

# The Bible Must Be Allowed To Interpret Itself

Can the Bible be trusted? Does the Bible contradict itself? Is every word of the Bible inspired? Is there a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New? Will there be any new light? How can we know the truth? Are there principles of interpretation whereby we might rightly divide the Word of Truth?

## **Can the Bible be trusted?**

“I saw that God had especially guarded the Bible; yet when copies of it were few, learned men had in some instances changed the words, thinking that they were making it more plain, when in reality they were mystifying that which was plain, by causing it to lean to their established views, which were governed by tradition. But I saw that the Word of God, as a whole, is a perfect chain, one portion linking into and explaining another. True seekers for truth need not err; for not only is the Word of God plain and simple in declaring the way of life, but the Holy Spirit is given as a guide in understanding the way to life therein revealed.”  
Early Writings, 220.2

## **Does the Bible contradict itself?**

“The teaching of Christ in the gospel is in perfect harmony with the teaching of Christ through the prophets in the Old Testament. The prophets spoke through the messengers of Christ in the Old Testament as much as the apostles voiced His messages in the New Testament, and there is no contradiction between their teachings. But Satan has ever worked and is still working with all deceivableness of unrighteousness to make the Word of God of none effect. He seeks to make mysterious that which is simple and plain. He has had long experience in this work. He knows the character of God, and through his subtlety he has captivated the world. It was through making the word of God of none effect that sin was brought into the world.” 1 Selected Messages, 345.1

## **Is every word of the Bible inspired?**

Isaiah 55:8, 9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

“The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God’s condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education.” Faith I Live By, 10.4

“He [Satan] leads them to misconstrue strong expressions of Scripture, giving to the language the coloring of bitterness and malignity which pertains to himself, but not to our

Creator. As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" Ezekiel 33:11, Great Controversy, 535.2

### **Is there a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New?**

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

John 10:30 I and my Father are one.

John 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

### **Will there be any new light? Is new light something to be avoided and feared?**

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

"New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God." Counsels Sabbath School Work, 34

### **How can we know the truth?**

Those who find pleasure in unrighteousness inevitably suffer strong delusions that make them vulnerable to believing popular lies unto damnation. We must receive a love of the truth or we will be deceived.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

To know the truth, one must dig deep for treasures not found in a mere surface reading. Superficial reading produces superficial understanding. Without the initiative to ask and seek, can we expect to find and 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. 9) Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? 10) Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? 11) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

The Holy Spirit will reveal to us the unknown, deep things of God.

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.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. 10) But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

A willingness to do God's will precedes the ability to differentiate between God's doctrines and those of man.

John 7:17 If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

## Principles of Interpretation

What are some of the principles of interpretation essential to rightly divide the Word of Truth?

- 1) *The Bible is its own interpreter.*
- 2) *The Bible demands deep research.*
- 3) *The age-old misapprehension of God's attributes must be revealed.*
- 4) *Examples of mere manners of speech not intended to be taken literally*
- 5) *Examples of plain language that don't seem to harmonize with "God is love"*
- 6) *Examples of language that need to be interpreted with the understanding God's thoughts are not ours*
- 7) *Examples of God's accommodating, permissive will*
- 8) *Examples of apparently contradictory passages*

### **1) The Bible is its own interpreter.**

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:

"When you search the Scriptures with an earnest desire to learn the truth, God will breathe His Spirit into your heart and impress your mind with the light of His Word. The Bible is its own interpreter, one passage explaining another. By comparing scriptures referring to the same subjects, you will see beauty and harmony of which you have never dreamed. There is no other book whose perusal strengthens and enlarges, elevates and ennobles the mind, as does the perusal of this Book of books." 4 Testimonies, 499.1

### **2) The Bible demands deep research.**

"In order to understand the truth of God, there is need of deep research, that we may discover in the teachings of Christ new aspects of truth, and behold the exceeding breadth and compass of grand old truth, of which we have only a superficial knowledge. The searching of the Scriptures would reveal the harmony existing between the various parts of the Bible, and the bearing of one passage upon another. We do not perceive the meaning of the word of God without much study; but the reward of the study of the Bible is exceedingly precious to him who fears God and earnestly searches for truth as for hidden treasure. At the present day there are a large number in our churches who are not sufficiently interested in Bible study to seek to understand the mysteries of the truth. They do not go below the surface." Review & Herald, Nov. 15, 1892 par 3

