

Dr. Ernest Martin's Home Study Course: Lesson 7

Notes by Brian H. Butler B.A., D.O., F.A.S.K.

Class of '64 Graduate & former Faculty Member of Ambassador College, England.

These notes, composed from 2013 on, are based on taped Home Study Course made between 1977-98 by Dr. Ernest L. Martin Ph.D. Former Head of Theology for the Worldwide Church of God; he resigned in January 1974 because of his unresolved doctrinal issues with the administration. Sadly Dr. Martin died in January 2002, a great loss to the world and to those who seek Biblical truth.

HOME BIBLE STUDY LESSON 7 SYSTEMATIC & DOGMATIC THEOLOGY

According to a survey made in 1980, there are over 20,800 different Christian denominations all over the world. This is a puzzle to those who wonder how it is that there is one God, one Holy Bible, yet there are all these people with such very different ideas as to what exactly Christianity is. Why, many ask, can all these people not agree upon what appears to be a simple issue. To the non-religious person, Christianity should be simply a matter of reading the Book and going along with what it teaches. Sadly such is not the case.

Any study of the Bible involves 'theology'. This word is made up of two Greek words, 'theos' meaning God, and 'logos' which means word; so we are studying the Word of God as Christ commanded us to do.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Sincere students of the Bible when led by Christ and the Holy Spirit are only interested in the truth it contains, and this 'truth' has to be carefully studied; while at the same time disregarding the thousands of misinterpretations that abound in the Christian world. It is essential to study carefully to determine what applies to us today as Christians, and what does not.

So what is wrong? Why is there is so much dissension among Christians as to what constitutes the Christian faith? Peter, chief of the Apostles was inspired to write:

2 Peter 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Paul mentions the same theme.

2 Corinthians 11:3 But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

Regrettably millions. if not billions of sincere people have been ensnared by 'cunningly devised fables'. Also by the deceptive devices of the god of this world without realising how far they have been drawn away from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus.

Rightly dividing the Word of Truth

We are exhorted to grow in Grace and Knowledge of God's Word.

2 Peter 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

The way to growth in Grace and Knowledge is to draw close to God.

James 4:8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.

Ask for, and we can receive. the gifts of repentance, the Holy Spirit, and an open mind and heart to study His Word.

2 Timothy 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (partitioning) the word of truth.

So for the earnest seeker after Truth, there is clearly a need to establish both a **systematic** and **dogmatic** approach to the study of the Bible. These are not fancy academic or complex terms.

A 'SYSTEMATIC' approach to Theology

The definition of 'systematic' is: doing or acting according to a fixed plan or system; methodical.

The synonyms are: structured, methodical, organized, orderly, well ordered, planned, systematized, regular, routine, standardized, standard, normal, logical, coherent, consistent, efficient, businesslike, practical, careful, fastidious, meticulous;

A '**systematic**' approach would mean that scholars of the subject would approach the study of the Bible much the same as one might approach a textbook on geography or mathematics. We would need to take each section, and progress through the facts of the geography of this world, or the principles of mathematics in a systematic manner, step by step. This could be relevant in the study of geography or mathematics, but to attempt to use this approach with the Bible is to misapply the 'systematic' principle.

The reason that a purely 'systematic' approach is not appropriate in relation to Bible study is because of the way Christ has structured His Word. It is not written in such a way that it can truly be 'systematised' from start to finish in order to define Christianity. This is why so many earnest scholars with all their knowledge fail to get the whole 'picture' when they attempt to 'systematise' the Bible.

A study of mathematics or geography or any other science can be 'systematised' to a degree because study reveals rules and principles that do not change. Whereas in the field of Theology, due to the development of God's Plan through six thousand years of human history and His principle of 'Progressive Revelation', any attempt to systematise the Scriptures leads to confusion.

The Bible is made up of thousands of stories about events, about people, and other aspects of life on earth. There are 'cameos', 'snapshots', and glimpses of moments in history. Rarely is the whole story about any matter in one place. Information about any subject is scattered through the Bible, and need to be considered in order to arrive at a true understanding.

So each topic has to be explored in its context, and in relation to other scriptures that are related to that topic. In a way, it could be said that the Bible contains many 'jigsaw puzzles', in the sense that we need to study carefully to find as many of the pieces of each puzzle in order to get the whole 'picture' that we need for proper understanding of that subject.

Isaiah 28:10 For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:

Whenever a concept is repeated in the Bible, as for instance the two verses quoted here, it is for emphasis, and to indicate its importance.

Isaiah 28:13 But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a

little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.

God has written the Bible in this way so that the 'scholar', the 'false' prophet, or the carnal person who uses the Bible for their own ends and their own purposes will 'fall backward, be broken, snared, and taken'. Many 'theologians' get into total confusion by basing a belief or doctrine on one text, without ever looking carefully to see if what that text says is modified or clarified by other texts in the Bible.

However, it does help to be somewhat 'systematic' in our study of any particular subject. Our time in study would be best spent in a 'structured, methodical, organized, orderly, and well ordered' approach to our work.

For instance, we could find the first place in the Bible that any matter is mentioned, and then proceed through different parts of the Bible to see how it deals with that subject, and to get a balanced view of the subject.

What simply does not work is to attempt to 'systematise' the whole Bible into a single thread to define Christianity, or base beliefs or doctrines on one or two texts. To do so leads to real confusion and has resulted in the development of the now reportedly 33,000 different denominations. A careful study will reveal that none of those denominations is completely free of the influence, or the inclusion in their body of beliefs, of 'doctrines and commandments of men'.

A 'DOGMATIC' approach to Theology

Definition of the word 'dogmatic': Inclined to lay down principles as undeniably true. Expressing personal opinions or beliefs as if they are certainly correct and cannot be doubted.

Each of the 33,000 denominations, at some level, tend dogmatically to assert that they are 'right', even if they do not say others are 'wrong'.

Notice the authoritative nature of 'dogmatic' synonyms: opinionated, imperative, assertive, insistent, emphatic, adamant, doctrinaire, authoritarian, authoritative, domineering, imperious, high-handed, pontifical, arrogant, overbearing, dictatorial, uncompromising, unyielding, unbending, inflexible, rigid, entrenched, unquestionable, unchallengeable; intolerant, narrow-minded, small minded.

Most people, especially Christians would not prefer to be thought of or seen as being this insistent or arrogant about their being 'right'!

Say a person were to take a **dogmatic** stand about the physical characteristics of water for instance. One person might assert dogmatically that the freezing point of water is 0°C, and the boiling point of water is 100°C. While this is true, both the freezing point and the boiling point of water actually depend upon a number of factors.

These figures of 0°C and 100°C are generally considered correct if the measurements are being made at sea level where, and if, the atmospheric pressure is 29.92 in. Hg (inches of mercury) or 14.696 psi. However, people climbing mountains can notice that the water boils at a lower temperature because of the reduction of atmospheric pressure at high altitudes. At approximately 1 mile above sea level, atmospheric pressure drops to approximately 12.2 PSI. and water boils at 92°C or 198°F.

