

Lifeline

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1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

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First Day of Unleavened Bread

(Sermon Notes)

Offertory

In His last remaining hours on earth, Jesus taught vital lessons that tied together so much of what He had taught His disciples in the previous three and a half years. Jesus gives us the crucial lesson of the Vine and the branches. We learn that we must remain **connected** to Jesus by an inseparable Lifeline so that we can produce much **spiritual fruit** which in turn will **Glorify our Father** (John 15:8). Interestingly, Jesus teaches us that there is more than one way to give Glory to God.

Letting **our light shine** also gives **Glory to the Father** and thereby we fulfill the prophecy and goal of becoming eternal lights shining in the firmament. Jesus said:

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and **Glorify your Father** which is in heaven.

Matthew 13:43 Then shall the righteous **shine forth** as the sun in the **Kingdom of their Father**.

In the same way that at creation Jesus spread out the physical stars across the universe, the spiritual Saints are destined

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to shine forth as do the stars in the brightness of the firmament of the New Heaven. We Christians are ordained to actually shine as Godly lights in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Daniel 12:3 They that be wise [the people of God] shall **shine as the brightness** of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the **stars** for ever and ever.

The Plan of God is that the Saints shall **shine** forever giving **Glory to God**. This spiritual connection to God pictured by the **Vine and the branches**, is of supreme importance to our salvation. Being truly unleavened comes from the continuing relationship with God that Passover and Unleavened Bread symbolize. Jesus said:

John 15:5 I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I abide in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

When we remain connected to Jesus, we bring forth much fruit, and we abide in the love of God. The spiritual sap that flows from the Vine symbolizes the eternal, sustaining life of Christ that is available to us. When we bring forth much fruit, we give Glory to the Father. Jesus expounds further: He says that we bring forth much fruit when we keep His commandments—specifically the commandment to love one another—and therein the Father is Glorified.

We’ve just observed Passover and now we come to the First Day of Unleavened Bread. We will be looking at one last vital lesson that Jesus Christ gave to us on that last night with His disciples.

That lesson is this: We are to stay fastened and **connected to Him** – as He is attached and joined to us.

Not only does Jesus want us to appreciate the fact that He **dwells** in us, as we learned when He said, “This is my Body, take and eat, Jesus wants us to greatly value the **ever continuous** contact we enjoy with Him from that time onward (Exodus 29:45-46, Revelation 21:3).

The title of today’s sermon on this First Day of Unleavened Bread is “**Lifeline**.”

In John Chapter 15, Jesus doubles down, not only on the concept of dwelling together, but on the necessity of **remaining connected and bound** together at all times by way of our Lifeline. Jesus put it his way:

John 15:5 I am the Vine, ye are the branches: He that abide in me, and I abide in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

I could have called this sermon, “The Vine and the Branches,” but people could have easily dismissed the subject, thinking, “I’ve heard all about The Vine Branches—there is nothing there for me.” They would say:

The Fruit of the Vine

“Oh, the Fruit of the Vine – we know what that represents – the wine – Oh, the blood of Christ.”

But brethren, we’ll see in today’s sermon that Jesus is going to say something **more** to us about the fruit of the Vine that is so **crucial** to our lives and understanding. That should whet our appetites.

When Jesus led into His subject of “The Vine and the Branches,” He was leading into something **really big**. You might say that He was saving the Best for Last – right at the end of His life!

Perhaps, I might be able to shed **a little light** on the subject that you may not have considered. There is a little pun here that will **come to light** as we look into God’s word today.

Let me give you a definition of a **Lifeline**: It is a rope used for life-saving; typically, one thrown to rescue someone who is slipping away in the ocean, or for saving a person who has stumbled over a mountain cliff. A lifeline is a line which provides a crucial connection so that they may be able to survive. A **lifeline** is like a rope that is used in mountain climbing to help prevent potentially fatal accidents.

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Specific Purpose Statement: In today’s sermon, we will be looking at some of the points Jesus was driving home to His disciples as His public ministry was coming to an end. And we’ll answer the question of how Christians are able to **Glorify** the Father by bearing much fruit?

Following their last Passover meal together in John Chapters 13, 14, and 15, Jesus gave His disciples some deep **spiritual lessons**.

Jesus had been utilizing a lot of analogies and metaphors to aid His disciples in understanding the deeper **spiritual** meaning of His life and purpose. Jesus emphasizes to us the concept of how He **dwells** in us, and we in Him.

We just observed Passover where Jesus made “dwelling” a major theme.

We know that Jesus is the **bread of life** – we ate it at the Passover service – Jesus now lives in us.

John 6:53-56 Then Jesus said unto them, Truly, Truly, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, **dwells in me, and I in him**.

The great overall truth that Jesus provides is the concept of dwelling together – and not only with Jesus but dwelling with the Father also (John 14:23).

In John 15, Jesus re-emphasizes the vital need for us to always **remain** in this **connection** of dwelling in one another, where He **dwells** in us, and we dwell in Him.

Jesus tells us how this reality of dwelling will be accomplished, and we will see that it is through the utility of God’s Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26)

For the purposes of today’s sermon, let’s recognize our **Lifeline** to Jesus Christ as an unbreakable safety tether, like the one that attaches an astronaut, on a spacewalk, to his spacecraft. You never cut loose from it – or you would be lost in space.

Or better yet, for the purposes of today’s sermon, let’s think of our lifeline as an umbilical cord which allows for the transfer to an infant of a life giving supply of oxygen and nutrients.

Vine and Branches analogy falls immediately after John 13 and 14 and Passover – Jesus turns to another analogy with the Vine and Branches.

Unless Jesus Christ is in us, and we are connected to Him and His Life’s energy, how can the **Light** of Christ shine in us?

Jesus used a similar analogy right after His last Passover when, He told His disciples, “Stay connected to me, and I will remain tied to you. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the Grape Vine; so neither can you bear fruit unless you continue to be linked to me.” (Paraphrased John 15:4)

Jesus is saying that He is the Divine Lifeline Vine. Jesus gives us the meaning of this connection—and it is for **bringing forth much fruit**. And just so the lesson is not lost on us, Jesus begins to tell us what is required of us. There is a progression that Jesus is showing us here, and it is this:

When we remain connected to Jesus we bring forth much fruit, and we abide in the love of God. When we bring forth much fruit, we give Glory to the Father. Jesus expounds further: He says that we bring forth much fruit when we keep His commandments (1John 2:5), specifically the commandment to love one another—and therein the Father is Glorified:

John 15:8-10 **Herein is my Father Glorified**, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as

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I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

We bear much fruit and dwell in the Father's love when we keep Christ's command to love one another. Jesus said:

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

This brotherly love command is repeated in many, many places, for example:

1Thessaloninas 4:9 As touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

Brethren, do not overlook this most important point that Jesus made:

John 15:8 Herein is my **Father glorified**, that ye bear much fruit;

That is how important it is to remain in contact with and bound to Jesus and the Father through this Lifeline that Jesus provides for us—we give **Glory to God!** Jesus says in:

Psalms 50:15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver you, and you shalt **glorify me**.

What an incredible concept that we as Christians can bring **Glory to God** who is King all Glorious!

Music, **King all Glorious**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4Hf2cF_cn4

Lyrics:

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore!
Mortals, give thanks, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.
The Lord is King! Rejoice! The Lord is King!
Jesus the Savior reigns, The God of truth and love:
When He had purged, had purged our stain,
He took His seat above.
Lift up your heart! Lift up your voice!
The Lord is King!

King all glorious, Lord of Hosts almighty,
Thou art revealed in victory,
O'er all the world ascended,
King all glorious! King all glorious!
Thou art revealed in victory.

Jesus the Savior reigns,
Your Lord and King adore.
Hail ye the Lord and King!
Hail ye the Lord and King!
Jesus the Savior reigns,
Your King adore.