### **3) The age-old misapprehension of God's attributes must be revealed.**

"The understanding of the people of God has been blinded, for Satan has misrepresented the character of God. Our good and gracious Lord has been presented before the people clothed in the attributes of Satan, and men and women who have been seeking for truth have so long regarded God in a false light that it is difficult to dispel the cloud that obscures His glory from their view." 1 Selected Messages, 355.1

"The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken." Desire Of Ages 22.1

### **4) Examples of mere manners of speech not intended to be taken literally**

If we were to overlook manners of speech, insisting on simplistic, literal Bible interpretation, what would we conclude from this passage?

Psalm 113:3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.

This seems to imply that the sun rises and goes down, yet we know that the sun does not move but it is the earth that rotates around the sun.

Gen 9:16 And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.

Does God need a reminder or is He simply using reassuring language to comfort our fears?

Gen 18:20, 21 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

Does God need to come down to see, or is He simply assuring us that He does a thorough job of investigating?

### **5) Examples of plain language that doesn't seem to harmonize with "God is love."**

Deuteronomy 28:63 And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. The Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and bring you to nought.

Psalm 59:8 But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

Matthew 15:22 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. 23) But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. 24) But He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 25) Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, help me. 26) But He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.

Romans 9:13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

#### God Creates Evil:

Isaiah 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

How did God create evil? By creating Lucifer perfect in the beginning, giving him freedom of choice, which is the foundation of God's love, which in turn is the foundation of God's laws.

Ezekiel 28:15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

#### God Creates Darkness:

Isaiah 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things.

We read that God created darkness and evil, but,

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

1 John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.

#### **6) Examples of language that need to be interpreted with the understanding God's thoughts are not ours**

##### God Repents:

Genesis 6:7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them.

Repentance is sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. Is God's repentance the same as ours?

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?

"It is stated in the Scriptures that God repented that He had done so much for man, when only ingratitude and disobedience were the return for all His mercies. Here the Lord speaks after the manner of men, that finite man may understand Him." Signs of the Times, Dec. 9, 1880 par 8

"God's repentance is not like man's repentance. 'The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for He is not a man, that He should repent.' Man's repentance implies a change of mind. God's repentance implies a change of circumstances and relations." Conflict & Courage, 157.3

Genesis 6:6 And it repented the LORD that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart.

We must conclude then that God's repentance and man's repentance are not the same. It continues on to describe God's repentance as grieving Him in His heart. Is He then grieved because of His sin or grieved because of our sin?

Hosea 11:8 speaks of His repenting regarding Ephraim whose end will be as those cities that were destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah. It sorrowed in His heart that He had to give them up.

Hosea 11:8 How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.

**God Is Jealous:**

Exodus 20:3, 5 Thou shalt have no other gods before me....for I am a jealous God.

**Is God's jealousy the same as ours? Hosea tells us that He is jealous for our salvation.**

Hosea 13:4 Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.

**God Tempts:**

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am.

**James clearly tells us that God does not tempt.**

James 1:13-15 Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

**James goes on to warn us regarding where temptation, sin and death originate. Only good comes from God.**

James 1:16 Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17) Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

**Paul states the same thing:**

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Trials are permitted to come upon the chosen people of God. The expression is used, 'God tempted Abraham'; 'God tempted the children of Israel.' This means that the Lord permitted Satan to tempt them in order that their faith might be found unto honor and glory when the judgment shall sit, and when every man shall be judged according to the deeds done in the body. God knows every heart, every motive, every thought in the heart of man; but He permits Satan to try, and tempt, and test His believing ones in order that their trust and confidence in God may be revealed. In the trial, if true to God, they reveal the fact that they render obedience to His written word." 13 Manuscript Release, 361.1