Another factor that would determine freezing and boiling points of water could be the purity and mineral content of the water itself. So to be dogmatic about these natural laws concerning water is not wise unless we take into account the factors that can make a difference to an law of physics. It might be a good idea to avoid being dogmatic, and to state our opinion about the freezing and boiling points of water in a rather more broad way which allows for there to be several answers to the question.

'If water is exposed to low enough temperatures it will freeze solid, and if water gets hot enough, it will boil.' This law of physics could be stated in a down to earth way, in a firm manner, without being unduly dogmatic.

The same thing applies to God's Laws. While God's Laws may be defined in a certain way at one time, to a certain people; they may be redefined to another people at a different time. In fact we see that this is actually the case as we consider 'Progressive Revelation'. It is unwise to express our beliefs to others in any manner that might give offence, or appear in any way to give an impression that we are assuming the attitude of any of those unfortunate synonyms of 'dogmatic'.

However, it is necessary to be 'dogmatic' when laying down the foundation of those things that are given to us by Christ, and are fundamental to the basis of Christianity.

For instance, I could state categorically, dogmatically that 'The Holy Bible is the Word of God'. I can know this personally from my studies, and only

because God has given me the gift of that knowledge. For me to state the same fact dogmatically to others who have not arrived at the absolute conviction for themselves, may only tend to alienate them.

Jesus Christ warns us as Christians that we have a very serious responsibility to be careful not to offend others, especially those who are 'young' in the belief and faith in Jesus Christ.

Matthew 18:6 But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

Strong words of warning from our Master.

It could be stated 'dogmatically' that every human who has lived, is living now, or will ever live, will die. This is a fact that is unarguable or open to discussion, however, that fact is still better stated without the additional emphasis of dogmatic fervour. The verses about human mortality in the Bible are dogmatic enough. In this case, a clear picture of this truth can be established with just two or three verses, although there are many more that support the same fact.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Paul, in 1 Corinthians 10 goes into some detail about the need for a Christian to avoid giving offence to others in the manner in which we conduct ourselves. Paul is talking about our conduct at a dinner.

1 Corinthians 10:24 Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth (welfare). 25 Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: 26 For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 27 If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake.

Meat that was sold in the 'shambles' in Corinth, the meat market, had in all probability been offered to idols at some stage in its preparation. Paul is saying, this is no big deal! Do not upset your host by questioning him about it. Just eat it, it won't hurt you, or offend God if you do!

But on the other hand, if anyone makes an issue of it, and challenges you to eat something he tells you has been offered to an idol, then that is the time to take a stand.

1 Corinthians 10:28 But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. 29 Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man's conscience? 30 For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? 31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

Eat what is set before you, but not in a self-righteous manner which might give offence to others. The theme of this chapter is not to give offence to others by making a dogmatic issue of our beliefs if it is not necessary.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

In our life as Christians, to take a 'dogmatic' approach means that we need to study carefully to determine which are those doctrines or 'dogmas' which are eternal and unchanging and unchangeable; as well as those which have altered in substance and application over time; and understand how both of these categories apply to us in our Christian life today.

Examples of 'dogma' or doctrines that will never change are faith, hope, and love. These are universal and timeless values. Without faith in God, understanding is impossible. Without hope, we have nothing. Love is the prime dogma that should govern every aspect of the Christian life.

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is Love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity. (Charity is the old English word for love.)

Well known examples of dogma, laws and values that have changed are the law concerning circumcision and the practice of the sacrificial system.

There are very few in the Christian realm who would have any problem with these doctrines being no longer relevant to Christians today.

Firstly then, it is not possible to **'systematise'** the doctrines of the whole Bible into one thread called Christianity, because the teachings in its different books and sections record changes of emphasis over time to different peoples, in different places and eras. This is true is because the teachings of the do Bible reveal the fact of "Progressive Revelation". Very few of even the top scholars and evangelists of the various denominations understand or teach this vital aspect of the Biblical revelation.

"Progressive Revelation" Not all teaching is relevant for all time.

"Progressive Revelation" means that God revealed some basic information to Adam, gave more information to the Patriarchs, first Noah, then successively to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the Prophets. When Christ came, he taught his disciples an more advanced truths. Later He gave Paul inspired revelations concerning the 'mystery', and finally He gave the book of Revelation to John.

The Ten Commandments were written by the finger of God **on stone**, but they were not **'set in stone'**, as in 'absolute' or 'unchangeable', but the Ten Commandments have been subject to change under different circumstances and periods of time for different peoples.

A close examination of many of the laws in the five books of Moses reveals changes. The Laws of Exodus given against the backdrop of wandering in the Desert; and many of those laws were given different emphasis in Deuteronomy when the children of Israel were to be located in one place.

Here an example of the changing of a law concerns the Mosaic Law of punishment for idolatry, a sin that God hates above most sins which states:

Deuteronomy 5:9 Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, (Or love God less, or fail to worship Him above all else.)

This aspect of the law of God punishing the children for the sins of their fathers was abrogated later in the inspired writings of Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 18:19 Yet say ye, Why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. 20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

So God, (Christ) changes aspects of His Law whenever He chooses to do so, as of courses it is his total prerogative.

Christ came to change the Law

Two and a half thousand years later, Christ Jesus gave more advanced information to His disciples, but even then He did not give them the whole final version of the story of the Gospel of God's Plan.

Isaiah 42:21 The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he (Christ) will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

Religious people often quote a part of Christ's teaching:

Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

Christ inspired Paul to define the meaning of the word 'fulfilled'.

Galatians 5:14 For all the law is **fulfilled** in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Many ministers use this verse to say that Christ has done away with the Law, and in 'fulfilling' it that the commandments are abolished. How can they think and teach that when Christ clearly says: *Think **not** that I am come to destroy the law.* That does not make any sense at all. Why call yourself a Christian, and contradict Christ's teachings? Nothing could be further from the truth.

Luke 6:46 And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Other religious leaders may take the opposite view and want to show that the Law of Moses still stands exactly as it was in Moses' time, and insist on

binding obedience to its commands on their followers. They preach that: 'If there is a command in the Scripture, it must be kept.' They teach that the Ten Commandments were written in stone, and therefore are '*set in stone*', and they apply for all time. They teach dogmatically that they apply today as much as when they were given to Moses and Israel on the Mount Sinai.

They quote Revelation to show that the 'commandments' will be law in the Kingdom of God, and those who do not keep them will not be in the Kingdom of God.

Revelation 12:7 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the **commandments of God**, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the **commandments of God**, and the faith of Jesus.

Are the 'commandments of God' referred to in Revelation the ten commandments of Sinai? But Jesus said:

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep **my** commandments.