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore!
Mortals, give thanks, give thanks and sing,
And triumph evermore.

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The Lord is King! Rejoice! The Lord is King!
King all glorious,
O'er all the world ascended,
Thou art revealed in victory.
King all glorious, Lord of Hosts almighty!

Crown Him with many crowns,
The Lamb upon His throne,
Hark! how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own:
Awake, my soul and sing
Of Him who died for thee,

And hail Him as thy chosen King
Through all eternity. Amen.

End Offertory:

Sermon: **Lifeline**

In the culture of Jesus' day, everybody grew up knowing a lot about work in a vineyard. Grapevines were everywhere and the work of vine dressing was a year-round endeavor. Planting, pruning, picking, harvesting, pressing...

John 15:1 I am the true Vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

There are two analogies there:

John 15:2 Every branch in me that bears not fruit He [the Father] taketh away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth **more fruit**.

Fruit grows only on new branches. Fruit develops as a result of God's correction (or trimming)—experience cleansing (15:2).

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. (Acts 22:16 ...baptized, and wash away thy sins, Ephesians 5:26, Titus 3:5)

We are to live in Jesus Christ – and He lives in us – it works both ways.

He lives in us by His Spirit in us. Life – mind – words...

How do we live in Him?

Answer: We stay connected to Christ so that God's Spirit can flow through our veins. Like the grape **branch** must be nourished and fed the sap by the trunk **Vine**.

We live in God when we **keep His Commandments** – and they change us to be like Him – that is how we live in His Love - that is how we dwell in His Love.

We are converted, because of what God has done in us. And we continue to grow spiritually – **only when He lives in us** and we live in Him.

Jesus uses “Abide / Dwell” three times in vs:4 alone.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide [continue living] in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide [connected as a babe to its mother by its umbilical cord] in me.

What is the **purpose** of abiding in Jesus? Jesus is telling us that we must be **connected** to Him, joined to Him, attached

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to Him if we are going to bear fruit. Again, we see John 15:5

John 15:5 I am the Vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in Me and I in him bears **much fruit**, for [otherwise] apart from Me [that is, cut off from vital union with Me] you can do **nothing**.

In examining ourselves coming up to Passover, we asked ourselves, “What use am I to God and His people?” Much fruit represents good works and godly living.

Unless we are tabernacling in Christ and Christ is tabernacling in us, we cannot bring forth **any fruit**. We are of no use to God.

John 15:6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

John 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

And just so the lesson is not lost on us, Jesus begins to tell us what is **required** of us.

We come to a pivotal verse that we are going to build on: (John 15:8)

John 15:8 Herein is my **Father Glorified**, that ye **bear much fruit**; so shall ye be my disciples. [Wow – we can do that!!! **Glorify God**]

Not only is it an **incredible concept**, that we as Christians on earth can bring **Glory to God** now, but as resurrected Saints we will **shine forever more!**

Matthew 13:43 Then shall the righteous **shine forth** as the sun in the **Kingdom of their Father**.

Paul echoes this

Ephesians 2:10: For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. [dwell in my Love – exist in my love]

Dwell is twice in 10.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall dwell in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love.

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you.

Jesus said:

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained / appointed us to this task, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

John 15:17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

We stay connected to Christ's lifeline when we love one another. How do we love one another? By staying connected to Christ's Lifeline, and we **throw the Lifeline** to everyone in need.

We wrap that Lifeline around us so that we cannot be separated from Him.

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What do we do while connected to Jesus? We remain instant in thought, study, meditation, and prayer.

John’s Chapter 15 teaches us that in our minds and hearts we must always be bound in the presence of Jesus Christ and God the Father...

We are to become light as Jesus is Light. That Messianic Prophecy, in Isaiah, about Jesus Christ coming as the “Great Light” was well known – and so Matthew picks up on it right away in the New Testament.

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the Light of the world:** he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the **light of the world.**”

We let our light shine – sounds oh so simple. But we need to see what Jesus means by, “Light.” The entire Gospel message is huge and magnificent! But it can be summarized in one word, light! And **God’s Light** must become our Light.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

God’s first recorded words:

Genesis 1:3 God said, **Let there be light:**

What are the first **words** of Jesus in the Bible?

Implicit in that prophecy to, Let there be light, is the sure expectation and projection that the **Saints will also let their light shine**—in the same way that Jesus prophesied that He would be the spiritual Light that would come into the world.

What is the first command of Jesus in the Scriptures?

Light exposes that which is hidden in darkness; it shows things as they really are. Christians cannot sit idly by and watch other brethren continue in darkness, knowing that those who are in the darkness of sin are destined for death. We are our brother’s keeper!

Without getting too far ahead of the story, we need to understand God’s **self-revelation**—and that is the fact that God is **spiritual radiant light**.

1John 1:5 “This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” 1John 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: 1John 1:7 But if we **live, conduct ourselves with great dignity in conformity with the precepts of God in the light**, as He [Jesus] is altogether the **Light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the **blood of Jesus**, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, came to dispel the darkness and impart His Godly wisdom everywhere.

We all know that God created the sun and put it in the heaven.

Genesis 1:5 And God called the **light Day**, and the darkness He called Night.

Wow! It went from Darkness to Light.

Brethren, we know when we put on our spiritual eyes that prophecy is often **dual** in nature.

That means that the Scriptures often have more than one meaning.

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Duality is a major teaching tool **employed** in the Bible and used by Jesus.

In today's sermon we will see that some of the prophets, and some of the apostles Paul, John, and Matthew and Isaiah in the OT... and others realized that when God said, "Let there be light," He was not only talking about visible light, the Sun, but He was prophesying the coming of the Messiah!

These are the first prophetic words of God in the Bible Genesis 3:15 as “the Bible’s first prophecy”:

“**Let there be light,**” those are the first words spoken by Jesus in the Bible.

A lot of people think that Jesus was speaking about our Sun – but He wasn’t.

Genesis 1:3 And God said, **Let there be light:** and there was light.

Brethren, be on your toes here, because, interestingly, **Sunshine** didn't come until **four days** later in creation! That is our first hint that, **Let there be light,** means something more than what first meets the eye.

It is prophetic, and it means more than Jesus coming as the Messiah.

Follow me closely as we take a trip back to the Beginning—those were the first words of Jesus Christ.

Psalms 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of the **stars** by the breath of His mouth.

Psalms 33:9 [Jesus] spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 147:4 He determines the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.

Job 9:8 [God] alone stretches out the [stars] of the heavens.

First prophecy here: **Let there be light,** and it is for us today – Jesus was speaking of the entire Plan of God – Darkness to Light in which, speaking of you and me brethren, He would bring many sons and daughters to **glory** (Hebrews 2:10), as God is glorious. By the time we come to the end of the Bible in Revelation, we find again that Jesus is Light:

Revelation 21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the **glory of God** did lighten it, and **the Lamb is the Light thereof.**

Revelation 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the **Lord God gives them light:** and they shall reign for ever and ever.

That is the spiritual meaning of **Let there be light – Jesus was prophesying of us also.**

By extension – and this is what Jesus was thinking when He said these words, “Let there be light in us – so that we too may shine.”

Paul reminds us we are “lights in the world”; it is God’s will that we shine “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.”

Bring Forth Fruit

What is the fruit that we must produce to be in God’s good stead?

How to Stay Connected

1John 3:24 And he that keeps His commandments dwells in Him, and He in him. And hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us.

We stay connected to Christ’s Lifeline When we let our light shine (Matthew 5:14-16).

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Jesus tells us the purpose of this ongoing connection to Him, and it is for the aim of bringing forth much fruit. What an incredible concept, that we as Christians can bring **Glory to God**.

We are told in 2Corinthians 4:4 that God has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the **light of the glorious gospel** of Christ, who is the image of God, should **shine unto them**.