"What is temptation? It is the means by which those who claim to be the children of God are tested and tried. We read that 'God tempted Abraham,' that He tempted the children of

Israel. This means that He permitted circumstances to occur to test their faith, and lead them to look to Him for help.” Mount of Blessings, 116.2

**If God’s ways are not our ways, are God’s ways ever Satan’s ways?**

1 John 3:8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

“It is Satan's constant effort to misrepresent the character of God, the nature of sin, and the real issues at stake in the great controversy. His sophistry lessens the obligation of the divine law and gives men license to sin. At the same time he causes them to cherish false conceptions of God so that they regard Him with fear and hate rather than with love. The cruelty inherent in his own character is attributed to the Creator; it is embodied in systems of religion and expressed in modes of worship.” Great Controversy, 569

**James tells us that God’s wrath is not the same as man’s wrath.**

James 1:20 For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.

### **7) Examples of God’s accommodating, permissive will.**

God allows us to choose, warns us of the results, yet condescends to guide us as much as we allow within the lower standards we have chosen. Bible language even credits God for that which He allows, though in fact He is only accommodating our choice to minimize harm as much as possible.

Deuteronomy 24:1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

It would appear in Deuteronomy 24 God approves divorce, yet Jesus revealed God’s perfect will “from the beginning.” We see here God, in order to protect, accommodates but does not approve man’s lower standard of marriage. Jesus revealed the higher standard, God’s perfect will.

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.

Matthew 19:7 They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? 8) He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

In this next example we find the recurring pattern again; Man chooses a lower standard and God accommodates, though not without warnings. The Lord allowed Israel to reject prophetic direction and choose a lower standard of government, a monarchy. Like other nations they desired the protection of a king over them to fight their enemies.

1 Samuel 8:4 Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, 5) And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 6) But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 7) And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

1 Samuel 8:19 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; 20) That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.

When they ultimately rejected His leading through a prophet, God accommodated, carefully directing Samuel to anoint Saul, then a humble strapping young man, to whom Samuel said God would send His Spirit in an effort to bless Israel.

1 Samuel 10:6 And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.

1 Samuel 10:24 And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king.

Some might argue that God was not choosing the best He could find.

Hosea 13:11 I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath.

If God's ways are not our ways, what is God's way of "anger" here? Strong's concordance includes "forebearing" and "long-suffering" in the original Hebrew word used in Hosea 13:11. He would have preferred to be their king because He alone could save them, (See Hosea 13: 4, 10)

Hosea 13:9 tells us that Israel has destroyed itself.

Hosea 13:9 O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help.

Could this be because she exercised her free will, yet by making wrong choices suffered the consequences?

Hosea 13:12 The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is hid.

Hosea 4:17 tells us that,

Hosea 4: 17 Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.

Israel destroyed themselves by being joined to their idolatrous sins. God respectfully honored their choice and departed, leaving them without protection.

Hosea 9:12 Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

Proverbs 26:2 reveals to us that the curse will not come unless there is a cause. Is the curse an arbitrary decision by God or are there simply consequences to sin as effect follows?

Proverbs 26:2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come.

Galatians 6:7 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

### **8) Examples of apparently contradictory passages.**

Deuteronomy 28:63 And it shall come to pass, that as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. The Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and bring you to nought



Ezekiel 33:11 Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

These next verses present an example of how Bible language credits God with direct initiative, when on deeper investigation it can be seen that He simply allowed events to unfold. Here we read that God slew King Saul.

1 Chronicles 10:13 So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; 14) And enquired not of the LORD: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

In this account we see that Saul took his own life.

1 Chronicles 10:2 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3) And the battle went sore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. 4) Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

And in yet another account it states the Philistines slew Saul.

2 Samuel 21:12 And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabeshgilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa:

Which one are we to believe? On close consideration we find a perspective that renders all three accounts correct. God respected the choices of all parties. In his disobedience, Saul had departed from God, forfeiting God's protective care. The immediate threat of a tortured death provoked Saul to kill himself rather than fall into the hands of the Philistines.

In this next example, we're told that God moved, (persuaded, stirred up, provoked) David to number Israel:

2 Samuel 24:1 And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah. 2) For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beersheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people.

