

# UPON THE ROCK

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## I CAN KNOW

We live in an age in which it is not fashionable to be certain of anything. Only the “arrogant” and “ignorant” claim to know anything. Many would say the best we can do is suspect something to be true because the evidence “would suggest that it might be so.” It is considered “intolerant” of the views of others to *know* some things to be right and others to be wrong.

Sadly, this view has been commonly accepted in religious circles. It is said to be “bigoted”, perhaps even “hate-mongering” to say that one religious view is right and others are not. “After all,” we are told, “what’s right for you may not be right for me. Besides, who are you to say what is true and what is not?” Some even suggest that it is impossible for us to *know* anything is true. There is always the possibility you might be wrong, and therefore you cannot be certain in your knowledge of anything. Even many who claim to believe the Bible is the only revelation from God become uneasy when we say we know the Bible teaches something to be true. They quickly ask, “Are you saying you know everything there is to know about the Bible? Is there no chance you could be wrong?” This writer was once asked by a religious leader, “How do you know that is what the Bible teaches? That’s just your interpretation. Other people interpret it differently. Who’s to say who is right?” No right-thinking person would honestly claim they know everything about the Bible. Certainly we are constantly growing in our knowledge of God’s Word. But just because we don’t know everything, doesn’t mean we don’t know anything. There are some things that the Bible clearly teaches, and we can *know* the Bible teaches them. It is not just a matter of personal

interpretation, it is what the Bible says. Surely God is capable of writing a book we can understand.

Our nation is tragically seeing the results of this attitude in the area of morality and decency. We used to know right from wrong, but now we can only have personal preferences that do or do not offend our “personal value system.” What is right for one may not be right for another, and what is wrong for one may not be wrong for another. It all depends on the person and the situation. Nothing is always right and nothing is always wrong. We are said to be “forcing our values on others” if we sound too certain about moral issues.

Such a view provides no hope or confidence in anything we believe or do. It leaves us floundering through life, hoping we are doing the right thing, but never knowing for certain. We become like those the Apostle Paul mentions in 2 Timothy 3:7 “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Surely, God would not abandon us to such uncertainty. It may be a sign of “intellectualism” to never be sure of anything, but it is a sign of faith in God to accept him at his word.

The Bible clearly says we can understand what it means. “Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge.” (Ephesians 3:4) God plainly says there are things we can *know*! Considering that God used the word “know” 764 times in the Bible, He obviously thinks knowledge is possible. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32) He did not say “Ye shall suspect the truth,” or “Ye shall theorize about the truth.” He said “Ye shall know the truth.” He did not say “Ye shall know a truth”, but “Ye shall know *the* truth.” There is absolute truth, and Jesus said it is possible to know it.

We can know that the Bible is from God. “If any man will do his will, he *shall know* of the doctrine, whether it be of God.” (John 7:17) (emphasis mine, PLG) There is tremendous comfort in knowing that we can understand the teachings God has given us, if we apply ourselves to the task. It is also possible for us to determine whether a particular teaching or doctrine actually comes from God. Not all ideas are equal, some are from God and some are not. We are commanded

Oh yes, I believe in heaven because the Bible tells me so! The Bible Is Right!!!

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## HOW CAN I KNOW?

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UPON THE ROCK  
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to “try the spirits whether they are of God.” (1 John 4:1) “Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.” (1 John 4:6) There is a difference between truth and error, and we can know that difference. It is possible for us to obey God and know we are obeying God. We can know God, and know we know Him. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” (1 John 2:3)

Often the belief that nothing can be known for certain stems from a desire to avoid taking a stand for the teachings of God. If I take the view that everybody may be right, then I can accept anyone and any doctrine. This writer was once involved in a lengthy discussion with a preacher for a particular denomination. After two hours of disagreeing with each other, he said, “Well, at least we know we are both right.” But it was impossible for both of us to be right. One or the other of us had to be wrong. He was trying desperately to find a way for us to ignore God’s word and just get along.

It is always interesting to hear someone say, “You cannot know anything for sure.” Are they sure you cannot know anything for sure? Do they know it is impossible to know? Their statement may sound modern, intellectual, and tolerant, but it is actually a logical contradiction, and therefore cannot be true.