But it does shine unto us. The apostle Paul adds a **spiritual** component to the **connection** to Christ's theme:

2Corinthians 4:6 For God, who commanded the Light to **shine** out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the **Glory of God** in the face of Jesus Christ.

The **Light of the knowledge** of the glory of God shone in the face of Christ. What is Paul referring to when he says here, “the Light to **shine** out of darkness?” In 2Corinthians 4:6 Paul's words express more than his grasp of the Hebrew, for by linking “Let there be light” **with the light of Christ shines** in the minds and hearts of those the Father calls, the apostle demonstrates that God's ancient command **prophesied** of the nature and scope of God's work **through Christ** with mankind over the span of Church history. The theme of **Our Glorifying the Father** brings us to the very beginning of the Bible.

Paul realized that God's Genesis 1:3 command, “Let there be Light,” spoken by Jesus on the first day of creation of the physical world, was in the future tense; it speaks to God's ongoing **spiritual** work with man.

After the creation of the angelic host, the first physical creation of Jesus was the intensely concentrated hot **physical light** plasma, “Let there be Light,” containing all the energy that was released into stellar and galactic nuclear reactions as it spread in every direction at the speed of light, only to begin to condense into the components of the elements of the firmament like our Sun on the fourth day (Genesis 1:14). That was Jesus' first act of physical creation – to flash out dense light that became the entire universe—visible and invisible. When you think about it, fleshly human beings are made up of stardust – that has cooled and become the elements of our earth.

But spiritually speaking that Light would be Jesus Christ at His coming (John 1:4). But it is being revealed to us, the saints, in these verses that **we are to also be light**—in a spiritual sense.

Implicit in that prophecy of Jesus in Genesis 1:3 to, “Let there be light,” is the dual projection that the **Saints would also let their light shine**—in the same way that Jesus prophesied that He would be the spiritual Light that would come into the world.

Brethren, do not let that fulfilment of prophecy go over your heads.

Jesus says, “your light.” The Saints are to let their light shine. So, we find that we **Glorify our Father** when we bring forth much fruit, AND when we let our light shine. It is important that we make that connection.

Remember why Jesus said that we were to let our light shine?

Matthew 5:16 **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works, and **Glorify your Father** which is in heaven.

In today's sermon we have seen how it is that the Saints give forth **their light** and **shine forever** as the stars in the heavens. In the same way that Jesus spread out the physical stars all across space at creation, the spiritual Saints are destined to eternally shine as the brightness of the firmament in the New Heaven (Revelation 21:1). We Christians are destined to actually become Godly lights as spirit beings in the eternal Kingdom of God.

Daniel 12:3 They that be wise [God's people] shall **shine as the brightness** of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness [will shine] as the **stars** for ever and ever.

Here in Daniel, Jesus quoted Himself as when He said, “Then shall the righteous **shine forth** as the sun in the **Kingdom of their Father** (Matthew 13:43).

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Psalm 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of the stars by the breath of His mouth.

We become light, following Jesus’ example – John 8:12

John 8:12 Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the **light of the world**: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have **the light of life**.

Brethren, our life’s duty is to **shine as lights in the world** just as Jesus did.

God’s called out brethren know and understand the words of truth in 2Samuel 22:29 where we see that Jesus is the One who **enlightens our darkness** so that together we might **serve as the light of the world**.

1Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation... that ye should **shew forth the praises** of Him who has called you out of darkness into His **marvelous light**:

Enlightening this darkened world is a responsibility and command that Jesus Christ has appointed His followers to perform.

Speaking directly to us, Jesus says, “**Let your light so shine**,” and it is not an optional suggestion but a command to us for the purpose of **glorifying our Father** in heaven.

Matthew 5:14-16 **You are** the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works and **glorify** your Father in heaven.

Brethren, we are not simply observers to the fact that **Jesus is Light** — which He is. But we have been called into this **exact same mission** — **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works and **glorify** your Father in heaven.

Paul recognized this brilliant reality:

1Thessalonians 5:5 **You are all the children of light**, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Paul reiterates this Truth that we are to **Let our light so shine** before this present crooked and perverse generation.

Paul adds that **God the Father** is a part of the equation—making it possible for us to truly follow in Christ’s footsteps of **Letting our light shine** in this corrupt world in which we live, and thereby **glorifying** God the Father. Christ says the light is “your light.” Jesus could have said “My light,” but He didn’t.

Yet, if we were to cut the **Lifeline** connecting us to Christ’s energy, our light **would go out**. We as the **sons of God** must remain closely joined and bound to God – as God is to us.

Philippians 2:13 For it is **God who works in you** both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Philippians 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among **whom ye shine as lights in the world**;

Only 5 days before His last Passover, Jesus, speaking of Himself, confers the exact same **task of enlightening the world** to us:

John 12:35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the Light with you. Walk while ye have the Light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes. John 12:36 While ye have light, believe in the Light [Jesus Himself], that ye may be **the children of light**.

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God refers to His elect as “**the children of light.**” Jesus calls us the children of light:

Luke 16:8 And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the **children of light.**

And Paul reiterates:

Ephesians 5:8-9 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now you are **light** in the Lord: Live as **children of light:** (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

Jesus is not thinking of Muscadine Grapes when He says that we are to:

Bear much fruit (John 15:8).

Not grapes but representing Jesus in our every thought and action.

But somehow, we came to know—almost instinctively—that “works of darkness” were evil things, and “letting our light shine” was a good thing.

John 1:4-5 In Him [Jesus] was life; and the life was the **light of men.** And the Light shown in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

At creation, that brilliant light shone out of the chaos of *tohu, bohu* and *chôshek* - darkness. What does it mean that Jesus shines in darkness?

Gen 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Gen 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

“Jesus shines in darkness,” is a metaphor that means He is the summation of all wisdom, truth, goodness, understanding, honesty, knowledge, righteousness, joy, and... enlightenment, life, light, and salvation.

As much as it is in us brethren, that is to be our life’s mission as well, “**letting our light shine**”.

John 12:35 Then Jesus said to them, Yet a little while is the **Light with you.** Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come on you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes.

Ephesians 5:14 Wherefore He said, Awake you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and **Christ shall give you light.**

That light that Christ gives us must be shared – it is a **salvational** matter.

“Light,” in the Bible can be a metaphor for life, happiness, righteousness, or understanding. Specifically, for this sermon, Light is first of all, Jesus Christ, and then the Saints who will give Glory to God forever more.

God is perfect spiritual **enlightenment.**

Colossians 1:27. Paul wrote it, and it goes, “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is **Christ in you,** the hope of glory.”

Please notice that we are not told that God is a light but that He is light.

God is radiant spiritual light.

God's Law is also light:

Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the **law is light;** and reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

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Our goal is witnessing to the world – in a right and proper and balanced way – witnessing to everyone that we meet. Just as Jesus said to Paul:

Acts 26:18 To open their eyes, so that they may turn from **darkness to light** and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

We all know that Jesus said, “Let there be light.”

Where do we find the SPS of the entire Bible? The Specific Purpose Statement that tells what the entire book of Scriptures is all about? The answer is in, “Let there be light” in Genesis 1:3 — a Prophetic reference to **Messiah’s coming** to us – And we becoming light as Jesus is Light. Paul and John knew it! Jesus is that Light. Definition of physical light at creation = daylight, and sunlight, but there is a spiritual meaning also.

Of course, Genesis 1:3 – speaking of light – is speaking of **physical** illumination – which is only a temporary type of a much greater **spiritual** meaning in God’s scheme of things which is the pure **enlightenment** of God – Himself.

The analogy of **light and darkness** indicates the contrast between the greater things of God, and the empty void of Godlessness. God uses the light and darkness symbolism for the purpose of making known His much **deeper** plan— His spiritual kingdom that we need to comprehend more fully. We help **bridge that gap** between ourselves and others when we let our light shine.

