

BIBLE EXPLORATIONS

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...to know the love of Christ
which passeth knowledge
that ye might be filled with
all the fulness of God Eph 3:19

The Harvest Of Self Will

“And to Adam He said, ‘Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, ‘Thou shalt not eat of it:’ cursed is the ground for thy sake ...thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.”” (Gen 3:17,18)

A Bible teacher once said, “The words above describe the results from discontent with divinely appointed limitations, and of self willed efforts on the part of man to obtain that which was not in the purpose and will of God. Man must have fruit, whether forbidden or not; and lo, he finds that he has but obtained a harvest of thorns.”

Scripture bears out these remarks for we find many examples of ones who were discontent with God’s provisions or with His limitations. They sought their own wills and reaped thorns. Some lost their sweet fellowship with God and harvested grief and frustration. Some lost their lives and some lost rewards they might have enjoyed throughout eternity.

The children of Israel were discontent eating the manna which God provided for them while they traveled through the wilderness to the promised land. They complained and cried for the meat and food which they ate before while they were slaves in Egypt. Then God sent a torrent of quail. They ate until they were filled, but their lust was not satisfied.

Psalm 106:14,15 tells us they, **“...lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but sent them leanness into their soul.”** While they got what they had longed for, it gave them no satisfaction. It was a trade off. Their lives were weakened and wasted.

Sowing And Reaping #1

Haggai, the prophet, described the harvest of some who were self willed. They had ceased working on the house of the Lord, but they continued improving their own homes. He said to them, **“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.”** (Hag 1:6)

In the epistle to the Galatians the Apostle Paul wrote to Gentiles who were grafted into Israel’s blessings during the years recorded in Acts. He warned them of the harvest of self will. They had been freed from the need of circumcision and from keeping Israel’s laws but some were choosing to continue in them. Instead of rejoicing in the grace God had given them, they preferred to continue in the rituals which gave an appearance of godliness and which made them more acceptable to Jews in the assemblies.

This was will worship, that is, worship which they had imposed upon themselves. It was not that which God desired. Paul told them, **“whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh (self will) shall of the flesh reap corruption.”** (Gal 6:7,8) Their self willed worship was wasted sowing.

After the years recorded in Acts, after God had postponed His plan for Israel and sent Christ to the Gentiles, the Apostle Paul wrote to members of God’s new creation. He wrote to Jews and Gentiles, members of the church called the body of Christ. They had heard and believed the new revelation which God had given to Paul. They had responded to the Father’s call into

His family for heavenly places. (Eph 1:1-13)

Paul wrote to make them know God’s house rules for this family and to explain the changes in His administration. He revealed that the Father had appointed the ascended Christ as their Head. Christ was their sole director, protector, provider and sustainer. He was their wisdom, their peace and their joy. No man or angel had authority or power in this family.

Paul warned members of the body of Christ about self will. He warned them of failing to hold to Christ as their Head, of turning to other sources for direction and help. He warned them of “will worship” in practices which were done away with. He warned of discontent in the limitations which the Father had set for them.

Paul explained that there was an inheritance which could be traded for a life of self will. He said, **“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”** (Eph 5:5)

He said there was a position, close to Christ in the ages ahead, which could be forfeited. It could be traded for a few years of ease or pleasure in this life. Second Timothy 2:12 tells us, **“If we suffer (endure with Christ), we shall also reign with Him: if we deny (say no to) Him, He also will deny (say no to) us.”** He will deny us reigning with Him.

There is a harvest for every child of God. Thankfulness for the Lord’s provisions and loving surrender to His will and limitations will reap His rewards. The harvest of self will is only thorns.

J. H.

Resurrection #6

SOME QUESTIONABLE CASES:

Elijah

“And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal ...And it came to pass as they still went on, and talked, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (2Kg 2:1,11)

Although music and art portray Elijah ascending in a chariot the Scripture plainly states that Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind. Such a powerful phenomena of nature is called a tornado today.

Elijah went up into heaven, but what happened to him then? Was he instantly changed into a spiritual being, free from the need of oxygen and nourishment? Did he suddenly become an immortal, not subject to gravity and able to move about in the heavens? The Bible gives us no hint of such changes, nor does it suggest that Elijah remained in the heavens.