Our understanding of how we please God depends on our knowing what God meant when he spoke through his Holy Word. We are not left to our own devices, feelings, interpretations, and guesses in serving God. He has been very specific in his instructions to us. It will be the purpose of the articles in this issue of *Upon The Rock* to examine some of the areas in which we can know what God meant. Please study them carefully. Eternity in heaven depends on our knowing what God said, and obeying it.

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## HOW DO WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS TRUE?

Larry G. Reynolds

In an age of doubt and uncertainty, a person needs something to which he can cling. We need a solid rock upon which we can stand. Is the Bible reliable, is it from God or is it a big book of lies? The Bible's claims to be inspired is easily seen by anyone who takes the time to examine its text. The fact that such a claim is made would not of itself, or course, guarantee that the claim is genuine. Many documents which are clearly frauds, claim inspiration (e.g., The Book of Mormon). The question is, therefore, is there sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that the Bible is true and is of divine origin? J.W. McGarvey makes the following observation in the introduction of his monumental work, Evidences of Christianity.

*The divine origin of the Christian religion depends for its proof of the evidence that Jesus of Nazareth is "the Christ, the Son of the living God." As he is the author of this religion, if it be proved that he is that Christ whose coming and work were predicted by the prophets of the Old Testament, and that he is the Son of God miraculously begotten, his religion is proved to be of divine origin, and to be for this reason possessed of divine authority.*

*But should we succeed in establishing the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and fail to show the authenticity of the writings on which we depend for a knowledge of his religion, the fact established would be of no practical value, seeing that we could not know how to secure to ourselves the blessings which the religion might offer. For this reason it is necessary to the practical value of an inquiry into the evidences of Christianity, that it furnish conclusive proof not only of the claims of Jesus, but of the authenticity of the Christian Scriptures.*

There is abundant evidence to lead to the conviction that the Bible is true and is of divine origin. What follows is a brief discussion of some of that evidence.

yourselves treasures in heaven." (Matthew 6:19-21; Colossians 3:1-4). Would it not be a terrible existence indeed if in this short and transient life only we had hope? (Job 14:1-2; James 4:14; I Corinthians 15:19).

Albert F. Brumley's song says it well. "This World Is Not My Home. I'm Just Passing Through. My Treasures Are Laid Up Somewhere Beyond The Blue!!!" The Bible teaches that our citizenship is not upon this earth, but it is in heaven. (Philippians 3:20-21). I spent almost seven years in the United States Army, and 39 months of that time I was stationed in Germany. I liked it there alright, and I took advantage of that time to travel and see some of Europe. However, I am a native West Virginian and my mother subscribed me to a magazine called, "Wild, Wonderful, West Virginia." It came every month, and when it did I would put on some good Ol' "Bluegrass Music" and thumb through that magazine looking over the pictures of familiar sites in the "Mountain State." I don't mind telling you that it made me very homesick, and I often would shed a tear or two while reading about home. One of the sweetest sounds I ever heard was when the tires of that big 747 touched down on the tarmac of JFK Airport in New York. You see, I was almost home then. I rejoiced greatly when I finally came back to West Virginia after a 39 month absence.

Christian, this world is NOT your home. You are only here on "Temporary Duty". One day you will go home to that place prepared for you. (John 14:1-4). We have this glorious hope because God cannot lie and He promised it before the foundation of the world. (Titus 1:2; Colossians 1:5). Non-Christian friend because you do not have God in your life and because you do not accept Jesus you have no hope of heaven! (Ephesians 2:11-12). It is my hope, my "heart's desire and prayer to God." that you will come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and to humbly and meekly submit to Him as Lord. (Romans 10:1-3; James 1:21-25). Submit to Him in humble obedience and become a Christian; one with a hope of eternal salvation. (Hebrews 5:8-9). Believe the gospel, repent of your sins, and be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. (John 8:24; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:38). You will "rise to walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:34), and you will have "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." (I Peter 1:4).

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## WHY I BELIEVE THERE IS A HEAVEN

First, the word “believe” means faith and visa versa. I have faith that there is a place called “heaven”. Why? Like the children’s song says, “The Bible Tells Me SO!” That is primarily why I believe there is a place called heaven!!!

You see, I can know that there is a Creator by observing the heavens and the earth. The Word of God says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1). I can look at the Sun, Moon, and stars and know that there is a certain design about it all. Furthermore, since design demands a designer, I can know that there is a Great Designer behind it all. It is certainly a foolish thing indeed for one to look at the great design of things and then to declare, “There is no God!” (Compare Psalm 14:1). Anyone who “thumbs their nose” at the Creator in such a fashion is certainly “without excuse”. (Romans 1:20).