Isaiah 2:5, “O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the **light of the Lord.**” [only place in the OT.]

To walk in the light means to repent of sin, examine our hearts’ motivation, to know God, understand the truth, and live in righteousness.

John 12:36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

The Scriptures tell us unequivocally that God is Life, He is Law, He is Love and He is **Light**. [1John 1:2, 1John 4:8, 16, 1John 5:3, 1John 1:5]

1John 1:7 - "But if **we walk in the light, as He is in the light**, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (1John 2:6)

In John 15, Jesus does not mix metaphors, but if He did, we would find that the root underneath the vine is **faith**. We have to believe that Jesus is Life, Light, Law, and Love and that His will is good, that His word is good, and that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the Life. John 14:6 – “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me.”

Isaiah was also inspired by God’s Holy Spirit to write this MP, Messianic Prophecy about Jesus Christ coming as the “Great Light.”

Isaiah 9:2 “The people that walked in darkness have seen a **Great Light**: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined.” (Matthew 4:16)

We have seen how it is that the Saints give forth **their light** and shine forever as the stars in the heavens.

Brethren let’s not assume that from the beginning the prophecies of light and stars only apply to the physical creation.

The prophecies of light apply to Jesus Christ, who then applies them to us when He said, “Let your light shine.”

1John 2:10 He that loves his brother **abides in the light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.

Brethren, that is where we must be — **abiding in the Light**. Jesus is that Light in which we are to dwell continuously.

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Yes, in Genesis 1:3 Jesus created **physical** light – the source of all that is in the universe — but Jesus Christ Himself is the **spiritual** fulfillment of that first prophecy in the Bible, and by extension, the Saints are the Children of light.

That prophesied creation of light will continue until there are billions of glorified sons and daughters (Hebrews 2:10) – the resurrected Saints – each one distinguished from Jesus Christ and from the Father of lights (James 1:17) as separate beings, yet each one indistinguishable from Him in terms of character and Godly purpose — all together in the eternal Family of God.

The Plan of God is that the Saints who remain linked to Jesus shall **shine forever** giving Glory to God.

See Warren Zehring’s other articles at:

[Zehring, Warren – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Northern Lights in Wisconsin
(Copyright 05-11-2024) by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Our daughter took these pictures of the Northern Lights in Wisconsin from her yard. She told me that in order to take these pictures you have to set your camera to “night” and just aim at the sky and take the picture because you cannot see these beautiful colors with your naked eye. Who would know?



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Was Jesus a Vegetarian?

(Copyright 2021) by Mike Ford (Oxford, Georgia)



"Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs." (Genesis 9:3)

As *Alice in Wonderland* begins, Alice is lying in the grass on a hot summer day, idly doing nothing, when a white rabbit runs past, wearing a waistcoat and consulting a pocket watch! She follows him to his rabbit hole and promptly tumbles in. This plunge leads her to a world of talking caterpillars, narcoleptic dormice, and disappearing cats.

Something like this has happened to us as we survey the world around us; we have fallen down the rabbit hole and find ourselves in a strange land. Up is down, and right is wrong. Food is an excellent example of our topsy-turvy world: We

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are told, “Meat is good,” and before we know it, “No, meat is bad.” We read, “Wine is good for your heart,” and a short time later, “No, wine is bad.” Bread, dairy, fat, protein, vitamins, types of water—they are all either good or bad, and not long after that, bad or good, depending on the day of the week and the news outlet. Gluten, caffeine, GMOs—it is hard to keep up! How do we make sense of it all?

What prompted my sudden interest in this subject was an article I came across stating that Jesus was a vegetarian, something, it turns out, that quite a few people believe. In this article, I have no intention of addressing whether a meatless diet is good for the human body. If you are a practicing vegetarian, you probably do not have the energy to argue the point anyway! But if a person is going to base his belief in this lifestyle because “Jesus did it,” he might want to think again.

This article will also not consider the problems some brethren of the New Testament church had with eating meat offered to idols. The apostle Paul deals with that quite well. Nor will we ponder the quality of today’s food and water versus those of Bible times. This article will confine itself to answering a narrow question, “Was Jesus a vegetarian?”

Meat-Eating and Violence

The following quotation can be found on the PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) website in its article, “Was Jesus Really a Vegetarian?”:

Many biblical scholars believe that Jesus was a vegetarian. Jesus’ message is one of love and compassion, and there is nothing loving or compassionate about factory farms and slaughterhouses, where billions of animals live miserable lives and die violent, bloody deaths. Jesus mandates kindness, mercy, compassion, and love for all God’s creation. He would be appalled by the suffering that we inflict on animals just to indulge our acquired taste for their flesh.

PETA seems to be saying, “We all have a choice. When we sit down to eat, we can add to the level of violence, misery, and death in the world, or we can respect God’s creation with a vegetarian diet.”

What we see above is the total of this entry on the PETA web page. It quotes or references none of the “many biblical scholars” it assumes to exist. Some do exist, but one must dig a little deeper to find them. However, calling them “biblical scholars” is a bit of a stretch.

Some of what PETA writes is undoubtedly accurate. Factory farms and slaughterhouses are not pleasant places, but killing and dressing an animal for meat is never a clean undertaking. Without a doubt, Jesus Christ is full of love and compassion, but it is not right to ascribe to Him things we only assume. For instance, PETA writes, “He would be appalled by the suffering that we inflict on animals just to indulge our acquired taste for their flesh.” This comment intends to lead us to believe, first, that Christ was a vegetarian because, being so compassionate, He would be horrified to see all these animals used for food, and second, that humans do not naturally want meat. It is an “acquired” taste. If “Christ was compassionate” is our argument against eating meat, we should extend this thinking to abortion! If only animal rights activists cared as much about human life!

Ted Altar argues in his article, “Jesus and the early Christians—Was Christ a Vegetarian?” that there is no “unequivocal biblical reference to Christ eating or buying meat.” Another writer, Lewis Regenstein, author of “Replenish the Earth: The History of Organized Religion’s Treatment of Animals and Nature—Including the Bible’s Message of Conservation and Kindness Toward Animals,” notes that nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus depicted as eating meat. He writes that “. . . if the Last Supper was a Passover meal—as many believe—there is, interestingly, no mention of the traditional lamb dish.”

This approach is disarmingly deceitful, given that Christ grew up in a Jewish family and had been present at more than thirty Passover meals in which a lamb was served. Luke 2:51 tells us that Christ, as a child, was obedient to Joseph and Mary. Does it make sense that He announced to His parents at Passover as, say, a ten-year-old, “I think I’ll skip the lamb and just have some figs”?

The Bible’s “Inaccuracies”

The previously mentioned Ted Altar says that the Bible is “not complete, and its many inconsistencies require thoughtful

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interpretation.” Those who argue this point try to disconcert people by looking for supposed errors in the Bible. If they can show that the Bible is inaccurate, they then make further assumptions to “prove” their points. Altar points to Genesis 1:29-30 and Genesis 9:2-3 as proof. First, he says, God says to eat only vegetation, then He says you can eat meat:

And God said, “See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. (Genesis 1:29)

These “biblical scholars” say that initially, God gave humanity a vegetarian diet. If we follow this line of reasoning far enough, then we today should be eating kudzu, poison ivy, grass, tulip bulbs, and so on. This idea is nonsense, of course. Many plants are poisonous to humans. Why would God have us eat daffodils, azaleas, nightshade, oleander, wisteria, mistletoe, or hundreds of other plants that can be fatal if eaten?

On the contrary, this verse simply means that God gave humankind certain foods to eat, and people quickly discovered—perhaps primarily through trial and error—what the good foods were. The *Contemporary English Version* translates this verse simply and clearly: “I have provided all kinds of fruit and grain for you to eat.”