And, when fifty sons of the prophets heard about Elijah being taken up in the whirlwind, what was their reaction? Did they praise God that the first man had ascended into heaven to God’s abode? No, instead they responded as one might after hearing a man had been taken up in a funnel cloud. They said to Elisha, disciple of Elijah, **“... Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master (Elijah): lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley.”** (2Kg 2:16) They deducted that Elijah had been flung some place, in the manner which tornadoes cast out what they take up.

It is not unheard of that God should take up one of His prophets and set him down in another place. For, in Acts 8:39,40, we read that the

Lord **“caught away”** Philip from the presence of one to whom he spoke. Then we read, **“But Philip was found at Azotus.”** God set Philip there to continue his ministry in the coastal cities.

Another Scripture which has been used to support the idea that Elijah, and Moses also, received immortality, is Mark 9:4. There we read concerning Peter, James and John, **“...there appeared unto them Elias (Elijah) with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus.”** In Matthew’s account of the same event, he adds Jesus’ command to the disciples after that appearing. Jesus charged them, saying, **“Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead.”**(Mt 17:9) They had seen a vision. They did not see Elijah and Moses in resurrection bodies.

And finally, in 2 Chronicles 21:8-15, we find a most weighty piece of evidence. There we read that, after his translation, a letter came from Elijah. The letter was to King Jehoram, who officially became king after Elijah went up in a tornado. The letter was about crimes which Jehoram began to commit after Elijah was gone. Did Elijah remain up in the heavens where he later heard of the new king’s crimes? Did he have writing materials there and a letter carrier? Or, was he set down in another place where he learned later of Jehoram’s crimes?

A.R. Fausset, in his Bible Dictionary, recognized a problem in saying that Elijah had left the earth and still wrote a letter afterwards. He attempted to resolve this conflict with this theory: He said, **“...Elijah wrote a letter which came subsequently to Joram (Jehoram), son of pious Jehoshaphat ...Elijah writes forseeing the murder, (Jehoram’s acts) for his translation was before Jehoshaphat’s death.”** (2Kg 3:11)

Fausset further stated that, before he was translated, Elijah committed

the letter to Elisha, the prophet after him. The letter comes, he stated, **“...with all the solemnity of a message from Elijah in the unseen world to condemn the murder when perpetrated which Elijah foresaw he would perpetrate.”**

Scripture gives no evidence that before he was taken, Elijah had a vision of Jehoram’s wicked life. The Bible says nothing about Elijah’s giving a writing to a prophet for later delivery. And, in no place do we find that people are alive in an “unseen world,” where Elijah was said to be. This was the teaching of the Greeks which crept into the doctrine of the Pharisees and into Christendom. Jesus showed the fallacy of it in a parable. (Lk 16:19-31)

What happened to Elijah when he was taken up in a whirlwind? We can only say what Scripture says. A letter came from him afterwards. And, since, **“in Adam all die”** (1Co 15:22), Elijah died.

Daniel 12:2 tells us that, **“...many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.”** Surely Elijah now sleeps in the dust, to awake at his appointed resurrection time.

J.H.

Congratulations to Barbara Beard upon completion of the course on Acts. Congratulations to the Craig Pacenti family for the completion of the course on John's Gospel.

The *Annual Phoenix Spring Bible Conference* is scheduled for early April. The actual date will be noted in upcoming issues.

Wise Sayings:

“Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice for a sweetsmelling savour.” (Eph 5:1,2)

“To be occupied with my guilt in the presence of God is humility as regards myself, but unbelief as regards the Sacrifice.” C.H. Macintosh.

The Deity Of Christ #7

In this lesson we will look at one simple fact, one command that we obey. We worship One God. We are instructed to do this. Many times when Jehovah was angry with His people, Israel, it was because they had begun to worship false gods, the gods and goddesses of the land, the created and not the Creator.

We are permitted to worship only One God. Isaiah 45:22-23 reads: **“Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”** This corresponds to the passage in Philippians 2:9-11 which we know so well: **“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him *a name which is**

above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Notice who it was who gave this order and exalted Christ. It was none other than God Himself. Not his followers, nor his human family, but God. Note also the *word “a”. The texts read “the”. What other name can be “the” name except that of the great I AM, the One God? God does not give one commandment in one place, to replace it with a contradictory one. We can worship no other than God, for it would become idolatry to do so. If Christ were merely a man, even a superman, or less than God, we could not worship

Him either, just as we cannot worship any other heavenly beings such as angels. In addition, in the passage from Philippians we see that not only human beings, but creatures everywhere are required to worship Christ.