John 14:21 He that hath **my** commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

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

Notice carefully that Christ said '**my**' commandments, not '**the**' commandments. The Commandments given to Moses on Sinai were specifically intended for those to whom they were given at the time they were given. They were not intended to be unchangeable absolutes, the principles were, yes, but the letter no! Paul makes that really clear

2 Corinthians 3:6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament; not of the letter**, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Paul warned of this form of religious slavery, and the tendency of religious people to want to stay in the Primary School of the Law when they should be graduating from the need for physical laws and a physical

'schoolmaster'. Christians need to 'graduate' to being directly under our spiritual leader, Christ.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul's statement in very plain language that we are no longer under the 'schoolmaster' is frequently twisted by those who wrest the scriptures to fit their own notions.

Many 'theologians' also teach that whenever the word 'commandments' is mentioned in the New Testament it is referring to the commandments of the Old Testament, and that they are 'eternal'. This makes a nonsense of Christ's teachings, who came to 'magnify the law', make significant changes, and to lead His flock His group, His ecclesia, into a new and greater understanding of the Law of Love.

This is one way in which 'Christians' deny the Lord that bought them, and His message, and embrace and adhere to 'another Gospel'.

The earnest Bible student, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will come to realise that there are 'dispensations'. The Old Testament Law was a dispensation to a physical people. The New Testament Law is a Spiritual dispensation to a spiritual people.

1 Corinthians 9:17 For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me.

Ephesians 3:2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

The New Testament Law of love is a dispensation from Christ given to Paul, a Gospel of total forgiveness, the unmerited pardon of Grace to a Spiritual nation that leads to Eternal Life, to humans in the process of becoming a child of God as a Spirit Being. This was all totally new information.

Such religious leaders who want to keep people under the old Law do not understand what Christ meant when he said 'to fulfil'. Christ did not come to

destroy the Law but to magnify it, to make huge changes to make it larger and more encompassing.

Isaiah 42:21 The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

There was nothing dishonourable about the Mosaic Law, but Christ came to fulfil it, or expand it, lift it to a spiritual level rather than just a physical law for a physical people, and actually make it even more difficult (actually impossible) for a human to obey and keep.

Christ came to change the Law – E.G. The Sermon on the Mount.

In the very important Sermon on the Mount, Christ announces some of His changes to the Law, and how He wants them to be understood and practised from now on. Several times in Matthew the 5th chapter, Christ says to His disciples: *'Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time'*. Christ is saying, 'this is how it has always been understood'.

Matthew 5:21 Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

Then Christ uses the very important word **BUT**. The word '**But**' is the great negator, and sweeps away what has gone before in any sentence. The word '**but**' introduces a new way of approaching the subject.

Matthew 5:22 **But** I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

So Christ clearly has 'upgraded' the nature of the law against 'killing'. He is saying in effect, 'Never mind not killing anyone, it is against the New Law I am giving you even to be angry without due cause, or to say to a 'brother' RACA'.

What did Christ mean by RACA? It means vain, empty, worthless. The Jews used it as a word of contempt. It is derived from a root meaning "to spit." So Christ is saying that that level of criticism of anyone is against the New Law He is now explaining. That places a very different emphasis on the law not to kill. As spiritual Christians, we are not even to express hateful or condemnatory thoughts to others.

Christ continues in the Sermon on the Mount to modify and upgrade more of the Ten Commandments. All the modifications Christ made to the Ten Commandments present an enormous challenge to any human being. They are huge changes in what is required as a standard of Christian behaviour.

Obedying Christ in regard to these changes can and must be attempted with all our heart and mind, but inevitably we will slip, sin, or 'chattah'- fall short or miss the mark as when an arrow misses the target.

This is why we have to be in a constant close spiritual relationship with Christ believing in, having faith and confidence in His sacrifice, His Grace, His forgiveness, and His willingness to regard us as His brothers and sisters in His Family.

Adultery

Matthew 5:27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 **But** I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

It is one thing to be able to resist physically getting into bed with someone, but to control the lustful aspects of the mind is very much more difficult.

Divorce

Matthew 5:31 It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 32 **But** I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.

Laws of divorce have become watered down over time, and now even 'quickies' are permitted for trivial and superficial reasons to our shame.

Matthew 19:8 He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning this was not so. Hardness of heart is not a Christian trait.

Swearing

Matthew 5:33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: 34 **But** I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by

Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Controlling the tongue is a most difficult challenge also. Over the last few decades, swearing has changed from being socially and morally unacceptable, to those words being used and broadcast by the media without let or hindrance. Foul language now permeates almost every television program or film in our era.

Proverbs 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

James compares the tongue to the rudder of a great ship. Just one tiny movement, and the course of the whole journey of the ship is changed.

James 3:4 Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5 Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth 6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7 For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8 But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9 Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10 Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.

Christ also told the Pharisees that it is the heart that speaks through the tongue, and our speech reveals what our hearts and minds are thinking.

Matthew 12:34 O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

It is a good Christian habit to listen to what comes out of our own mouths, and also out of the mouths of others, and check whether how we speak measures up to the Law of Love that Christ brought or not.

Revenge

Matthew 5:38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: 39 **But** I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.

To attempt to take revenge upon someone is not the act of a Christian.

Obey the law of the land willingly

Matthew 5:41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Under the laws of the Roman occupation, and Roman could make a citizen of Israel carry his burden for one mile. Christ said, go above and beyond in being helpful.

Be a giver

Matthew 5:42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Be a giver, and take care of your resources and protect them from those who would take advantage of your generosity, and squander or misuse anything they can take from any person who has a giving attitude.

Matthew 10:16 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.

Love your enemies

Matthew 5:43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. 44 **But** I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Again, this is not an easy directive to comply with! It takes a lot of God's Spirit working in us to enable us even to begin to comply with this law.

At the end of Matthew 5, Christ says in verse 48: Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

But this is humanly impossible, we can only be 'perfect' if Christ lives in us and we in him, and we are in a constant attitude of repentance and trust in His constant ongoing forgiveness and His love towards us, even with and despite all our faults and failings.

The Sermon on the Mount continues in Matthew chapter 6:

Giving money to others or to charities

Matthew 6:1 Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. 2 Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 3 **But** when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.

It is one thing to give to those one knows are in special need, and the principle is to 'prime the pump' to help anyone on their way, and if any money given is used for purposes other than was intended, then the situation needs to be looked at again. When the same individuals ask for more, then again, that is another matter.

Giving to charities in this era is fraught with difficulty, as it is almost impossible to know just how much of a donation actually reaches those for whom the charity is claiming to help. Much donated money is used up in 'expenses', 'salaries', 'administration' to the point where a very small proportion any money given actually reaches those needing help.

This is mentioned simply to suggest that one takes care in giving. Be 'wise as serpents...'

Praying in public and in private

Matthew 6:5 And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 6 **But** thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.