A lot of people hold the belief that the pre-Flood world was vegetarian. However, we must be careful how we read Scripture. While telling us that God has provided food for us, it is *not* telling us, “Do not eat meat.” Advocates of vegetarianism often pay no heed to the fact that God had previously given humanity dominion over all animal life (Genesis 1:26, 28), which could include using fish, birds, cattle, and even insects for food.

The argument continues, however, claiming that, after the Flood, God finally permitted humans to eat meat, implying that God is indecisive or unsure: “Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs” (Genesis 9:3).

To put it simply, Altar and others say the eating of meat was unknown before the Flood. These “scholars” totally ignore Genesis 4:3-4, where Cain offers produce, which God disdains, yet He accepts Abel’s offering of his firstborn lamb. This event occurs right at the beginning, long before the Flood! Animals were offered. Their blood was emptied, their bodies burned, and, in many cases the remains of the offering were eaten by those making the offering. These offerings were, of course, clean animals.

The Pre-Incarnate Christ and Meat

But did Jesus Christ eat meat? In Genesis 18:1-9, the pre-incarnate Christ appears to Abraham, who hastens to fix the Lord something to eat. Did he have Sarah run over to Whole Foods and put together something from the salad bar? No, as we see in verse 7-8:

And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, and gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it. So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

That “he hastened to prepare it” means the young man killed the calf! Its body was drained of its blood, the best parts of meat were cut out and cooked, and it was served to the Being who later died as our perfect sacrifice. So, it is evident in verse 8 that Christ, in His pre-incarnate state, ate meat, butter, and milk! This biblical fact no doubt comes as shocking news to some.

This incident is probably why Lewis Regenstein writes, “Nowhere in the *New Testament* is Jesus depicted as eating meat” (emphasis added). This passage also counters the vegan argument against eating dairy. Despite Ted Altar claiming that nowhere in the Bible is Christ seen eating or buying meat, we see Him doing that very thing in Abraham’s day! Of course, Altar probably does not believe that Christ was the God of the Old Testament (see John 1:1-3, 14; Colossians 1:16; John 17:5, 8; Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 1:7, 11; 2:8; 22:14; Exodus 3:13-15; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8).

Regenstein allows that Jesus was Jewish, and sacrifices and Passover lambs were a way of life for Him and His family, but he maintains that we do not have a *specific verse* saying He bought meat or ate it. Aside from others’ washing His feet a few times, do we have any verses telling us that He bathed regularly? From this omission, are we to assume

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showers and baths are forbidden?

What we have seen is a common tactic of these so-called “biblical scholars.” They require chapter and verse to prove things they oppose, and if they cannot find one, they use the absence of a proof-text to peddle their pet theories. But the Bible tells us that the LORD, the One who became Jesus Christ, sat with Abraham and ate a meal of meat, butter, and milk. Later, as a man, He grew up with the Passover meal. Christ does not change (Hebrews 13:8; see also Malachi 3:6). Jesus ate meat.

Fish Too

What about fish? The PETA website contains another article, “Did Jesus Eat Fish?” This question may seem easy for us to answer because we are familiar with Matthew 15, Mark 6 and 8, Luke 9 and 24, John 6, and more—but not to these people. The author writes:

Although there are stories [!] throughout the Bible that appear [!] to suggest [!] that Jesus ate fish, there has been serious theological debate as to whether he actually did, or if the word “fish” is a mistranslation.

Who writes this nonsense? “Stories,” “appear,” and “suggest” inject a great deal of wiggle-room into this quotation. And “serious theological debate”? Really? We will unpack one of these “stories,” Christ’s feeding of the 5,000 (Matthew 14:15-20), to find out what God’s Word says about this claim:

When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” But Jesus said to them, “They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.” And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” He said, “Bring them here to Me.” Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. [Perhaps, if He were a vegetarian, He should have told them, “Just eat the grass.”] And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So, they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

We will consider the simplest matter first. In verse 17, did Matthew really write “fish”? The Greek word behind it is *ichthus* (*Strong’s Concordance* #2486), which means “fish.” New Testament authors use it 21 times, and each time it is translated as “fish.” Sometimes a word has multiple applications and shades of meaning, but not *ichthus*. It means “fish” and nothing else.

That seems straightforward enough. But not so fast, our “serious theologians” say. Half the disciples were fishermen. They tell us that early Christians used the fish symbol to recognize one another, in the manner of something like a secret handshake. (We will set aside the fact that the fish symbol is probably pagan in origin, in religious use long before the early church. This symbol was not a part of the true church, if for no other reason than its members did not have car bumpers to slap stickers on.) The five Greek letters used to spell *ichthus* are *ΙΧΘΥΣ* (*iota chi theta upsilon sigma*). These “theological scholars” assert that these letters are an acronym, standing for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” Therefore, their reasoning goes, Jesus was not giving the multitudes “fish” to eat but using the code-word for “Christians.” Does this sound like “serious theological debate” to you?

They further argue that verse 17 informs us that the only food in this crowd is five loaves and two fish. Christ says in verse 18, “Bring them here to Me,” and in verse 19, He blesses the food, both the loaves and the fishes, but gives *only the loaves* to His disciples. The verse does not mention that He gave the fish back to them. In verse 20, they gather the fragments, but again, the text does not explicitly say anything about the fish!

Using this account alone and disregarding the other three gospels is called “proof-texting,” that is, lifting a passage that says what one wants and ignoring other verses that clarify or add to it. The same event is related in Mark 6:30-44. Verse 43 records, “And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish.”

Despite this clarification, these folks say that none of the gospel accounts of feeding the 5,000 say specifically that *Jesus* ate the fish! He blessed it and had the fish passed out to the crowd, but it does not say that He ate any. They, of course, ignore Matthew 14:20: “So they all ate.” Again, the text does not say explicitly that *Christ* ate, but even PETA

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knows this is a thin argument, writing, “We may never know for certain whether or not Jesus ate fish . . . , but it’s certain He wouldn’t today.” How do they know this? They back up their doubtful reasoning with another assumption.

Jesus Ate Fish After His Resurrection

After Christ’s resurrection, He appears in human form to the disciples (Luke 24:36). The disciples and others had gathered in a secure room, and He appears right in their midst, an act that shook them. They believe they are seeing a ghost, a spirit, but He assures them that He is indeed Christ. He lets them examine His hands and feet.

Still, they do not seem quite convinced, so He asks, “‘Have you any food here?’ So, they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb” (verses 41-42). Fish and sweets made from the labor of bees? Oh, the horror of it all! By the way, the Greek word used here for “fish” is *ichthus*. We are undoubtedly reading about actual fish.

Then what happened? “And He took it and *ate it* in their presence” (verse 43; emphasis added). This concise statement is a tough one to get around. The Greek word translated “broiled” here means simply “cooked.” Most translations use “broiled,” “baked,” or “cooked.” If anything, this verse might be a good argument against sushi! But there is no getting around what verse 43 states: The resurrected Christ ate the fish and the honeycomb right there in front of them. He put it in His mouth, chewed it, and swallowed it.

This would have been a good time for Him to say, “Fellows, we’re going to give up eating fish and anything made with honey.” But He did not. Despite Luke writing in verse 45 that “He opened their understanding,” Jesus neglected to cover vegetarianism.

A little later, Christ appeared to the disciples again (John 21:1-14). Peter and six other disciples decide to go fishing. Apparently, they had still not gotten the word that fishing was unethical. They fished all night and caught nothing. The next morning, Jesus, standing on the shore, asks if they have any food, and they reply in the negative. He tells them to cast the net on the right side of the boat, which they do, hauling in a net full of 153 “large” fish—so many that, by all rights, the net should have broken.

PETA, of course, is against commercial fishing and says Christ would be too. Yet is not what Peter and the other disciples did “commercial fishing”? By all accounts, they were returning to their pre-calling jobs. Instead of working against their catching any fish, Jesus helps them out!

