

# How To Interpret The Bible

In this study we are going to look at some Bible passages and discover upon deeper examination that their meanings differ from what a mere surface reading suggests. We will find that the Bible will often say something in one place that doesn't seem to match the thoughts found in another place. Does the Bible contradict itself? Can it be trusted? As we learn to allow scripture to interpret itself we will find that the Bible is harmonious and can indeed be trusted. Do you find a difference between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament? Is it true that God never changes but is the same yesterday, today and always? Are there principles of interpretation that we need to learn in order to "rightly divide the Word of Truth?" (2Timothy 2:15) Let's take a closer look.

## **Satan is a liar and a murderer from the beginning:**

John 8:44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

## **Satan has deceived the whole world:**

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.

We must pray for the Holy Spirit to guide if we would have true understanding. Sin began through Satan's subtleties in making the Word of God of none effect. He subtly projects his own character traits to the Creator and it results in distrust of God. When we find strong language that does not seem to describe loving behavior, we must take a deeper look to unveil the truth.

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

To know the truth, one must dig deep for the treasures are not found in a mere surface reading. A superficial reading produces a superficial understanding.

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 guide us into all truth:**

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.

## **Spiritual things are spiritually discerned:**

1Corinthians 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.

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.

### **If we take pleasure in unrighteousness, we'll be deceived and lost:**

2Thessalonians 2:9 Even him, [the antichrist] whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10) And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 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.

### **Will there be any new light?**

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

## **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. *Does the passage violate freewill?*
4. *Does the passage violate cause and effect?*
5. *Is it a good gift or a bad gift?*
6. *God takes credit for that which He allows.*
7. *The age-old deception of God's attributes must be revealed.*
8. *Examples of mere manners of speech not intended to be taken literally*
9. *Examples of language that need to be interpreted with the understanding God's thoughts are not ours*
10. *Examples of God's accommodating, permissive will*
11. *Examples of apparently contradictory passages*

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

Even though men who interpret the Bibles may have their preconceived distinct views regarding its interpretation, yet God has guarded His word. The great truths of the Bible may be found by comparing scripture with scripture.

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 we compare Scripture with Scripture, we will find the Bible is perfectly harmonious. It will interpret itself.

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

We are told that the treasures of the Word of God are not merely on the surface. We must dig as for hidden treasure.

Matthew 13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

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

Acts 17:11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

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

### **3) Does the passage violate freewill?**

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Joshua 24:15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

### **4) Does the passage violate cause and effect?**

Galatians 6:5 Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

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

(In other words, just as sure as a bird wanders and just as sure as the swallow flies, so also if there is no cause there will be no curse.)

### **5) Is it a good gift or a bad gift?**

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.

### **6) God takes credit for that which He allows.**

#### **The Story of Job**

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.

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 twice credits God with afflicting Job.**

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.

Following, 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.

- **The servant credits God for afflicting Job.**

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, not once but twice.**

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, Satan is the destroyer.**

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.

## **The story of the plagues of Egypt.**

- **God slew the firstborn 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. 13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, [spare & protect] and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. 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 [allow] the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

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

In the beginning Satan deceived Eve regarding the character of God. He subtly suggested to her that God had lied to her desiring to be self-serving and therefore she could not trust Him.

Genesis 3:4 And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: 5) For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Not only did Satan misrepresent God, but the very nature of sin caused Adam and Eve to be ashamed and fearful of God.

Genesis 3:9 And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? 10) And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

Life eternal comes from knowing God, having entered into an intimate relationship with Him.

John 17:3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Not only are we deceived by Satan, but sin and shame also blinds us from understanding the character of God and His gospel.

2Corinthians 4:3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 4) In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The lack of the glorious gospel of Christ will destroy us.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

What was this lack of knowledge?

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

The glory or character of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

Habakkuk 2:14 For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 60:1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. 2) For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee.

## **8) 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 the following verses?

### **• Does the sun literally rise and set?**

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

- **Does God need to be reminded of His promises?**

Genesis 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 to come down to earth to verify what is happening?**

Does God need to come down to earth to verify what is happening here or is He simply assuring us that He does a thorough job of investigating?

Genesis 18:20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; 21) 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.

- **Will God rejoice to destroy Israel?**

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.

- **Will God laugh at the heathen?**

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

- **Would God call any of His human family dogs?**

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.

- **Does God ever hate anyone?**

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

- **Is God the originator of 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.

- **Did God create 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!

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

**9) 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?

We must conclude then that God's repentance and man's repentance are not the same. In the following verse it describes God's repentance as grieving Him in His heart. Is He then grieved because of His sin or grieved because of our sin?

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

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 Him in His heart that He had to give them up to destruction.

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, an act of selflessness and not selfishness.

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, neither is He responsible for lust, sin or death.

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 warns not to err and that 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.

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

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.

1John 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.

• **Is God's wrath the same as ours?**

Satan has cleverly projected his own character traits to God and made Him to appear as a tyrant. Many fear God instead of loving Him for who He really is.

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

**10) 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 24:1 that 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 and divorce. 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.

• **God Chooses Saul To Be The First King Of Israel:**

God chose Saul to be the first king of Israel.

1Samuel 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.

Here we find that the Lord allowed Israel to choose to have a king over them and to fight their enemies like all the other nations.

1Samuel 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.

In 1Samuel 8:8-18 the Lord had previously warned His people through Samuel of the consequences of their choice. But the people are determined in their choice.

1Samuel 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.

God states that He gave them a king in His anger,

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

He would have preferred to be their king because He alone could save them.

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.

Hosea 13:10 I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

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 making the wrong choice and therefore had to suffer the consequences?

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

Hosea 4:17 tells us that "Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone."

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

Hosea helps us understand how they destroyed themselves.

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!

### **11) Examples of apparently contradictory passages:**

#### **• God Rejoices to Destroy**

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?

#### • God Slew Saul

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.

1Chronicles 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 following account we see that Saul took his own life.

1Chronicles 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.

2Samuel 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.

#### • God Provoked David to Sin

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

2Samuel 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 prepared for battle.

2Samuel 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.

2Samuel 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:

1Chronicles 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.

- **God sends strong delusions.**

What does the Scriptures mean when it states that, "God sends?"

2Thessalonians 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. 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.

- **God sends a lying spirit.**

2Chronicles 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.

• **God sends an evil spirit which causes Saul to attempt to kill David.**

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 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.

1Samuel 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.

Properly understood, the fiery serpents were already there and God was able to protect them while they were in obedience to Him.

Deuteronomy 8:15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

• **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.

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. Does He desire that the Egyptians recognize that He can destroy or save them?

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.

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! The truth is that God needs to prove that He is the only one who can save!

Which sounds more credible, God hardened Pharaoh's heart arbitrarily or, 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?

We find that Pharaoh hardened 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 Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5) 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; 6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds.

• **God states He will slay 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 their gods whom they served 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!

Jeremiah 46:25 The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith; Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him:

Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time: for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. 36) For the LORD shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants, when He seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. 37) And He shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, 38) Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. 39) See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.

Isaiah 42:17 They shall be turned back, they shall be greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images, that say to the molten images, Ye are our gods.

God destroys by allowing the destroyer to smite the first born.

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. 13) And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over [spare and protect] you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

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 [allow] the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

Evil angels smote the first born. Did God send evil angels to do His bidding or, did He allow them to do what their leader Satan delights in—destroying man?

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:

## **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.

1Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3) And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4) And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

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.

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.

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