However, I can not know much about the mind of God by looking at the natural Universe. I can know that He exists, but nothing about His purpose and plan for me. If I am to know anything about these things, I must have communication from the Creator, and the fact is, we do have such communication. We have the verbally inspired Word of God; the Holy Bible! (2 Timothy 3:16-17). The Bible, when read and/or heard, produces faith. (Romans 10:17). What I believe about God, about Jesus Christ, about the church of Christ, about worshipping God, about hell, about heaven, etc., comes from the pages of the verbally inspired Word of God!

The Bible says a great deal about the place called “Heaven”. As we live for Christ we will suffer here in this old world below (2 Timothy 3:12), but we should rejoice even in such suffering, because we know that we have a great reward in Heaven! (Matthew 5:11-12). The Word therefore teaches us that we should not place a great deal of emphasis upon the things in this old world, but we should “lay up for

## IT HAS SURVIVED THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

The Bible though written on material that perishes, having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years by hand, its style, correctness, or existence did not diminish. Compared with other ancient writings, the manuscript evidence of the Bible is greater than any ten pieces of classical literature combined. It is sufficient to ensure that we are reading the words of the original. The Bible today is the best selling, and most widely read book of all time.

The Bible has survived through persecution. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and otherwise outlaw it. In 303 AD, the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping, and to destroy their scriptures. Only 25 years later the Roman emperor Constantine called for 50 copies of the Bible to be prepared at the expense of the government.

Voltaire, French atheist who died in 1778, predicted that Christianity would be swept from existence and pass into history within 100 years of his time. Fifty years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used his printing press and house to produce stacks of Bibles! Listen to what God said about His word. “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever (1 Peter 1:24-25).

## THE UNITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

Here is a book that was written over a period of 1600 years. A span of 40 generations. It was written by approximately 40 authors from every walk of life. For example, Moses, a political leader trained in the universities of Egypt; Peter a fisherman; Amos a herdsman; Joshua, military general; Solomon, philosopher king; Matthew, tax collector; Paul, a tentmaker. These men wrote from different places and different times. In three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.). Yet there is a marvelous unfolding of the general theme of Man’s fall from his holy estate, God’s plan for his redemption through the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the ultimate victory of the Christian system. There is complete harmony and continuity throughout. I challenge you to compare the continuity of the Bible with any other writings of men. Imagine what you would have if you took just ten

authors from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one continent, one language. You would have conflicting ideas, not harmony!

### FULFILLED PROPHECY

Another area which affords much evidence for the Bible being true is prophecy. Biblical writers often foretold events hundreds of years before they transpired. Unless they were guided by the Spirit of God, this would have been impossible. Sidney Collett has declared that of the approximately 800 prophecies in the Old Testament, no less than 333 center in the person of Jesus Christ. (Collett, Sidney "All About the Bible, page p.192). The prophecy regarding the Son of God is nothing short of miraculous, and is a demanding evidence for the Bible being true. For example, there are prophecies about:

**Born of the seed of a woman** (Genesis 3:15; fulfillment Galatians 4:4); born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; fulfillment Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:26); **Son of God** (Psalm 2:7; II Samuel 7:12; fulfilled Matthew 3:17; 16:16; Acts 13:30-33); **seed of Abraham** (Genesis 22:18; fulfillment Galatians 3:16); **born in Bethlehem** (Micah 5:2 fulfillment Matthew 2:1; John 7:42); **shall be Immanuel-God with us** (Isaiah 7:14 fulfillment Matthew 1:23); **Shall be a prophet** (Deuteronomy 18:18 fulfillment Matthew 21:11; Luke 7:16; John 4:19); **shall be a judge** (Isaiah 33:22 fulfillment John 5:30). These are but a sampling of the more than 300 prophecies relating to the Lord. In his interesting book, *Science Speaks*, mathematician Peter W. Stoner selected just eight of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, and estimated that the odds of these being fulfilled accidentally are approximately 1 in 10<sup>17</sup> (that's one followed by seventeen zeros). Think about this thought in view of what God said in Deuteronomy 18:18,19 *"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my word in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not harken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him."* "The fulfillment of prophecy is a testimony that the Bible is true and needs to be followed.