Notice that Christ has a fire going before they have even made it to shore, and fish and bread are cooking (verse 9). He tells the disciples in verse 12, “Come and eat breakfast,” one comprised of fish and toast made by the Creator God Himself! John writes in verse 15, “So when they had eaten breakfast,” verifying that the disciples—and probably Jesus too—ate what He had provided (leaving the 153 they had caught for crass money-making, no doubt). He misses another excellent opportunity to announce that Christians should be vegetarian.

These people pose additional spurious arguments, such as saying Christ was an Essene, who were vegetarians. Neither of these assertions is true. They also claim that Jesus’ teachings, especially His love for those whom society has marginalized, would make Him a vegan, a stricter regimen than vegetarianism. Somehow, in their minds, animals are “marginalized” but not unborn humans!

The Bible supplies so much more evidence that Christ was *not* a vegetarian and certainly not a vegan, but the proof offered here should be enough. We may have gone down the rabbit hole as a society, but that does not mean we have to be taken in by these obvious deceptions.

See Mike Ford’s other articles at:
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Donald Trump, The USA Bible, And Accusations of Christian Nationalism (Copyright 2024) by Eddie Hyatt (Grapevine, Texas)



President Donald Trump's endorsement of the "God Bless the USA Bible" has been met with a storm of criticism. Some are calling it "sacrilege" and "heresy" and others claiming he is taking advantage of people's faith for the sake of money. Others claim that by associating America with the Bible he is promoting Christian Nationalism, which they insist is dangerous and un-American.

I am not writing here to speculate about Trump's motives in partnering in the promotion of this Bible. My concern is the widespread ignorance concerning the major role of the Bible in the founding of America. My concern is the accusations of "Christian Nationalism" by those who use it as a weapon to try and silence those like me who have documented and emphasize America's overt Christian origins.

That the Bible played a major role in the founding of America was highlighted in a 1982 article in *Newsweek* magazine, entitled "How the Bible Made America." The authors showed the Bible's impact on the founding of America in vivid fashion and wrote,

For centuries, the Bible has exerted an unrivaled influence on American culture, politics, and social life. Now historians are discovering that the Bible, perhaps even more than the Constitution, is our founding document: the source of the powerful myth of the United States as a special, sacred nation, a people called by God to establish a model of society, a beacon to the world (Hyatt, *1726: The Year that Defined America*, 7).

The following are just a few of the many evidences that the Bible played a major role in the founding of America.

The Continental Congress Opens with Bible Reading

The earliest immigrants to America were children of the Reformation, which means they held to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, or "Scripture alone." This meant that they saw the Bible, not the pope or bishop, as their primary guide for faith and morality. The Bible was the book, more than any other, to be read and applied to all of life.

The Great Awakening (1726-70), which had a profound impact on the 13 colonies, produced an even greater love and respect for the Bible. The Bible was, in fact, the most popular book in America at the time of its founding. Even the most nonreligious Founders regularly quoted from the Bible.

It is, therefore, not surprising that when the delegates to the First Continental Congress met on September 5, 1774, they opened with an extended time of Bible reading and prayer. Rev. Jacob Dusche, who became their chaplain, began by

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reading the entire 35th Psalm to the assembled delegates, which included George Washington, John Adams, Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee, and others.

The reading of that Psalm produced a powerful impact on all those present. John Adams described this impact in a letter to his wife Abigail. In describing the reading of that Psalm, he wrote,

It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I never saw a greater effect upon an audience. It seems as if heaven had ordained that Psalm to be read that day. I saw tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave pacific Quakers of Philadelphia. I must beg you to read that Psalm (Hyatt, *1726: The Year that Defined America*, 108).

Dusche became their chaplain, and every subsequent session of this Congress was opened with Bible reading and prayer.

Congress Endorses the First English Bible Printed in America

The Founders’ respect for the Bible was also highlighted by their endorsement of the first English Bible printed in America in 1782. The producer of the Bible, Robert Aitken, had written a letter to Congress in which he asked for that government body’s sanction of his work. In the letter, Aitken called this Bible, “a neat Edition of the Scriptures for the use in schools.”

Congress enthusiastically responded to his request and offered the following recommendation to be included in this first English Bible printed in America.

Resolved: That the United States in Congress assembled, highly approve the pious and laudable undertaking of Mr. Aitken, as subservient to the interest of religion as well as an instance of the progress of the arts in this country, and being satisfied from the above report, of his care and accuracy in the execution of the work they recommend this edition of the Bible to the inhabitants of the United States and hereby authorize him to publish this recommendation in the manner he shall think proper.

Washington Takes the Oath of Office with His Hand on a Bible

George Washington’s great respect for the Bible was affirmed by his nephew, Robert Lewis, who served as his secretary and lived with him while he was president. Lewis said that he had accidentally witnessed Washington’s private devotions in his library and that on those occasions he had seen him in a kneeling posture with a Bible open before him, and that he believed such to have been his daily practice.

It is, therefore, not surprising that when it came time for Washington to be sworn in as America’s first president, he insisted on taking the oath of office with his hand on a Bible. There was no precedent that he should do this. It was his own decision and a declaration that the Bible would be the ultimate source of wisdom and guidance for his administration.

After being sworn in, Washington delivered his first inaugural address. It was no surprise to his audience that his speech was filled with references to God and the Bible. At the close of the ceremony in New York City, he and Congress proceeded to St. Paul’s Chapel where they participated in a worship service with more quotes and readings from the Bible.

The Bible Helped Shape America

The founders respect for the Bible was verified in a ten-year project to discover where they got their ideas for America’s founding documents. This exhaustive study found that although they quoted ancient writers of Greece and Rome and contemporary writers of the Enlightenment, the single most cited authority in their writings was, by far, the Bible (Hyatt, *America’s Revival Heritage, Second Edition*, 69).

The Bible was the lens through which they interpreted everything they read and studied. The well-known Catholic scholar, William Novak, has said,

Everywhere that reason led, Americans found the Bible. If they read Francis Bacon, they found the Bible. If they read Isaac Newton or John Milton, they found the Bible. In Shakespeare, they found the Bible. In the world of the founders, the Bible was an unavoidable and useful rod of measurement, a stimulus to intellectual innovation (Hyatt, *5 Pillars of the American Republic*, 16).

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Andrew Jackson, America’s 7th president, understood this. He once gestured toward a Bible and declared, “That book, sir, is the rock on which our Republic rests.” Teddy Roosevelt, America’s 27th president, said, “No other book of any kind ever written in English has ever so affected the whole life of a people.”

This is not to say that early Americans lived up to the Biblical standard. Far from it! However, they all agreed that the Bible, particularly the teachings of Jesus, was the moral standard and goal toward which all should strive.

Keeping the Bible as the standard had far-reaching results. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, who regularly quoted from the Bible, often pointed out that it was Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount that inspired the dignified, nonviolent social action of the Civil Rights Movement.

Yes, it was the Bible that made America great and enabled her to overcome slavery, Jim Crow, and so many other societal ills.

A Revival of Biblical Values

From the above brief overview, it is obvious that those who say associating the Bible with America is dangerous and un-American are grossly uninformed. My concern, therefore, is not that Donald Trump is promoting the “God Bless the USA Bible.” My concern is that so many in Washington D.C. and throughout the nation no longer respect the Bible as a source of moral wisdom and guidance.

For example, in 2019, the Democrat National Committee (DNC) unanimously passed a resolution affirming atheism and declaring that neither Christianity nor any religion is necessary for morality. In other words, “We don’t need God or the Bible!”

This rejection of Biblical values and truth has left the nation adrift on a sea of moral confusion, our only salvation is a national spiritual awakening that will restore reason, common sense, and a respect for God’s word. Such an awakening will restore respect for the Bible as held by the Founders and expressed by Abraham Lincoln who in 1864 commented on the Bible, saying,

In regard to this Great Book, I have but to say, it is the best gift God has given to man. All the good the Savior gave to the world was communicated through this book. But for it we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare, here and hereafter, are to be found portrayed in it.