Simple enough, prayer is a private matter between ourselves and God. On occasions it might be that a public prayer where someone leads it for a group, might be something to participate in, or not.

People are led to pray in churches in a manner that might be considered to be vain and highly repetitious. Only those attending can decide whether they are or not.

Matthew 6:7 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.

In some countries, adherents to some religions use mechanical devices like prayer wheels to send thousands of 'prayers' with a twist of the wrist. Most of the prayers in churches are very repetitive also. The worshipper's

concept of the nature of God in these instances is hardly consistent with the God of the Bible.

God is our Heavenly Father, and when we talk to Him, we are invited to talk to Him as we would our earthly father, but in an attitude somewhat different towards our Creator. We need to hallow, to respect greatly His name, and honour Him with the most profound veneration as we are talking to the King of Kings.

The 'Lord's Prayer is only a format, or a guide. Mumbling it repetitiously by heart is not the manner of prayer that should be used by a Christian.

Matthew 6:8 Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. 9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. 10 Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

This is a simple framework, not something to be used repetitiously.

Forgiveness, unmerited pardon is by Grace, and is conditional

Matthew 6:14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

To receive forgiveness, we are required to have an attitude of willing forgiveness towards our fellow human beings.

Fast in private

Matthew 6:16 Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 **But** thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

We cannot serve God and money or earthly 'treasures'

Matthew 6:19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 **But** lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: 21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 **But** if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore

the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon.**

It is all too easy to be caught up in chasing 'success'. The pursuit of money is like a drug, before you know where you are, it is dominating your time, your thoughts, your emotions. Pursuit of money is 'mammon' or 'worldliness'. Nothing wrong with prosperity or doing well in life, but when it becomes our all-consuming dominant activity we enter dangerous waters.

Take no anxious thought in daily life, God knows what we need.

Matthew 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?

Matthew 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? 32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. 33 **But** seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. 34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

What are '**all these things**'? They are the necessities in life, food and drink, clothing, and shelter. Does this mean we will never be without these things as Christians? There may be times when God allows us to suffer somewhat, but if we are constantly seeking the Kingdom and obedience to His Law, we need to ask for the Faith to know that He knows our state and what we need, even if and when things get difficult in our lives.

Do not judge or be critical of others

Matthew 7:1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. 3 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, **but** considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

When anyone points the finger at another, three fingers of their hand point back at them. When anyone indulges in criticising others, it is well to remember that we are all guilty of exactly the same thing. If we can see it in others, then it is because we know that it is within ourselves.

Romans 2:1 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.

It is so very easy to see the speck in someone else's eye, without realising we have a plank in our own.

Treasure the pearls of wisdom God has given us

Matthew 7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.

The word 'dogs' in the Bible can refer to ministers of religion, and those who are godless, and openly practice things against God's Law. If we attempt to share truly spiritual truths with the 'heathen' or those of other faiths, we risk rebuttal and rejection at the very least. In some countries we may even risk imprisonment or death.

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Christians are authorised to share with great care what knowledge we have been given, but only to those who sincerely ask. This can be a trap when the one asking may pounce on the unsuspecting Christian and reveal that they did not want to learn anything, but just wanted to start an argument.

Ask God for our spiritual needs and Christians will receive

Matthew 7:7 Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: 8 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

God does bless with physical things, but that is not where our hearts should be. We should be seeking spiritual gifts, belief, faith, repentance, trust, and a closer walk with our Father.

Treat others as you would like to be treated

Matthew 7:12 Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

Sometimes the way we like to be treated is not always shared by others. Some people like to take risks, are not afraid of heights, and so on; others

do not. So we need to be sensitive to the feelings of others as to how they would like to be treated in ways that might differ from what we might like or enjoy.

The Christian life is not the easy path, very few find the true way

Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

God is not opening the eyes, ears, and minds of the majority of the billions on the planet earth at this time.

Christ warns often of false prophets – are we listening?

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

How can you tell if someone is a false prophet or one who is not motivated by God's Spirit? The Bible and Christ in His ministry tells us so many times not to be taken in by anyone.

There is only ONE Mediator between God and man, Christ. Any person who assumes the role of mediating is putting him or herself between people and God, which is clearly forbidden.

Matthew 23:7 And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

The leaders of the Jewish faith to this day call themselves and are called, 'Rabbi'. Jesus said do not allow anyone to call you Rabbi, which means master, for One is your Master, even Christ, and you are all brothers, that is with the same rank. No human is 'over' us in authority, only Christ is our Elder Brother, and our Mediator.

Matthew 23:9 And call no man your 'father' upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.

Of course Christ was not talking here about calling your human dad 'father'. The priests and ministers of the world's largest Christian denomination are called 'Father', which Christ said is not to be done in any religious or theological context.

The 'Fathers' of the Church, mere men, hear confession, and hand out punishments of various kinds, and grant 'forgiveness' of sins to those who go to 'confession'. There is only one who can and does forgive sin, and that is Christ Jesus.

Matthew 23:10 Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. 11 But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

The religions of the world are run by people who want to control others, to control how they worship God, to control what they believe and think, and even control aspects of their private lives. God, No human is qualified to do that.

Part of a Christian's work is to use all our might to control ourselves, and to avoid any attempt to control others.

Avoid attempts to control others

We all need to be aware of any attempt to control others. There is a strong part of human nature that has a desire to control others. We have all seen when some people are given even a modest amount of authority over others, immediately begin to use it unwisely and become petty tyrants.

Children at play are an absolute prime example. "Now you do this and I'll do that." If you don't do this, I won't let you play with me." Controlling, or attempting to control others starts young and is part of everyday adult life.

Most of the English speaking world is largely unconscious and unaware of the words they use constantly which amount to an attempt to control or criticise others.

"YOU" is possibly the most used word in attempts to control others. When the word "YOU" is followed by any of the following: you are, you could, you might have, you should, you should not, you ought to, you ought not to, you must or you must not, they all imply a measure of control. Also "You always" and "You never" are best avoided, as they are rarely fair comment or true.

"WHY?..." Nobody likes being called into question, or to account for their actions. From our earliest childhood, we were asked "Why did you do this or that?" It is invariably linked to a critical frown. Or worse still, some form of punishment. We grow up learning that every time we hear the word "WHY?" to have a very negative feeling about the word "WHY".

"TRY to..." the word "TRY" is actually interpreted by the brain as confusion. "TRY" means to make an attempt to do something but falls short of achieving a result. As long as anyone is 'trying' to do something they are not succeeding. Repeating the instruction to "TRY" usually results in frustration. Christ does not tell us to 'try', He tells us to "do".

“SURELY”: This word has negative connotations with superior and patronising overtones. It implies that you don't know what you are talking about, or that you have got it wrong." Surely you don't mean...?" "Surely you ought to..." "Surely you should ...".