Connecting with the Philippians passage is also Romans 14:9-12: **“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, “As I live (Hebrew: By Myself have I sworn), saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”**

L.A.

The Deity Of Christ #8

When we think of the “King of Glory”, we usually think of the Old Testament and the Psalms in particular. Let us now look at both Old and New Testaments and find out Who The King of Glory is.

The Psalmist asks, **“Who is this King of glory?”** (Ps 24:7-10) This is a rhetorical question in its own context, because the psalmist knows the answer and expresses it in the same psalm. How wonderful it is that, even though the psalmist had never seen God, his Jehovah, his Savior, he was able to express himself thus. How different from the tone of 1 Corinthians 2:5-8 which is a sad commentary on the unbelief and pride of the world. Paul is trying to impress on his audience that the wisdom of man is not the same as the wisdom of God. And what was the result of the lack of real wisdom? Unlike the psalmist, these persons failed to recognize the “Lord of Glory”: **“That your faith**

should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” James 2:1 is also a recognition of “our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory”.

In case anyone is inclined to quibble about the words “King” and “Lord”, we could look at this just a little more. Jehovah was always the first and primary King over his people, even though they mistakenly did not acknowledge this. We see this referenced in several places in the Old Testament. In Psalm

89:18 the psalmist says, **“the Holy One of Israel is our king”**. Isaiah talks about “the king of Jacob” (41:2), **“Creator of Israel, your king”** (43:15), **“the Lord, the King of Israel”** (44:6). In the New Testament, who did the wise men from the east seek? The **“King of the Jews”** (Mt 2:2). There are numerous references to Christ being the King of the Jews and it was this inscription that was put on His cross. It follows that in 1 Timothy 6:13-16 Christ is **“...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”**. In Revelation 17:14, Christ, Who is also known as **“the Lamb”**, is again called **“Lord of lords, and King of kings”** and His clothes and thigh are said to bear the title, **“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS”**. (Rev 19:16) So, whether the title is “King” or “Lord”, it applies to the same Person.

L.A.

Resurrection #7

SOME QUESTIONABLE CASES:

Enoch

“And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: And he was not; for God took him.” (Ge 5:23,24)

What happened to Enoch when God took him? Does Scripture tell us that he was changed into an immortal and taken up to heaven? This is the doctrine of some who do not believe the declaration of Paul about 3000 years later. For Paul wrote then that Christ, “... **only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto.**” (1Ti 6:16) And, John also wrote at that time saying that no man had ascended except the Lord. (Jn 3:13)

To support the theory that Enoch did not die but was taken up to heaven, Hebrews 11:5, is often quoted. There we read, **“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”** However, a closer examination of the

words used here by God, and consideration of the context and what follows after this verse, we find there is no contradiction to the words of Paul and John.

In Hebrews 11:5, the word “translated” has been understood by some to mean, a carrying up to heaven. However, the Greek word rendered “translated” does not suggest any upward movement. Rather, it suggests a movement “over” as in Acts 7:16 where it is rendered, **“carried over into Sychem.”**

In addition, reading that Enoch should not “see death” has led some to believe that Enoch did not die. In the Greek, death has the definite article “the” with it which indicates some specific death. Enoch did not see “the death”. But, what death does this mean?

It is possible that “the death” refers to the horrendous death of the flood which destroyed all but eight people. Enoch was not around to see that.

It is also possible that Enoch never lived long enough to see what death was, that is, a natural death. Only the murder of Able is recorded before this, and unless

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Enoch saw that, he may have never seen that awful demise of man. Because Enoch pleased God, God may have shielded him from seeing the terrible result of sin.

We find such a case in 2 Kings 22:20 where God shielded one from seeing a horror ahead. To King Josiah, God said, **“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord ...Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into the grave in peace, and thine eyes shalt not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.”**

What happened to Enoch? After mentioning Enoch and other heroes of faith, the writer to the Hebrews adds, **“THESE ALL DIED in faith ...”** (Heb 11:13)

The question to us is, **“Believest thou this?”** (Jn 11:26)

J.H.