So, in answer to all the secularist, anti-Christian critics, I loudly and unapologetically declare that I prefer the moral values of Jesus and the Bible over those of Biden, Buttigieg, Harris, and Levine, and the secularist, woke ideology they have embraced. America's Founders would obviously agree!

See Eddie Hyatt’s other articles at:
[Hyatt, Eddie – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Are These the Last Days!
(Copyright 2012) by John Jewell (London, England)

That is a question that has been asked countless times since the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his subsequent resurrection. Over the centuries many have publicly preached that the return of Jesus Christ to this world is imminent and, naturally, many have been disappointed as he did not return when people thought he would. Some have tried to

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rationalise it and say that Christ would return to men’s hearts! However, man’s society has remained steadfastly corrupt down through the years. When I was a young boy, I well remember men walking through our towns and cities, with notice boards slung over their shoulders and carrying the message that we should prepare for the wrath to come. By wrath they meant God’s wrath and how He would destroy the world because of its corruption. In fact, God makes it clear in the book of Genesis that He wouldn’t again destroy all living creatures, human and animal as he did before. And to remind mankind of that fact established the rainbow, so that every time we see it, we are reminded of God and how He would not destroy all life. It now becomes selective, Jesus Christ is to return and establish a new world system.

The new world system will be composed of those who came to know God and received His Holy Spirit and will accordingly receive eternal life. They will work with Christ to train and educate those people throughout the world who, although not having the holy spirit, had lived on over and through the events of the last days of Man’s society on earth and who then live in the new world to be taught, perhaps for the first time, the truth. And to then have the opportunity of being converted, to receive the holy spirit and to also be given eternal life. Some will not accept this and will die a physical death from which there is no resurrection. Eventually the planet will be populated by only those with God’s spirit. The real work then lies ahead.

This, in a nutshell, is a brief, very brief, rundown of what is actually happening on this planet. We are all at the beginning of something amazing and incredible. The beginning of something for which this present physical life is a preparation. What we fail to understand is that the bible also tells us of powerful spirit forces which are antagonistic to God and determined to destroy all of us and thereby any possibility of that new age ever coming into being. They are not going to succeed but they certainly are going to create as much havoc as possible before Jesus Christ steps in.

Today we live in a very violent world. Our newspapers and the rest of the media are constantly filled with reports of dreadful things happening to the world God created and to the people who populate it. There are forces, forces which really DO exist which are determined to snatch away any understanding of God from us and to bring the world to the point of total destruction. These things were prophesied in the bible, you may no doubt have a copy! I will just point you to some quotes from the bible describing events in today’s world with which you will be familiar.

In the New Testament, in 2nd Peter chapter 3, verse 3 it says “... there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, (or died), all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” You will be familiar with some people who use the media, radio, television and the newspapers to publicly mock God. To point the finger and say He said this, or that, and it hasn’t happened! Or that a lightning flash from the sky struck a muddy pool of water and caused life to appear on earth. Evolution becomes a god to those who have these views. At the present time there are, in Britain, some men who use the media to make fun of the Eternal. They are, the bible says, typical of the last days! The very existence of people such as these actually proves the existence of God.

The bible is quite scathing in its comments about them. Another comment in the first chapter of Romans says this: “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man...” It continues “...Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator. ... “ It goes on: “... for this cause God gave them up unto vile affections; for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet

“Describing the time just before the return of Jesus Christ the bible speaks of adulterers filling the land. Romans goes on in chapter 1 to speak of people who are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; the book goes on to say that people at the time of the last days profess themselves to be wise but show themselves to be fools!

The book of Isaiah explains how the dreadful attitudes of mankind have succeeded only in separating him from God. It speaks of lies, how no one seeks truth or true justice, but only embraces lies. Continuing it says that “The way of peace they know not” The 2nd epistle of Timothy in the New Testament has an excellent description of the last days. It says this

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in chapter 3, verse 1 onwards “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; it continues with a warning to those who believe and trust in God. A warning to not be taken in by those who have a form of godliness – and that’s quite a description of certain big religious organisations! – the passage continues to say that these people deny the power of God, and then comes the warning “from such turn away.”

Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20 gives us the reason. It says “... if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them.” If you did nothing else in a search to understand the times we now live in you should read the 24th chapter of the gospel of Matthew. In just one verse it warns of constant wars, famines, diseases, earthquakes and says that this is just the beginning of sorrows. It gives a warning that unless the time of these things was shortened no one on this planet would survive. But for the sake of those who do believe and trust in God these events will be cut short. From the time of Jesus Christ and the disciples all of these things have been recorded, preserved and now published in one book in every known language on earth, so there can be no excuse.

As we read our newspapers, we should maintain an awareness of what is actually going on in the world and keep in mind the six signs that Jesus Christ gave us so we would know roughly the time in which to expect his return and the end of this present age of Man. These are (1) False prophets – we are aware of these more and more through television. (2) Wars – these are more numerous than probably any other time in history. (3) Famines – shortage of food for multiple millions of people is now a reality. Especially in vast areas of Africa. (4) Earthquakes – It is stated that the number and intensity of earthquakes in the last 100 years is at a level higher than any other time in history. (5) Tribulation – here one can cite the constant attack on the reality of God and those who believe in Him and accept His word. (6) The gospel would be preached throughout the world. Until recent years this was not possible, but now through the power of the Internet the truth is preached without fear or favour and can be freely heard by multiple thousands in almost every nation on earth.

What could trigger the events that would bring the world to the edge of destruction? The Earl of Stirling recently wrote a paper with the title “The Iran War – How It Will Begin.” He has served as a consultant to three very high tech aerospace companies. His specialty was to ascertain the direction of weapons development. To extrapolate these to see where it would all lead. He says that at some time in the weeks to months ahead there will be war launched on Iran. He continues to say “What I see unfolding with a war on Iran is the most frightening set of circumstances I have ever seen; and I have been involved in advanced theoretical weaponry strategy and design for over 20 years. Regardless of how it starts he says “the probabilities of the war becoming a major regional war within 48 hours are 90% or higher.” He goes on to outline the most likely order of events.

Throughout the middle east there are very large stocks of some of the most lethal weapons in existence, much of which has been supplied by the Soviet Union. He says that war against Iran could be instigated by Israel, the USA or by a NATO-EU-US alliance. The response would undoubtedly quickly become massive given the huge number of weaponry, missiles, etc held by the middle east nations and especially by Lebanon, and their hatred of Israel. Israel would have to quickly use neutron bombs the response to which would be all-out nuclear. Radiation would spread around the world from the nuclear bombs. The Saudis have a small number of nuclear weapons having funded the Pakistan nuclear weapon program. The death toll is estimated to be in the multiple millions of people. This would result in total global war.

We cannot say this is all unlikely! It is all too likely given the hatred the Middle East nations have for Israel and their religious beliefs whereby death by what is viewed as being a martyrdom will result in immediate transition to paradise. More and more we need to understand what is happening in the world today, the power moves etc and we need to stay closer to Jesus Christ and to our Heavenly Father and pray even more earnestly “Thy kingdom come thy will be done”?

See John Jewell’s other articles at:
[Jewell, John – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Prayers for Sharon (Copyright 2024) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)

I have been adding my voice along with many others in praying for Sharon Z. In addition to prayer, I would like to share something that may also be helpful.

I have had several family members suffer with cancer. My own sister, also named Sharon, had breast cancer back in her mid-thirties. She was able to beat it and be cancer free for many years till about three years ago when it came back. I'm not certain what all treatments she went through this last time. But she seems to be doing fine at this time. My nephew's wife, Megan, has just finished her chemo treatments for breast cancer. She is in her thirties. There are other family members that I can mention, but my point is that I'm well aware of the struggle a person goes through when fighting cancer.