“BUT” – this word is the great negator. If you tell someone what a great job they have done, and that you are pleased with them, **but...** The word **‘but’** sweeps away all the nice compliments. All the person hears and feels are the words after the word ‘but’, and they feel they are critical, judgmental, and not accepting of them. "Yes, BUT...", actually means 'No! I do not agree with you at all!' It is wise to avoid the use of “BUT” at all in these circumstances.

“ASSUME”: "I assume you mean...", "I assume you think...", It has been observed that using the word “ASSUME” makes an “ASS” out of “U” and “ME”, and all too often it does. Making assumptions about what others mean or think is dangerous ground indeed.

“I was only JOKING!” People frequently, laughingly, make all kinds of unkind, cruel, or thoughtless personal comments, and as soon as they see the effect on the recipient, they immediately say, **“I was only joking!”** Actually, they meant every word of it. Christ says: “Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” Without realising it, what a person says is based on what they truly feel in their hearts.

There is another old proverb which states: “As an arrow loosed from the bow, so a word uttered cannot be recalled.” Once something is said, it has an effect on the hearer. So we do well to think before we speak.

As Christians we will want to avoid using controlling words, or even attempt to control others, and instead, think how we can speak kindly and respectfully, and build each other up.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. 11 Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

Romans 12:10 Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Christ, tells us how He wants His called out ones to live this life today, and attempting to control others is not part of the Christian way.

Yes, Christ warns often of false prophets

So how are we to know if someone is a false prophet or whether anyone who purports to represent Christ is a false minister? Again Christ warns:

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

In the 21st century, there have been countless appalling accounts of the degree to which religious and other leaders of schools and groups have been involved in preying sexually on children, men and women. These reports are only those which have come to light, sometimes several decades after the offences took place. Nobody knows the extent to which these perversions are happening today behind the scenes of organisations which are still entrusted with the care of others.

These activities are part of the fruits of the flesh, and parents and families need to be aware of the possibility of it happening in their area. We can indeed know them by their fruits, and it would be wise not to be gullible in our trust of others. They may be indulging in the 'fruits' of going against the very instructions of Christ who they claim to represent.

Just because anyone knows how to quote the Bible, or mention the name of Jesus or God, or wear certain clothes, does not mean that they are genuine God-fearing people.

Matthew 7:21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

'Dogmatic' – Certain teachings that cannot and will never change.

Here are some examples of teachings, concepts, and principles that will never change: Love, Faith, Hope, which are universal, permanent in value and importance dogmatically. No discussion. They are imparted to God's children by way of God's Power, the Holy Spirit.

In John chapters 13-17, Christ is teaching His disciples just before His crucifixion, and many of His statements supersede earlier definitions.

When the serpent told Eve that God was lying when He said they would die if they ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, this was the beginning of the doctrine of the 'Immortality of the Soul' which coupled with belief in 'Reincarnation' is so widely believed in the world today.

If the doctrine of the 'Immortality of the Soul' is true, then Christ did not die on the tree of crucifixion, he was not dead in the tomb, but alive somewhere else (some say visiting the spirits in prison!), then we cannot be saved, and we are still in our sins. The penalty of sin is **death**, the complete cessation of life, and Christ had to **die** for our sins for them to be removed so that we could have eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Some Christians seem to want it both ways, they want to believe in the Immortality of the Soul and to be saved by the death of Christ. Both cannot be true. If Christ did not die, then nobody is saved.

Ezekiel 18:4 Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

Hebrews 19:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement:

Christ says: When we die, we die, we cease to exist completely.

Ten Commandment variations

Interpretation is of vital importance, and has to be tempered with great care. Dispensations, circumstances, exceptions, chronology, ethnicity, all have to be taken into account in the understanding and application of law. Only by earnest study can we be sure what applies to us in this age and what does not.

Graven Images

Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

This commandment is very clear, that no type of graven image or any likeness of anything is to be made and used in connection with worship.

Genesis 3:24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Cherubims were spirit beings placed in the garden of Eden to prevent Adam or anyone else from going near the Tree of Life.

So despite the clear law about making any graven image, there is an exception in the case of Cherubim. God tells Moses to make two of them and place them in the Tabernacle, and later they were placed in the Temple when it was built.

Exodus 25:18 And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. 20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be.

But while Moses was still upon the mountain receiving the commandments from God, Aaron, a priest of the Most High God gave in to the demands of the Israelites and made them an image to worship.

Exodus 32 :3 And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. 4 And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Aaron was a priest of the Most High God. He not only made a molten calf, but told the Israelites that this was the god that brought them out of Egypt; he told the Israelites to be naked, no doubt to prepare for sex worship; then lied by making the ridiculous excuse that the calf made itself!

Exodus 32:24 And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came

out this calf. 25 And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

God's immediate reaction was to want to destroy them all. Moses pleaded for their lives, and God relented, but three thousand people died for this transgression of the second commandment, and God continued to plague the Children of Israel for this vile act.

Exodus 32:28 And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. 33 And the Lord said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book....34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. 35 And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Taking God's Name in vain

It is not intended to enter into any discussion here about the names of God. What is clear from the context of the commandment is that to use any word that we or others associate with God in a disrespectful or blasphemous manner is against spiritual law.

When the King James Bible was first translated and printed in 1611, there was no such letter in the English alphabet as J. It was only over a century later that a J was included in the alphabet. Prior to that time, there were of course many names of God, most of which we have no way of knowing how to pronounce the original Hebrew words. The Hebrew language does not put the vowels into written words, so to any attempts to pronounce accurately the Tetragrammaton YHWH are futile.

Some people pronounce YHWH as 'Jehovah'. Others use the pronunciation 'Yahweh'. Others might use 'Yaheshua' which would mean 'God is deliverer'. Some use the word 'Yashua' which would literally mean 'God is crying out for help' which would be totally inappropriate.

Regrettably, out of total ignorance the masses use the words 'Jesus' and 'Christ', and 'Jesus Christ' in a manner of blasphemous epithets in everyday language. That is certainly very sad, and to be avoided by Christians.

Christians will use the third commandment as a guide to be very careful only to use words to refer to God in a manner of absolute reverence, respect and honour.

Law on killing and murder

Exodus 20:13 Thou shalt not kill.

The Mosaic Law details a large number of crimes for which capital punishment was the automatic penalty.

The Old Testament is full of accounts where God commanded the killing, and even the apparent mass 'ethnic cleansing' of peoples who had descended into depravity and Godlessness. Also clearly this does not apply to the killing of animals under certain circumstances, as in sacrificing the ram for Isaac, and the thousands of animal and bird sacrifices involved with worshipping God in the Temple sacrificial system.

So again, the caveats of 'Dispensations, circumstances, exceptions, chronology, ethnicity', all have to be taken into account in our understanding and application of law.

Adultery

Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Under Mosaic law, adultery was punished with the death penalty.

