will go. For the answer we go to a parallel account in Luke 17:35-37, where Yahshua said. “Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Master? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.”

What did He mean by “body” and “eagles”? This verse has a translation difficulty in the KJV which, once cleared up, makes understanding crystal clear. Let’s go back to Matthew 24. This passage about the coming of the Messiah is an improved rendering of the same account we just read in Luke 17:35-37.

In verses 27-28 of Matthew 24 we find: “For as the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”

Here the translators used the more correct “carcass” in translating

the word *ptoma*, which in Greek means, “ruin, lifeless body, corpse.” The word for “eagles” refers more accurately to vultures. Eagles are not carrion eaters as are vultures.

Does this sound like a glorious place of safety where the saints will be taken up in a rapture? On the contrary, Yahshua told His disciples that those taken, meaning the wicked, will be destroyed, not whisked off to safety in heaven!

Just as Noah was protected on earth during the catastrophic flood, and Israel was protected in Egypt during the passing over of the death angel, Yahweh promises the same kind of earthly protection for His people in the last days: “And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth” (Rev. 12:14-16).

The terms “wilderness,” “flood,” and “earth” demonstrate unequivocally that the saints will find protection on earth, not in heaven. Satan certainly has no power to chase the saints around in heaven!

The rapture doctrine is just another aspect of the modern, false idea of gain without pain. Something for nothing. No effort or overcoming is necessary. Such an idea is completely foreign to Scripture. In the Book of Acts we read, “Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of Elohim,” Acts 14:22.

Heaven on Earth

The typical funeral sermon announces that the deceased is now “in a better place”—meaning in heaven—and smiling down at the gathered loved ones. Although such a statement may comfort the grieving, do the Scriptures themselves support it?

Yahshua the Messiah said plainly and clearly in John 3:13, “No one has ascended up to heaven...” Of all the millions of people who

had died up to that point in history not one went to heaven. That fact is on the direct authority of our Savior Himself. Certainly there had been good people deserving of salvation who never went to a heavenly reward. Take King David, for instance. He will rule directly under Yahshua in the millennial Kingdom, Ezekiel 37:24-25. But where is David now – in heaven?

Acts 2:29 explains about this man that Yahweh loved: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.” For nearly a thousand years up to the time Yahshua walked this earth David lay in the grave, and he is still dead in the grave, having gone nowhere but to his rest for the past 3,000 years.

Paul explained that we get everlasting life only at the resurrection when our Savior returns to Earth. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 Paul wrote: “For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits; then they that are Messiah’s, at his coming.”

After searching the Scriptures for 40 years we have not found one verse that says, “When we get to heaven,” or “I’ll see you in heaven,” or “Rejoice for you will one day be in heaven,” or anything similar. The notion of a heavenly reward stems from teachings of Greek philosophers and Gnostic traditions, ultimately embraced by the church.

What we do find in the Scriptures are many passages that speak of the earth as our reward, such as Psalm 37:11: “But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.”

To Be Immortal

In addition to heaven, the concept of the immortal soul is foreign to Scripture. According to historians and biblical scholars, this belief was derived from cultures long past.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia*, in the article, “Immortality of the Soul,” says, “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere

taught in the Holy Scripture....The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended.”

Like many of today’s popular teachings, belief in an immortal soul is a legacy of ancient pagan beliefs handed down through the millennia. According to Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived during the fifth century BCE, immortal soul beliefs trace directly back to the mystery religion of the Egyptians: “The Egyptians were the first that asserted that the soul of man is immortal...This opinion some among the Greeks have at different periods of time adopted as their own” (Euterpe, chapter 123).

The *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* corroborates, “Perhaps we may say that the idea of immortality assumed a more definite shape among the Egyptians, for they clearly recognized not only a dwelling-place of the dead, but also a future judgment. ‘Osiris, the beneficent god, judges the dead,’ and, ‘having weighed their heart in the scales of justice, he sends the wicked to regions of darkness, while the just are sent to dwell with the god of light.’ The latter, we read on an inscription, ‘found favor before the great God; they dwell in glory, where they live a heavenly life; the bodies they have quitted will forever repose in their tombs, while they rejoice in the life of the supreme God.’ Immortality was thus plainly taught, although bound up with it was the idea of the preservation of the body, to which they attached great importance, as a condition of the soul’s continued life; and hence they built vast tombs, and embalmed their bodies, as if to last forever,” *Immortality*, p. 514. This same exhaustive source also explains the connection between immortality and the ancient eastern religions of Hinduism and Confucianism:

“Hindus – In the sacred books of Hindus called the Veda, ‘immortality of the soul, as well as personal immortality and personal responsibility after death, is clearly proclaimed....’