What treatments each person decides to pursue with cancer or any other health issues is a personal matter between him or her and the medical expert of their choice. We know that God can heal us directly or work through human instruments. We can't walk in another person's shoes, but we can pray that God direct their steps to needed answers.

About 10 months ago, I started to have miserable pain in my right foot, especially, at the heel. As you know, the right foot is the gas-pedal foot. The pain was intense whenever I had to drive even a short distance. I tried better insoles for plantar fasciitis. No real help. I watched videos on stretching or exercising techniques. Again, they didn't help.

I came across a video that explained that the pain could be caused by inflammation. Eventually, I came across a video about **Tocotrienols** and their effect on inflammation. I ordered some from Swanson Vitamins. I loaded up on them when I first got my order. It was the only thing that took away the pain. I try to take about 400 mg each day (2 pills twice a day) to maintain their effectiveness.

Tocotrienols are a form of Vitamin E. Most of the time, Vitamin E is in the Tocopherol form (commonly, Alpha-tocopherol). Dr. Barrie Tan is the foremost expert on Vitamin E, particularly Tocotrienols. I have linked some videos below where he explains the beneficial effects of Tocotrienols. I have watched many more of his interviews. One of the benefits of **Tocotrienols** is how it **protects our cells from oxidation** and can **help with fighting cancer**.

Not all doctors are up on the benefits of Tocotrienols. Or they may confuse them with Tocopherols which should not be taken with Tocotrienols. Dr. Barrie Tan explains the reason for this. For this reason, sometimes a person may assume that if Tocotrienols were so good, then why doesn't their own medical doctor recommend them. This subject can open a can of worms since the medical industry doesn't like competition from natural resources that can't be patented.

What matters is the patient. If a God-made substance offers relief from pain and provides superior anti-oxidant protection for our cells, then may God receive the glory and not man.

Dr. Barrie Tan discovered a natural source of Tocotrienol a number of years ago. His company extracts the Tocotrienols from the Annatto plant. Their product is called "Delta Gold." You can't buy a retail product direct from them. They only sell to vitamin companies which make retail products with "Delta Gold." The best price I found is at Swanson Vitamins. I load up when they offer a discount, which is often. Wherever you decide to buy Tocotrienols make certain that the label says, "Delta Gold."

Here is a link to the Tocotrienols at Swanson Vitamins which I personally use:

[Swanson Ultra Tocotrienols - Double Strength 100 mg 60 Liq Caps - Swanson® \(swansonvitamins.com\)](https://www.swansonvitamins.com)

Here is the link to American River Nutrition which makes Delta Gold: [Home - American River Nutrition](https://www.americanrivernutrition.com)

I encourage anyone to check out their website to learn more about the company.

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If you care to pass this email or information onto Sharon, then I hope that she may find the videos helpful and encouraging. God has the power to heal us through His Holy Spirit or through the natural substances that He has put in His creation for our benefit and healing (Revelation 22:2).

I also found that cutting down on carbs is also helpful in reducing pain in my foot, not to mention also reducing my waistline.

Here are a few videos where Dr. Barrie Tan explains Tocotrienol benefits:

Tocotrienol's effect on cancer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MfzbzQtbjOE>

Why you need Tocotrienols: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YI81tMwgbPo>

Tocotrienol Dosage (General recommendation. Higher dosages needed when dealing with certain issues.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MBVTqVmq6A>

How Tocotrienols work: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zj2MyKoElqM>

See Dwight Fleming's other articles at:
[Fleming, Dwight – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Women in the Church

(Copyright 2013) by Rhoda Foust (Lehigh Acres, Florida)

I, and I'm sure, the majority of women in the church, are perfectly content not to be put into the heavy responsibility of being a speaker in front of congregations in the church. Never-the-less, there are some scriptures that refer directly to women in the church, which are not being dealt with in light of Bible reference Conc. and the original Greek usage of certain words.

Paul, in establishing order in the early church, and in the context of confusion that was developing in the Gentile church services in Corinth said, "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." 1Cor. 14:34-35

Researching this topic in Strong's Conc., I find the word "speak" as used here, in the orig. Greek has nothing to do with speaking under inspiration, or of prophesying. The word used is *laleo* = defined: to speak, talk, preach, etc., but then an additional reference is given to another number which defines this word in this particular usage, and says: *laleo* = an extended or random harangue, ask, bid, boast, call, etc. This then, was not a direct reference by Paul toward an inspired female speaker, or one speaking in an orderly fashion, but women who were randomly haranguing, questioning and interrupting the order of services to quarrel and be disorderly in discussing doctrines of the church.

This is further attested to in Haley's Bible Handbook: "Paul here forbids, (1Cor.14:34) what he seems to allow in 1Cor 11:5. There must have been some local circumstances, unknown to us, that gave point to these instructions. Possibly some very bold women, converted temple prostitutes maybe, were putting themselves forward...."

1Tim. 2:11-12 Paul says: "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. I do not permit a woman to teach, nor usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence..."

Strong's Conc.: a) silence = desist from bustle and language. b) silent = close, secret, hold peace. c) subjection = to subject oneself to obey. d) teach = teach, (as to) learn. e) usurp = and authority = (same def. given for both words)

to act of oneself, to dominate.

These words show a woman should learn without noisome bustling and/or chatter (talking), and refrain from interrupting while learning. She should not dominate or take to herself authority over a man who has authority. Could this scripture not equally apply to anyone--man, as well as women--who does not have a position of authority? It clearly instructs women of non-authority not to "usurp" (take of one's self the authority) over one who already has authority.

So, according to the original Greek usage, Paul--in both places--is simply telling the unruly, noisy, and rude Gentile women to be quiet and listen to those men who had the authority to teach, not haranguing, interrupting, asking questions in a disorganized way. He was telling them: if they did not understand, they were to wait until they got home and ask their husbands (who were also in attendance) to explain what had been taught.

It makes no sense at all for a woman who has been a Bible student for many years, converted and growing by the power of God's Holy Spirit, to go home and ask her unconverted (and possibly hostile) husband questions about spiritual matters. Paul could not have been speaking to inspired women or women with unconverted mates! It was (is) only to women who try to cause discord or disruption that Paul addresses in 1Cor. 14:34

See Rhoda Foust's other articles at:

[Foust, Rhoda – The "New" Church of God Messenger \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Iron Sharpening Iron

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

In regard to: Lifeline

Article by Warren Zehrung
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

In this article the author makes the following two comments:

1. Following their last Passover meal together in John Chapters 13, 14, and 15, Jesus gave His disciples some deep **spiritual lessons.**
2. **Jesus used a similar analogy right after His last Passover when, He told His disciples...**

The meal that Christ ate with His disciples before he was crucified was a meal, it was not the Passover.

Joh 19:13 When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha. **Joh 19:14** And it was the preparation of the Passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

In John 19:13 it clearly says the day Jesus was hanging on the stake was the preparation for the Passover. So the meal He ate before he was crucified was not a Passover Meal because the Passover did not take place until after Christ was crucified and in the tomb.

Eze 45:21 In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

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In Eze. 45:21 it clearly shows that Passover was a Feast of seven days where unleavened bread was to be eaten.

Also if you study the Exodus Passover you will see that the lambs were killed between the two evenings on Nisan 14. Between the two evenings is from noon to sunset on the latter part of each day. The lambs were then eaten after sunset on the 15th of Nisan.

Holy Days 2024

Passover – April 23, 2024 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 23-29, 2024

Pentecost – June 12, 2024

Trumpets - October 3, 2024

Atonement – October 12, 2024

Tabernacles –October 17, 2024, to October 23, 2024

Last Great Day – October 24, 2024

Notes