Why did David desire to number the people? Trusting in the arms of flesh, he wanted to know how many valiant men there were in Israel.

2 Samuel 24:9 And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

David admits to sinning in his numbering the people.

2 Samuel 24:10 And David's heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the LORD, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

He understood that his dependence should have been on the Lord and not on how many soldiers he had. Did God really provoke David to sin?

In this next account we read that Satan provoked (enticed, moved) David to number Israel:

1 Chronicles 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel. 2) And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know it.

How can we reconcile these two accounts? Each explicitly states who moved David to number Israel, one crediting God, the other Satan! Can both be true? Yes, but only with this insight. The Bible credits God with that which He allows, or does not prevent. Satan tempted the proud David to think that he had been successful without the Lord's involvement, provoking him to number the valiant men in Israel.

Next, we'll read that God sends strong delusions. What does the Scriptures mean when it states that "God sends?"

2 Thessalonians 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12) That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

"As they reject the teachings of His word, God withdraws His Spirit and leaves them to the deceptions which they love." Great Controversy, 431.1

"To the same degree that the penitent and obedient are shielded by God's love, the impenitent and disobedient will be left to the result of their own ignorance and hardness of heart, because they receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved." 1 Selected Messages, 313.2

In this next example, we read that God sends a lying spirit.

2 Chronicles 18:19 And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner. 20) Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? 21) And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so. 22) Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

Does God live by double standards, lying while commanding us not to? The scripture says that it is impossible for God to lie.

Hebrews 6:18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:

Titus 1: 2 In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

The credibility of Scripture demands these statements be reconciled. How would you defend the God who cannot lie but tells a lying spirit to go into the mouths of forty false prophets? Are we to believe that God initiated that lying spirit or honored the God-given right of Satan's government to send his spirit into the mouths of those who had rejected God's governing spirit. Again we see the liberty with which God lives and breaths extended to every creature.

Next we'll consider how it could be said that God sends an evil spirit which causes Saul to attempt to kill David.

1 Samuel 16:14 But the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD troubled him. . . 15) And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. . . 23) And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

1 Samuel 19:9 And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. 10) And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence, and he smote the javelin into the wall: and David fled, and escaped that night.

1 Samuel 16:14 states that the "Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul." But why? Is not God simply honoring Saul's choice since Saul had "turned back from following" the Lord? Imagine God's anointing the faithful David to be king then sending an evil spirit to kill him first! If we are to lead others to believe the Word of God, we have no recourse but to resolve utter perplexities by teaching correct principles of Bible interpretation, one of which reveals the great respect God has for the freedoms of choice He irrevocably extended. Yes, He extended the freedom, so yes He is credited for honoring it, often with language the superficial reader misconstrues.

1 Samuel 15:11 It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night.

**God sends fiery serpents.**

Numbers 21:6 And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.

"Moses faithfully set before the people their great sin. It was God's power alone that had preserved them in 'that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water.' Deuteronomy 8:15. Every day of their travels they had been kept by a miracle of divine mercy. . .

"Because they had been shielded by divine power they had not realized the countless dangers by which they were continually surrounded. In their ingratitude and unbelief they had anticipated death, and now the Lord permitted death to come upon them. The poisonous serpents that infested the wilderness were called fiery serpents, on account of the terrible effects produced by their sting, it causing violent inflammation and speedy death. As the protecting hand of God was removed from Israel, great numbers of the people were attacked by these venomous creatures." Patriarchs & Prophets, 429.1

**God hardens Pharaoh's heart.**

Exodus 4:21 And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. 22) And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn: 23) And I say unto thee, Let my son

go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn.

**Pharaoh's response was,**

Exodus 5:2 And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go.

**Exodus 7:3-5 God hardens Pharaoh's heart, multiplies His signs in all the land that He might free Israel and show the Egyptians that He is God.**

Exodus 7:3 And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. 4) But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. 5) And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them.