“Chinese – While it is true that Confucius himself did not expressly teach the immortality of the soul, nay, that he rather purposely

seems to have avoided entering upon this subject at all...it is nevertheless implied in the worship which the Chinese pray to their ancestors....” p. 513.

Eventually these pagan beliefs were handed down to the Greeks, who then delivered them to Judaism and Christianity, forever changing the concept of the soul for western religion. According to Plato, a Greek philosopher and mathematician schooled by Socrates, the soul could not be destroyed. In Plato’s dialog *Phaedo* he states, “The soul whose inseparable attribute is life will never admit of life’s opposite, death. Thus the soul is shown to be immortal, and since immortal, indestructible....”

Contrary to the beliefs of the pagan Plato, the soul is not immortal. As Ezekiel wrote, “...the soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

Eternal Torture?

In Yahshua’s prophesy to John of Patmos, he wrote the following, “And death and hades were cast into the lake of fire,” Revelation 20:14. The word hades is traditionally rendered “hell” and has been understood as a place of perpetual torment. The fact is, this belief is nowhere in the Bible but only in myth and man’s traditions.

The current concept of hell developed from Greek influence, according to authors Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber in their book, *What Christians Believe—A Biblical and Historical Summary*. “In the intertestamental period there were significant developments in eschatological themes. The first relates to the development of a compartmental view of sheol. When the righteous and the wicked die, they go to different places. This is to be contrasted with the Old Testament view that sheol is the place where both the righteous and wicked go. Under the growing influence of Greek concepts of a distinct body and soul, some Jews taught that after death ‘the immortal and perishable soul, once detached from the ties of the flesh and thus freed from bondage, flies happily upwards’ [quote from Flavius Josephus, *The Jewish Wars*, II, VII.2]...On the other hand the wicked go to sheol, which is now identified with the Greek hades. This region of damnation is also called *gehenna*, a place of eternal fire (originally the old rubbish heap and a place of child sacrifice south of Mount Zion

in Jerusalem). It was known as the Valley of Hinnom,” pp. 423-424. The current concept of hell as an ever-burning fire is completely missing from the Old and New testaments and arose only through pagan traditions of man. This belief was further propagated and solidified in the 14th century through the “Inferno,” the prologue to Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*. Scholars say Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* as retribution against his political rivals, whose evils are featured in the work. He depicts *sheol* or *hades* as a place of fire and torment in the earth for those who do wrong during their lifetimes. Images of this epic-poem continue to influence New Testament believers today.

You might now be wondering, what about the references in Scripture to eternal fire? To the surprise of many, this phrase does not refer to an everlasting punishing. From the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah we learn that “eternal fire” simply refers to the finality of Yahweh’s judgment: “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,” Jude 7.



Statue of Dante Alighieri in Florence, Italy

From the *Restoration Study Bible* we see that the phrase “refers both to its ability to continue burning in the presence of sufficient fuel, as well as its lasting effects....” The latter explains the eternal nature of this punishment. It is not the fire that burns forever, but the

punishment or sentence of judgment that remains forever. Sodom and Gomorrah no longer burn, but Yahweh's judgment on them will be forever remembered. Two additional examples are found in Jeremiah:

- “But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched,” Jeremiah 17:27.

- “Therefore thus saith my Sovereign Yahweh; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched,” Jeremiah 7:20.

These prophecies were fulfilled when Judah was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. It says this fire would not be “quenched.” This word comes from the Hebrew *kabah*, a primitive root, meaning, “to expire or (causatively) to extinguish (fire, light, anger).” As with Sodom and Gomorrah, it is not referring to eternal fire, but to fire that no one shall put out until it has completely burned up its fuel, a comparison to the totality of Yahweh's judgment.

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