All such human standards of determining morality leave us floundering through life with no real guidance. We end up with as many standards as there are people. It is said twice of God's people, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. (Judges 17:6; 21:25) Between those two statements are some of the most morally-despicable events in that nation's history. When men "do it their way", there is really nothing to restrain them from horrible deeds. History abounds with gruesome examples of this.

Only through God's Word can we know with certainty what is right and wrong. The God who made us and our world surely knows best what makes it work. When we turn our backs on his instructions, things go down hill quickly. This writer once attended a seminar dealing with ethics in the medical profession. It was conducted by a group of nationally known experts who had unfortunately abandoned the Bible. They were genuinely concerned about doing the right thing, but had no basis for determining what that "right thing" was. They spent the day searching for answers to important questions, but found none. They had no standard by which to settle their questions. The best each could do was express his personal opinion and preference. It was truly sad to watch intelligent, honest, sincere people flounder aimlessly in search of answers.

We can KNOW right from wrong! But we will know it only by a continuous, careful study of the Bible. We are not left to guess, wonder, and hope we are right, If we study, the answers will be forthcoming. "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14) It is "by reason of use" that our "senses are exercised to discern" right from wrong. The more we study, the clearer the answers become. We can know right from wrong. God has told us in his holy word.

Right and wrong are not determined by what the majority thinks. “Everybody else is doing it” is not a justification for anything. The majority has often turned out to be wrong. History is full of examples in which whole nations were wrong. In Noah’s day the entire world was morally wrong, except for Noah and seven members of his family. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” (Genesis 6:5-6) “When once the longsuffering of God wafted in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” (1 Peter 3:20) It was a time when the whole world agreed about right and wrong, but the whole world was wrong. Only “a few, that is, eight souls” were righteous enough to find grace in the eyes of the Lord. (Genesis 6:8) Jesus, himself, said you cannot trust the majority, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14) We are living dangerously if we make our moral decisions based on what the majority thinks. If we follow the majority, we will end up with the majority—eternally separated from God. No wonder God said, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.” (Exodus 23:2)

Right and wrong is not determined by what “church leaders” say. “Our preacher says...” “The position of our church is...” With such an approach everything from hatred to homosexuality to abortion has been justified and defended. But what gives any man, woman, or group the right to decide for God what is right and wrong? Many denominations have fought and divided over moral issues that could have easily been settled simply by turning to God for his instructions. We do not have the right to countermand God, no matter how many “experts” vote to do so. A unanimous vote will not change what God says. Suppose the world’s religious leaders voted to execute all those whose religious views differed from theirs, (and this has happened from time to time). Does that make such killing right? Of course not! But if religious leaders decide right and wrong, then by what standard would we condemn them?

## CONCLUSION

Through the years the Bible has been tried and tested, yet the Bible has survived all of the attacks of the devil. The fulfillment of prophecy is certainly proof that the Bible is true and is of divine origin. You be the judge. What is your conclusion? If the Bible is really God’s Word, how should it affect your life? What you do with the Bible effects eternity.

## HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE BIBLE CORRECTLY?

by Roger A. Rush

Paul charged Timothy, and thus by implication all of us: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Other translations, including the American Standard of 1901 and the New American Standard urge diligence that God’s word might be handled aright, accurately, or correctly. It is imperative that we not only know what the Bible says, but also what it means. This does not always come easily, therefore, we must be willing to put forth the effort necessary to understand the meaning.

All of us should want to understand the Bible. It is only when we understand the Bible and obey it that we can please God and serve Him acceptably. We must begin our study with the understanding that the Bible is no ordinary book. It is the inspired, authoritative, all-sufficient, and by implication - inerrant word of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It is like no other book. Though written over a period of some sixteen hundred years by approximately forty authors, a “golden thread” is woven throughout the text. The whole Bible can be outlined in three brief statements: 1) The Old Testament - Someone is coming! 2) Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - Someone has come! 3) Acts to Revelation - Someone is coming again! That Someone is Jesus Christ!

God is omnipotent! It is ridiculous to argue that an all-powerful God would give His creation a book and demand that they study it, even though it was incomprehensible to them. I have heard others say something to the effect that they study the Bible but they can't understand it. I frankly don't believe it. Yes, there are some difficult things in the Bible.

Peter said that Paul wrote "some things that are hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). But the vast majority of the Bible is easily read and understood. The average word in the King James translation contains fewer than five letters. It should also be acknowledged that those passages which are most difficult are least important to our eternal salvation. Those things which are essential are presented in clear, concise language that requires help to misunderstand. We can know that our understanding of the Bible is correct if we will follow a few simple guidelines.