Yet, the Patriarchs with whom God was dealing on a personal level often had more than one wife, and they also had concubines.

Genesis 25:1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah.... 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country.

David committed adultery in a particularly horrific manner and also married many wives, and took concubines, yet he above so many men, was a 'man after God's own heart'.

2 Samuel 5:13 And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David.

Solomon, who was used by God to build his Temple, had hundreds of wives and concubines and was not accused of adultery.

1 Kings 11:1 But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: 2 Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.

In our society in this era, we are required as Christians to obey the laws of the land. Adultery is against common law, but those who commit it are not

required to submit to the death penalty. Bigamy, marrying more than one wife at a time is also against the law, but the sentence of capital punishment is not handed down.

Paul says that in his era a minister and deacons should be the husband of one wife, but he does not exclude the practice of anyone having more than one wife in the society in which he lived at the time.

1 Timothy 3: 2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;... 12 Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

Yes Exodus 20:14 Thou shalt not commit adultery was true in former times, but the law against adultery is now not only against the physical act, but also to do with the thoughts of the heart.

Again the law of adultery has been interpreted differently according to circumstance, times, and different peoples positions.

The Sabbath

Christ came to fulfill the law, and He did it perfectly, which meant that He observed the keeping of the Sabbath correctly in every detail. Ministers and pastors of many denominations use the fact that Christ kept the Sabbath during his ministry, to insist therefore that it is binding on Christians to keep it today.

Firstly, it is virtually impossible to observe all the constraints and aspects of Sabbath keeping in our era. Some sincere religious but self-righteous people are content to keep some parts of the Law of the Sabbath, feel good about that, but conveniently ignore others, and in so doing are not actually keeping the Sabbath at all. If we offend in one point, we offend in all.

Isaiah 64:6 But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

The Sabbath was a command for to be observed for ever, or Olam – age lasting is not forever, but for as long as the 'olam' lasted. God does not keep the Sabbath. Actually Christ did work on the Sabbath during His ministry, and when challenged by the religious people, He replied, “My Father works, and I work”. He plucked grain with his disciples to eat which was against the Pharisaical interpretation of the law.

Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man not the other way around. Christians in Christ are now under the dispensation of a different 'Sabbath' rest. Hebrews 4 explains that Christians are now in the spiritual 'rest' of Jesus Christ.

Stealing

In Numbers 31 God told the Israelites to 'spoil' the Midianites. Even 'stealing' had variations and different dispensations in the law. Theft is still wrong, and always will be as it is one of those permanent dogmatic teachings that will never change, yet even that law can be modified by Divine Fiat. Now in this era we have identity theft, and intellectual property theft, stealing a person's identity and their ideas is still against the law.

Coveting

'Coveting' which is an illicit desire, wanting for yourself that which belongs to another. It is destructive to Godly character, and our Lawgiver wants us to respect our neighbours and the Laws that govern our thoughts regarding them.

Exodus 20:17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

The origin of this law in Exodus 20 refers to your neighbour's house, wife, servant, ox, ass, etc. The intent at that time was not to covet your *Israelite* neighbour's things. But God did decide that the Israelites were entitled to 'spoil' the Midianites, and kill the Canaanites, and in other ways, contravene the letter of the commandment laws.

We do not have any instructions in this day and age from God that it is alright for us to break these physical laws, but rather take them to a heart and spiritual level.

More “Progressive Revelation” - The 'Mystery' hidden since before the world began.

Christ Jesus came to introduce the beginning of the next stage of the Divine Plan relationship between God and humankind. Christ transformed the law by His life, by bearing the entire sins of human beings, by His death to pay the penalty for everyone, His resurrection, His being judged by the Father as perfect, and His sacrifice enabled Him to present all human beings to the Father without spot, wrinkle or any type of sin, so they could ultimately enter into eternal life with God and Christ Jesus.

John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

So then when the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost 31 A.D., we were already released from the bondage of the Law, and from the penalty of our sin, and sealed with that promise of salvation which we had been accorded since before the world began.

Paul, (Saul) a Benjamite Pharisee who had been causing Christians to be killed, and was present at the stoning of Steven the first martyr, was blinded on the road to Damascus. From then on, Christ appeared to him in vision, and began and continued to work with his mind, and give him more "Progressive Revelation".

Acts 9:9 And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. 3 And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Jesus was dealing directly with Paul, and gave him authority as an Apostle, because Christ had a special work for him to do.

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.... verse 15 But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

Romans 1:1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

In Romans the eighth chapter, often called the Holy Spirit chapter, Paul reveals more detail about the relationship of God to human beings than had been known previously.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Christ paid the penalty for all sin, so nobody is under condemnation (of death), but will inherit life. Whatever was necessary for a human being to

become a fully fledged child of God was done for us by Christ Jesus who knew each of us before He created the world and the Universe.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. 5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

Even the most sincerely religious people have a mind and a heart that is at enmity to God, unless He has called them and given them His Spirit. This accounts for the evil behaviour that runs rampant in many so-called Christian organisations.

Romans 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. 8 So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Once we have been sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit we become potential children of the Most High God, and are allowed to call Him father, or 'Abba' or Dad.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

We can call the Father, Dad! God the Father has adopted all human beings into His family. Amazing Grace!

Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: 17 And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

The enormity of that last sentence is so awesome, yet is glossed over by so many people. This can only be regarded with a 'ho-hum' attitude if that person has not been given the spiritual enlightenment to be able to appreciate the majesty of our future as members of the Royal Household of God. Christ then says through Paul that we may have to go through the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' in this life, but when we look past our trials and tribulations of this life to our glorious future, they are nothing.

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creature (the whole creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, 21 Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Our Messiah was appointed by the Father to be over all of creation.

Romans 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. 24 For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

We do not even know how to pray, or what we should pray for, but God even takes care of that for us.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. 27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

So whatever trials we experience in this life, we can have the absolute assurance that everything will work together for good for those who are the called according to His purpose, because God knew each of us personally before the creation of the world.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also

called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

If people who consider themselves to be Christians actually really believed what verses 29 and 30 are saying, 'how can we (they) neglect (disregard or treat so lightly) so great salvation'; (Hebrews 3:3) which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. 34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

When Christ came to deliver us, the Mosaic Law had served its purpose, as a schoolmaster for kindergarten physical humans, and now Christ brought Faith and Grace, the physical Law would be superseded by the Spiritual Law for those who are circumcised of the heart.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

But then Christ brought Faith and Grace, unmerited pardon, and the promise of eternal life as a gift.

Galatians 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. 26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The rite of physical baptism is no longer necessary, as when Christ was baptised, so in effect was every human being. When we are 'in Christ' we are also baptised into Christ.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

This was more of the revelation that was staggering to those who first heard at the time that the uncircumcised 'heathen' Gentiles were also to inherit the Kingdom of God and were to be given salvation.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Every human being was chosen to inherit eternal life long before the world was created by Christ under the direction of the Father. Everyone was potentially 'saved' before the universe and the world were even created. We were known individually and personally to the Father and to Christ who were able to see the awesome nature of the Plan they had devised to replicate themselves with an extended family.