**Joshua 11:20 The Lord hardened the Egyptians' hearts, that He might destroy them.**

Joshua 11:20 For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that He might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

**Exodus 9:13-16 God says, "And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power."**

Exodus 9:13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me. 14) For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth. 15) For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth. 16) And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

**Are we to believe that God intended to harden Pharaoh's heart so that He could slay his first born and destroy the Egyptians in order to reveal to all generations His irresistible, dominating power to destroy? Would He raise Pharaoh up for that very reason? Does God need to show His power? That's a no brainer!**

**Which sounds more credible, that or this? God, realizing the natural effects that would follow Pharaoh's rebellion, in mercy immediately warned him regarding the death of his first born, hoping it would soften his heart.**

**Pharaoh hardens his own heart.**

Exodus 9:34 And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.

**It is the cherishing of sin that hardens the heart.**

Hebrew 3:7 Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear His voice, 8) Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: 9) When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. 10) Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. . . 12) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of

unbelief, in departing from the living God. 13) But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Romans 2:4-6 Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

Matthew 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

“We are told that the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. The repeated refusals of the king to hear the word of the Lord, called forth more direct, more urgent and forcible messages. At each rejection of light, the Lord manifested a more marked display of His power; but the king's obstinacy increased with every new evidence of the power and majesty of the God of heaven, until the last arrow of mercy was exhausted from the divine quiver. Then the man was utterly hardened by his own persistent resistance. Pharaoh sowed obstinacy, and he reaped a harvest of the same in his character. The Lord could do nothing more to convince him, for he was barricaded in obstinacy and prejudice, where the Holy Spirit could not find access to his heart. Pharaoh was given up to his own unbelief and hardness of heart.” Review & Herald, Feb 17, 1891.1

#### **God slew the first born of Egypt.**

Exodus 12:12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

Notice the judgments are against the gods of Egypt. Would they save the Egyptians who had put their trust in them? This is how God demonstrated His power. It was not the power to destroy but to save. God desires for all to recognize the true God, the only one who can save. Will the real God please stand up!

#### **The destroyer smites the first born.**

Exodus 12:23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

#### **Evil angels smite the first born.**

Psalms 78:49 He cast upon them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them. 50) He made a way to His anger; He spared not

their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; 51) And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

**The servant of the Lord also records how the firstborn died.**

“...Removing His restraining power, He gave the king into the hands of the worst of all tyrants,—self.” *Review & Herald*, July 27, 1897

“But no dwelling of Israel was visited by the death-dealing angel. The sign of blood--the sign of a Saviour's protection--was on their doors, and the destroyer entered not. At midnight ‘there was a great cry in Egypt: for there was not a house where there was not one dead. All the first-born in the land, ‘from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle’ had been smitten by the destroyer.” *Patriarch's & Prophets*, 279. 3, 4

**Who was this “death dealing angel?”**

“Angels do not come to the earth to denounce and to destroy, to rule and to exact homage, but are messengers of mercy to cooperate with the Captain of the Lord's host, to cooperate with the human agents who shall go forth to seek and save the lost sheep. Angels are commanded to encamp round about those who fear and love God.” *Lift Him Up*, 207.3

**However, here is an example of a seeming contradiction in the following quote.**

“A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits.” *Great Controversy*, 614.2

**A text without its context is a pretext. If we return back to GC 614 and read the context, the superficial reading and misunderstanding of that passage will be correctly understood to be in harmony with what we have been learning.**

**God has done all that He can do to save, but when man hardens his heart in rebellion, committing the unpardonable sin, God leaves him to his choice, removing His protection and permits Satan to control.**

“When He leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected His mercy, despised His love, and trampled upon His law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.

“A single angel destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians and filled the land with mourning. When David offended against God by numbering the people, one angel caused that terrible destruction by which his sin was punished. The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits. There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere.”  
Great Controversy, 614

Notice the phrases: “The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed,” “Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent,” . . . “the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn,” “Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one,” “Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble.” “As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose.” . . . “The same destructive power exercised by holy angels when God commands, will be exercised by evil angels when He permits.” “There are forces now ready, and only waiting the divine permission, to spread desolation everywhere,”

In other words, when God commands the holy angels to let go and the restraint is removed, evil angels are now permitted to do the work of destruction.