Before we look at those guidelines I want to point out one other thing. When two people disagree on the meaning of any passage they both cannot be right. It is possible that both are wrong, but it is not possible that both are right. When someone argues that he understands the Bible one way and someone else understands it another, the argument is false. To understand the Bible follow these simple guidelines.

First realize that the Bible never contradicts itself. Any interpretation which sets one passage against another cannot be correct. If the Bible is God's book, and it is, it is absurd to suggest that there are contradictions in it. Difficult passages should be interpreted in light of those that are clearer on the matter. Never interpret a difficult passage in a way that contradicts the clear meaning of another passage.

Second, to understand a passage it must be studied in its context. Discover all you can about the passage by reading what comes before and after it. If possible, determine who said it, to whom it was said, when it was said, where it was said, and why it was said. Never lift a

## HOW CAN I KNOW RIGHT FROM WRONG?

By Phil Gear

Eve was faced with a monumental decision. She was being tempted by Satan to eat a piece of fruit God had forbidden. But much more was involved than just whether or not to indulge her taste buds. Satan had told her, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:5) She was the first, but certainly not the last, of the human race to struggle with a decision between right and wrong, good and evil. Such decisions are a major part of our lives. One of the most vital questions we will ever consider is how to make our moral decisions.

There is a difference between right and wrong. Even those who advocate the broadest definition of right behavior are forced to admit that no one has the right to do anything they please even if it hurts innocent people. How do we determine that difference? Obviously, there is no generally-accepted standard of right and wrong. What one person insists is immoral, another sees as perfectly acceptable. It seems there are as many standards of morality as there are people. But is this as it should be?

Some argue that morality is strictly personal. "Determine your own values, and live by them." "Be true to your own value system," They insist that morality is determined by the person involved, and varies from person to person. But such a concept makes morality so subjective as to be meaningless. Some people's value system will allow literally anything from lying to murder to total genocide. Adolph Hitler was living by his "value system" when he ordered the extermination of the Jews. He felt it was the right thing to do for him and his nation. If moral decisions are made strictly on the basis of each one's personal value system, who are we to say he did anything wrong? He was only living by his values. Truly, "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

they desire spiritual food. Christians long for this milk so that they can grow. (I Peter 2:2) Once again, we find we can't be passive but need to be doers of the word. (James 1:21-27)

The part of our worship that becomes crucial is the Lord's Supper. This part of our worship is a memorial of Christ. It is called by other names but should be taken in all seriousness. (I Corinthians 11:26-29) It should remind us of Christ's sacrifice and His promised return. Eating it symbolizes our dependence on Christ for spiritual life. It is an especially good time to examine our lives by the standards of Christ. The rules we govern our actions and worship by are not those of humanity but those of God. Christ is our peace. Christ wants to reconcile us to God in one body by the cross. Emblems of this memorial feast help us to remember what happened on the cross. The broken bread represents the wounded and bruised body of Christ while the fruit of the vine represents his shed blood. (Ephesians 2:13-18) We should examine ourselves as we partake so as to not take this memorial lightly.

The heart of the Christian can be found in giving. God has given abundantly to us and it is natural for us to want to give back. Financially we are to give to the work of the church. (I Corinthians 16:1-2) The Bible doesn't tell us how much to give but that it is a serious thing because it requires planning and honesty. God's part, in our lives, needs to come first. (Matthew 6:33)

Any other things we might want to incorporate into our worship should be evaluated by the gospel. I Thessalonians 5:21 teaches us to "Prove all things." This day and time God won't necessarily strike us dead immediately like he did Uzzah if we do wrong, but it ought to cause us, in our worship, to strive for excellence. We need to serve God "acceptably with reverence and godly fear." (Hebrews 12:28) We can know how to worship our God. And it becomes important as we worship to do so in spirit and truth.

passage out of its context and force a meaning on it which the writer did not intend. So many false doctrines are the result of lifting passages out of context and giving them a meaning they were never intended to convey.

Third discover all that the Bible has to say on a subject before drawing a conclusion. Here is where the advocates of the "faith only" doctrine make their mistake. The Bible clearly teaches that we are saved by faith (Hebrews 11:6), but it does not teach that we are saved by "faith alone." If we read all the New Testament says regarding salvation we will discover that there are other elements involved in our salvation besides faith (Ephesians 2:8, 9; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; etc.). Open your Bible and read these passages and others like them. Are they not clear?