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, (and to the Father) according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Philippians 3:20 For our conversation (citizenship) is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: 21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

This verse in Philippians harks back to the first book of Corinthians the fifteenth chapter written around 52 A.D., known as the 'resurrection' chapter. Part of that chapter is included here because it gives such a clear account regarding the future resurrection from our human body to our new glorious body.

1 Corinthians 15:35 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36 Thou fool, that which thou sowest is

not quickened, except it die: 37 And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: 38 But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. 39 All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. 40 There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. 42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. 46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. 48 As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. *(Revelation 11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Revelation 20:6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.)* 53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

So although the resurrection of the body had been preached by Paul earlier in his ministry, the fact that both Jew and Gentile were to be co-heirs with Christ, the understanding of the 'mystery' was completely new information.

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is

neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Ephesians 1:9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

People talk blithely about 'going to heaven when you die' with about the same tone as they might say 'we go down to the coast to be by the seaside!' Our inheritance deserves more attention than that!

Ephesians 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

In 63 A.D. after many years of his ministry, the Apostle Paul was to be given more personal teaching directly from the risen Christ Jesus about the 'mystery' of our ultimate future. This was completely new information, and another example of 'Progressive Revelation'. Paul was given more details regarding the full and complete understanding of the 'Mystery' that had been hidden from human beings since the beginning of time.

Ephesians 3:9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

Colossians 1:25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; 26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: 27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

The matter of the Gentiles becoming heirs also must have been a difficult concept to accept for those steeped in the traditions of the Jews.

Colossians 3:10 And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: 11 Where there is

neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Again, because God has seen fit to reveal His plan in stages, it is totally impractical and incorrect to take statements of doctrine and law given at one time, and to certain people for them to practice and obey, and then arbitrarily to apply them to people of different races, times and geographical locations throughout history without due regard for "Progressive Revelation".

Paul lived on for a few more years after 63 A.D., but died around 68 A.D. The Bible does not tell us the exact time or manner of the apostle Paul's death, and secular history has yet to provide us with any definitive information. However, evidence highly suggests the apostle Paul's death occurred after his fifth missionary journey ended in 67 A.D. Paul was likely beheaded by the Romans, under Emperor Nero, sometime around May or June of 68 A.D. Nero himself died by suicide on June 9th of the same year.

After Paul's death, Christ gave final special inspired information in the Book of Revelation to the Apostle John, the forty-ninth book which put the capstone on the whole body of doctrine in 96 A.D., just before John canonised the Old and New Testament into the perfect arrangement of one Book made up of 49 books.

BEWARE DECEPTION

Religious people, ministers, and those in higher ranks of churches can appear totally sincere, and it is probable no doubt that some are sincere.

Both Dr. Martin, and the author of these notes were totally and utterly sincere for many years while associated with an organisation that claimed to be the one and only church of God. We did not know we were being deceived until God opened our minds to see how false their teachings were, and how in fact they were actually not following the Bible at all, but were teaching, and we were following, the commandments of men.

Matthew 15:8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

Utter sincerity is of no value if what you are sincere about is wrong!

James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

We can also pray: Matthew 6:13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: Or deliver us from the evil one.

We can thank God that the KEY to protection from deception is freely available to those that God is adding to His Ecclesia. That KEY is to avoid the teachings of men, and rely completely on God's Word as we grow in Grace and knowledge.

However, we know, and need to keep in mind that God has built into the heart of man a deceitful nature. We need to keep our own deceitful nature well in check both towards ourselves and others, and that can only be done with God's help.

Jeremiah 17:9 The (human) heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? We can and we do!

Here is a statement that is not only true, but disturbing:

Those who are deceived do not know that they are deceived.

If anyone knew that they were deceived, then they would not be deceived!

A disturbing thought, but only if we do not have the KEY to God's protection from being deceived.

Jesus Christ gave a clear warning about false ministers and those who would come using Christ's name and His Word the Bible as the authority for their teachings. Yes, they say that Jesus is the Christ, but they do not preach the true Gospel, but use the Bible to deceive.

Matthew 24:5 For **many** shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

Christ said, "many" shall come *in my name*. False teachers are good at using the name of Christ, and quoting the Bible to further their own ends. False ministers and false prophets do not go around wearing a sign which says 'False Prophet', of course not! It is up to each of us to use our knowledge of the Scriptures thoughtfully to make a careful and valid judgement of anyone who presents himself, or nowadays herself, as a

minister of God. So religious organisations and their ministers may well have the appearance of piety or godliness, but Christ says inside they are dangerous ravening wolves.

Thinking about the fact that those who are deceived do not know they are is very disturbing, unless we have an assurance that we are not deceived. We can have that assurance.

So how can the ardent student of Theology, the study of God's Word know, and know that they know, that they are not deceived? We can have protection from deception.

The KEY: We have to protect our minds from, and ignore any and every doctrine, belief system, and religious organisation of men or women.

There is an absolutely reliable KEY. The KEY is only to believe and accept ONE Mediator between us and God, and that is the Man Jesus Christ, and His Word, the Holy Bible. Our contact with Christ and with our Father can only be directly from that Source, never through other human beings.

How do we do that? It is important to maintain a close connection with our Father and Jesus Christ. In an attitude of humility, when we approach our studies, it is crucial to ask the tools we need for true understanding. What are these tools?

* Understand that there is only one standard of Truth, Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures is the only source of Truth we can trust implicitly.

* Ask God for a repentant attitude.

* Claim forgiveness through Christ.

* Ask for the guidance of God' Holy Spirit as we study.

John 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

How does the Spirit show us what God wants us to know? Not in words, or in a language, but God speaks to each of us by transmitting insights, thoughts, understandings, feelings, concepts, realisations, appreciations, joy and enlightenment to our minds as we study.

* Express gratitude. Be constantly grateful for our open minds and ears, very grateful indeed, for very few are being given these gifts in this era.

When in a right attitude, the Holy Spirit will guide us into all the Truth God wants us to have at that moment in time as we grow in Grace and Knowledge. We have seen that 'Progressive Revelation' has taken place over thousands of years as God reveals His plan. We will grow in knowledge 'progressively' as God reveals to each of us what He wants us to know and appreciate at any given time.

The chances are that every human being, regardless of denomination or ministerial rank that would have us follow his or her beliefs, ideas, doctrines are themselves deceived. To listen to, or follow their teachings would lead us to be deceived also.

BEWARE OF COUNTERFEITS

What is a counterfeit? To counterfeit means to imitate something. Counterfeit products are fake replicas of the real product that are indistinguishable from the genuine article. Indistinguishable that is unless one has access to highly specialised knowledge concerning that article.