The story of Job is the clearest example of this principle that God takes credit for that which He allows. Satan claims the only reason Job serves Him is because God has prospered him and put a hedge of protection about him. Satan challenges God to afflict Job suggesting that Job will turn from God. Job represents the remnant church of God who fear God, shun evil by keeping His commandments and glorify Him thus vindicating Him from the original accusations of Satan.

Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Next we have a clear statement of God giving permission to Satan, although limited.

Job 1:12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

Then the plagues begin. In this story we will find four different people crediting to God the afflictions of Job.

1. Satan
2. the servant
3. Job
4. God

Satan credits God.

Job 1:11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

Job 2:4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. 5) But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

The servant credits God.

Job 1:16 The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them;

### Job credits God.

Job 1:21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

Job 2:9 Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.  
10) But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

### The Lord Himself takes the credit.

Job 2:3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

### The truth is revealed.

Job 2:6, 7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

"It was generally believed by the Jews that sin is punished in this life. Every affliction was regarded as the penalty of some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. It is true that all suffering results from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted. Satan, the author of sin and all its results, had led men to look upon disease and death as proceeding from God,—as punishment arbitrarily inflicted on account of sin.

"Thus the way was prepared for the Jews to reject Jesus. He who 'hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows' was looked upon by the Jews as 'stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted': and they hid their faces from Him." Isaiah. 53:4, 3

"God had given a lesson designed to prevent this. The history of Job had shown that suffering is inflicted by Satan, and is overruled by God for purposes of mercy. But Israel did not understand the lesson. The same error for which God had reproved the friends of Job was repeated by the Jews in their rejection of Christ." Desire Of Ages, 471

"The visible and the invisible world are in close contact. Could the veil be lifted, we would see evil angels pressing their darkness around us, and working with all their power to deceive and destroy." Review & Herald, June 27, 1882 par 26

Old lies die hard. Tragically some believe what the Bible says is more sacred than what it is saying. They stop short of wrestling with perplexing Bible language that turns the honest in heart away from the world's only Savior, while a revelation of the choice-honoring principles governing God's responses to the government of Satan could renew their trust in both the Bible and the God of the Bible. Sadly we read, "At the present day there are a large number in our churches who are not sufficiently interested in Bible study to seek to understand the mysteries of the truth. They do not go below the surface." Review & Herald, Nov. 15, 1892 par 3



What are we to do with our discovery in this study that the God who cannot lie takes credit for lying, for the actions of murderous evil spirits, and for deadly plagues? Principles of Bible interpretation emerge from the Bible itself. With deep study the Bible shines in the context of God's allowing the destroyer to rightfully rule those who by rejecting God's government and His laws place themselves under Satanic dominion instead. How long dare we reinforce pagan views projected by Satan of an angry God that must be appeased, without seriously studying how God's "anger" differs from ours. Dare we attempt to persuade the rational with irrationality that cannot withstand close scrutiny? Christian's are called to let their light shine, rightly dividing the word of truth while incorporating the principles of God's perfect will in their own characters.

Those lacking love for the wicked are content to imagine, as did the followers of Nimrod, that they are under the protection of the mightiest hunter/God, who will destroy their enemies to protect their peace, then all will be well. Little do they understand how close they are to attempting to rebuild the tower of Babel, confusing raw Bible language with truth while driving others from God, some to atheism, some to a Laodicean defense of the love of God by dismissing their misapprehensions of God as divine mysteries not to be understood.

*"The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yes, millions, of skeptics and infidels."*  
Great Controversy, 536.2

*"Do you ask, What shall I do to be saved? You must lay your preconceived opinions, your hereditary and cultivated ideas, at the door of investigation. If you search the Scriptures to vindicate your own opinions, you will never reach the truth. Search in order to learn what the Lord says. If conviction comes as you search, if you see that your cherished opinions are not in harmony with the truth, do not misinterpret the truth in order to suit your own belief, but accept the light given. Open mind and heart that you may behold wondrous things out of God's word."* Christ's Object Lessons, 112.3