The Bible is its own best commentary. Spend time with it. Get a good English dictionary, a good Bible dictionary, a Hebrew and Greek Lexicon and jump into the text. Look up any words you don't understand. Examine the original language for subtle shades of meaning not captured in the English. And, apply the same common sense rules of interpretation you use to understand the Reader's Digest, the newspaper, or any other printed material. By following these simple rules you can have confidence that you understand the Scriptures.

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## HOW CAN I KNOW HOW TO WORSHIP GOD?

by Bill Gardner

Worship is defined as an act of reverence rendered to God. John 4:24 says, "God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

In the reality shows on TV during recent times, at the end of the program they "vote" and somebody gets voted out. They know who is voted out. There is no question about who or anything related to the vote. They know! And we want to know if we are rendering the correct

act of reverence to our God. Our God is an awesome God worthy of our praise, adoration and worship. I Chronicles 16:29 says “Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Worship provides an opportunity to seek God’s favor. We can’t put God in our debt. We can and should express our adoration to this God who created us.

Every act of worship also presents an opportunity for displeasing God. Cain’s sacrifice was an opportunity that displeased God while Abel offered what God wanted. True worship wins God’s favor while vain or unacceptable worship brings his condemnation. John 4:23 talks about true worshipers will worship the Father “in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” So then every act of worship becomes a crisis that presents both an opportunity and a danger.

Worship can become critical because we are in the presence of God, which requires us to be reverent. Matthew 18:20 says, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Bible characters aware of God’s presence were awed. Abraham fell on his face in Genesis 17, when he was given the seed promise. Jacob, in an open field, used a rock for a pillow and was deeply impressed in Genesis 28:16-17. Moses in the wilderness was told in Exodus 3:5 to remove his shoes. Aaron and his successors bathed and changed their garments before entering the Holy of Holies, according to Leviticus 16:1-4. Though we are spared from the sins of that time, we have a propitiation, or sacrifice, for us in the person of Jesus Christ and we should serve God in reverence and awe because of his giving his life for us.

We assume, in our discussion of worship, that we can know how to worship God. Worship is critical because it requires attention to God’s prescribed forms of worship. Substitutes are irreverent and vain because they assert man’s will against God’s will. Matthew 15:8-9 states, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Improper worship can be vain and become unacceptable.

Nadat and Abihu, in Leviticus 10:1-7, offered strange fire to the Lord and it cost them their life. “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.” (Hebrews 11:4) God was displeased with pollution of the table of the Lord and defective sacrifices that they would not even offer to the governor. (Malachi 1:6-14) Doing less than required robs God of the honor due him. Jews robbed God of offerings due him. (Malachi 3:8-10) Some Christians rob God of worship by forsaking the assembly of the saints. (Hebrews 10:25).

Worship is critical because only sincere worship is acceptable. The Bible gives examples (Acts 20:7) and commands (Hebrews 10:25) concerning public worship. Worship is not something people are made to do. It arises from a sincere desire to praise and thank God. (Read Psalms 100) Someone might ask: “How often do I have to worship?” The early Christians always met on the first day of the week for worship. Other meetings were held, as is the case today. Christians who are truly appreciative, anxious to please God, (Matthew 5:6) and enjoy communion with Christ (Matthew 18:20) will want to attend every meeting. It is the lukewarm (Revelation 3:15-16) who worship seldom and irregularly. We don’t need to fear doing too much. We discover that the worship service helps us to live a better Christian life. It helps us to set a good example for other Christians and for those that are not followers of Christ. It was certainly Jesus’ custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. (Luke 4:16) Worship requires activity. It is the desire of the heavenly Father that we pray. (I Timothy 2:8) Prayer is to be done a certain way. (Matthew 6:5-15) Commands to sing can be found in Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19, and Hebrews 13:15. God is not so much interested in the voice or tune as he is in the attitude of the heart. We worship by God’s commands and should not do anything for which there is no authority. There is authority for singing only, but none for instruments in the New Testament. Remember, we aren’t living under the Old Testament for it “has been nailed to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14) If we use the Old Testament for our proof we must also bring back animal sacrifices and other laws of the Old Testament.

Acts 20:7 shows that teaching was a part of public worship in the early church. Just as babies desire food, Christians learn because