If one has ever had the misfortune to be given a counterfeit bank note, they will know about the sinking feeling when they realise that the note is worthless. The art world has been plagued since time immemorial with fake pictures, spurious copies of masterpieces, especially when the original is worth millions. It takes a highly skilled specialist to determine whether a picture is genuine or a cleverly produced fake.

The world is full of many thousands of counterfeit 'Christian' religious organisations, each setting forth their beliefs as 'the Truth'.

How many 'Christian' denominations are there worldwide? World Christianity consists of 6 major groups divided into 300 major ecclesiastical traditions, composed at the last count of over 33,000 distinct denominations in 238 countries. The total number of 'Christians' is generally estimated to be in the region of two billion. How is it possible for so many people to be deceived? Satan is **the** master counterfeiter.

A denomination is defined as an organized Christian church or tradition or religious group or community of believers, whose congregations and members are called by the same denominational name in different areas.

Each group regard themselves as one autonomous Christian church distinct from other denominations, churches and traditions by virtue of having similar ecclesiastical traditions and beliefs.

How is this possible? Satan is **the** master counterfeiter!

2 Corinthians 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Satan the Devil has indeed deceived the whole world in every aspect of life, and especially in the relationship of human beings to God.

The Devil does not appear with horns and a tail. Both he and his myriad of fallen angels can and do present themselves in many most attractive forms.

In the day that Satan was created his name was Lucifer, the 'lightbringer', the morning 'star'. He was a very beautiful being covered in sparkling jewels. In this passage in Ezekiel his origins are given as if the 'King of Tyrus', but this description cannot apply to a mere man.

Ezekiel 28:11 Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. 13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. 14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. 16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.

The Apostle Peter warns Christians to be wary and vigilant concerning Satan and his wiles

1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

If anyone saw a lion running towards them, they would run from the terrifying sight, and the possibility of being torn to shreds. That is not how Satan the Devil appears to humans. He appears as an angel of light.

In Isaiah 14, we get a glimpse of what turned Lucifer into Satan the Adversary of all who would follow Christ in honesty and truth. God created Lucifer with enormous power and capacity, but this led to pride, and to think that he was greater than God Himself, so he tried to attack God.

Isaiah 14:12 How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 13 For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: 14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High. 15 Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit.

God will cause Satan to come to an end of his power over humankind, but until that time, God is using him to forward and execute His Glorious Plan.

The Devil has very cleverly got the majority of people in the world believing that he does not exist, how clever is that? The Devil also has a high proportion of human beings believing that God does not exist either!

Jeremiah 14:14 Then the Lord said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

When God leads us in our study of the Scriptures, it becomes clear that billions of people who think they are Christians are to one degree or another, deceived. In a way this is horrifying, but it is important for the 'called', His ecclesia, to recognise that God actively allows this situation to exist.

We do not use the word 'church' in these notes, as the origin of the word is 'Circe' a pagan god, which also gives rise to the Scottish word Kirk.

There is also such a thing as 'selective' deafness and blindness. Many religious denominations choose parts of the Bible to believe and to quote to others, while leaving well alone other verses or section which do not support their ideas or teachings.

The ministers of one church which insist on obedience to the Mosaic Laws by their adherents, were adept at avoiding the book of Galatians for instance, which talks about Christians being no longer under the schoolmaster of that Code.

This organisation, and others, also teach that their members must 'tithe' to the 'Work', or they would be guilty of robbing God. The truth of God's Word is that tithing was only to be handled by the Levitical Priesthood, and the tithes were devoted to the provisioning and maintenance of the running of the Temple for as long as the Temple existed. If there is no Temple and no Levites, then to tell people to tithe is to break the Law, and those who tithe to false ministers are also breaking the Law!

In the first chapter of the book of Job, it records conversations between God and Satan the Devil. It is worth taking the time to meditate on that first chapter of Job. From those inspired words in the Holy Bible we can learn a very important principle. God does allow Satan to deceive and afflict people, but strictly under His watchful eye and total control.

We also know from our studies of the Bible that God has 'blinded' and 'deafened' the vast majority of human beings on the planet, so that they cannot 'see' or 'hear' the truth unless God actively gives anyone that gift.

Matthew 15:12 Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? 13 But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. 14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

This is unfortunately true of religious leaders of every persuasion in this day and age. Jesus warns in His Holy Bible many times not to be taken in by 'false prophets'.

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets (or pastors or ministers etc.), which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening

wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

Sheep look so harmless, do they not? We cannot really know what goes on any organisation in secret, hidden from the 'flock'. Floods of evidence of evildoing by churchmen and women have come to light in recent years. Sometimes their activities are known to their colleagues and superiors, yet nothing is done to restrain them, sometimes over decades of depraved behaviour. And when their 'fruits' do come to light, they are soon forgotten in a constant stream of media reporting of horrors in this world.

Surely one might think that cannot apply to this pastor, he is such a nice man. Well, he may look fine in his 'sheep's clothing' he may carry and quote from a Bible, but is he a true minister of God?

Dr. Martin ends this lesson with great emphasis on the fact that a Christian needs to study the Bible very carefully. We need to be mindful of the knowledge of 'Progressive Revelation' in order to systematise our minds to understand exactly what applies to us today in this era, and what does not. He reminds us of the scripture we all know by heart:

2 Timothy 2:15 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing (partitioning) the word of truth.

The 'Truth' cannot be divided, certainly not into what is right and wrong or truth from error as there is no error, since the Truth IS the Truth. So what is meant? The word 'divided' is actually 'partitioning' or 'cutting' the truth into its dispensations, in order to be clear to whom, when, where, what, why, and how, and indeed whether different scriptures apply in our era.

Many are deceived into thinking that ALL the Bible applies to EVERYONE, always and for all time. This is just not so as we have seen.

Some truths applied specifically to Adam and Eve, some to Noah, some to Abraham, to Moses, to the Prophets, to Israelites, and these truths which were always truths have expanded over time. Truths have periods of being more relevant to some people than to others. The different dispensations cannot be absolutely 'systematised' or harmonised, as circumstances altered cases, as did the 'Progression of Revelation'. It is essential to understand the timing of different revelations.

You cannot make truth into error, but it is possible to be in error if it is misapplied or put to work inappropriately. We can review past truths, and glean more information. We can examine prophecy, history written by Christ in advance, to have an idea what is coming. We can be carefully systematic in our studies. We can be really dogmatic about absolute truths like the fruits of the Spirit, and avoid giving offence by being dogmatic inappropriately.

Truths that were emphatically 'physical' still have a physical aspect to them, but are now also spiritual and even more difficult or even impossible for the Christian to observe unless we have the help of the Holy Spirit.

Only with the ongoing help of our Elder Brother, and continually having the flow of the Holy Spirit renewed in our minds as we study can we grow in Grace and knowledge. Selah.