

Shaqah

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ. Colossians 2:8

Step Into the Springs!

Some of you may remember a very long time ago, I promised to publish a book about the Sabbath. Nothing in my life has made James 4:13-15 clearer to me than this book, because there we are instructed, we should not say tomorrow we will do this or that, but "...if the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." So, after seeing several dates for this book's publication come and go without being able to get it done, the last promise I made about this book was the fact we would publish it as the Lord willed. Well, I am pleased to announce that day is upon us!

The book's title is, *A Sabbath By Design*, and Lord willing, it will be released in mid-June! This book is a straight forward Biblical look at the issue of the Sabbath. In it, you will find teaching on how the Sabbath was created, why the Sabbath is important to all true believers, what it means to keep it holy, and much, much more! If you're interested in knowing the ways of God deeper in your life, you are going to want a copy of *A Sabbath By Design*!

How can I get a copy of this new book you ask? The answer to that is easy! Copies of *A Sabbath By Design* are free for the asking, and some of you will not even have to ask. As promised, we will mail a free copy of *A Sabbath By Design* to each of you who are regular mail subscribers to Shaqah. So, all of you should look for the book to arrive in your mailbox come mid-June! We would also like to send copies to all of our e-mail subscribers, but there is a catch. Because you are e-mail subscribers, we don't necessarily have your current mailing address. Due to this, we will not be automatically sending the book to e-subscribers unless you write or e-mail to your current mailing address. When you let us know you would like your copy *By Design*. Your copies will be wait-e-mail us today!

Others who will receive copies of *A Sabbath By Design* on or around the release date will be all those who have pre-ordered the book through our online Resource Shop. This, in fact, is the best way for everyone to get their free copy. Just go to www.livingspringsinstitute.org and click on the "Resource Shop" button. All you need to do is check the order box for *A Sabbath By Design* and type your mailing information into the form provided!

You can also get your free copy of *A Sabbath By Design* by writing to us at Living Springs Institute, P.O. Box 271, Loveland, CO 80539. Just tell us you would like a copy of *A Sabbath By Design*, and be sure to give us your mailing address!

One other point I should make, is the fact that giving us your name and mailing address will not put you on any mailing list! Living Springs Inc. does not share your personal information with any other organization(s), and we do not send out unsolicited mail. That is why you need to tell us you want a copy of *A Sabbath By Design*. We are happy to send you a free subscription to Shaqah or any other resource we offer, but we will only send you what you request.

Don't forget, subscriptions to this publication (Shaqah), as well as *A Sabbath By Design*, are free for the asking. So, don't hesitate to order yours today; and if you would like extra copies of *A Sabbath By Design* to give out to others, please let us know. If you are using our online order form, please make your request for extra copies in the comment box at the end of the order form.

We at Living Springs Institute are very excited to offer *A Sabbath By Design*, and we hope it's only the first of many published works God blesses us with the privilege to produce. We greatly appreciate all your prayers and support of this ministry, and we hope the work we are doing is a blessing to you. May God bless you each one; and as always, we hope you enjoy this issue of Shaqah!



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Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip Busby

As we go into this segment of “Following the Biblical Stream,” I want to start by looking again at verse 5 of chapter 6. In verse 5, we are told two separate elements. The first is the fact man’s wickedness was great in the earth. This tells us the state man had come to, and this alone is what we often think is what causes God to step in and strike us dead. However, that is not the nature of God. God is not shallow in his thoughts and determination. God does not simply look at where we are and determine what we deserve. God is in the business of saving souls from this earth, and understanding the second element of verse 5 is very important to understanding the true nature of God!

The heart of the second part of the statement is about man’s thoughts: which is the process which leads us to take action, and truly defines who we are before God. As we grow in righteousness, we should have a better and better understanding of what good actions look like. This will help us teach others, but we cannot ultimately judge others because we never really know why people act the way they do. God, on the other hand, does! (I Sam. 16:7) There was no doubt that man’s actions were wicked, but even under those circumstances there remains the question of why? Now, sin is destructive because it’s going against the way God created us to live, and ignorance is no excuse; because as we walk in this time and place, the destructive power of sin is a cause and effect thing. This is why God said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Learning the ways of righteousness is what we need to do if we are going to keep from destroying our lives with sin, and being removed from a world of sin is what we ultimately must have to keep all this world’s sin and all its consequences from negatively affecting our lives forever.

So, God looked down and saw man was wicked, but God also was/is interested in man’s thoughts because that is the indicator of hope! If man is sinning because of ignorance, then God is not going to strike him dead in judgment; God is going to reach down in mercy and pull us out of the miry clay. (Ps. 40:1-3, James 4:17) Here, God wants us to be clear on the fact, He does not make the determination of verse 6 simply on the basis that man was wicked in his actions, but on the basis of what hope there may be for redeeming man.

For that, God looked at every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart, and in doing so, found they were only evil continually. Now, there is a lot of information in God’s statement, so, let’s break it down a bit. Again, we are talking about man’s thoughts, but we are not talking about just any thought which passes through the mind; we are talking about the “...imagination of the thoughts...” This is a reference to the fact man can have a lot of things going on

in his head at any given moment. As we walk along, we think about things. We do this even if we don’t think we are doing it, that is why we are able to walk along. We are calculating where to put our next step, or, at the very least, the fact we are going to take one, which can get us into trouble if we are not calculating where to put it. We are often not only thinking and analyzing what we see, but things we see often remind us of things we have seen, done, or want/need to do. Thousands of things can enter our mind and be at least touched on in some way every minute, if not every second, but the imagination of our thoughts is not all these little pieces. The imagination of our thoughts are what we might call today, our hopes and dreams. They are those thoughts which ultimately lead to what we use our lives for, and how we hope to shape the world around us.

Whether it’s the little moment by moment thoughts or deep calculated thoughts which we choose to use as our guide, in the end, we all are walking a path of our more cumulative choosing. This doesn’t mean our lives are unfolding in the way we would like them to, but they are unfolding according to the choices we make and the effect those choices have. We may choose to rob a bank, so we can live off the money on a sunny beach in the Caribbean; but if we get caught, it’s more likely we will live a significant part of our lives in jail. That’s truth and consequences. The same can be true if we intend to live our lives in the way God has asked us to. Just because we intend to do right doesn’t mean we will live a comfortable life in a sin filled world. We may be persecuted greatly, and many believers have been. This is why God looks at the imaginations of the thoughts. There can be great wickedness in the world, but that does not mean everyone in it is desiring to be wicked. In fact, even trying to be righteous in a world full of sin can spark greater wickedness. There is no greater example of this than the Holocaust. Just as in Esther’s day, Hitler believed the Jews with their strange laws were a detriment to man’s accomplishments, and this is very true if man wants to accomplish something contrary to the ways of God! Being contrary to the things of God was precisely the imagination of Hitler’s thoughts, and great wickedness was unleashed on God’s people for standing in his way. Now, the fact true righteous action may cause others to take very unrighteous actions, will lead some people to conclude the proper thing to do is compromise their righteous beliefs. This is adopting the belief that keeping the peace is more important than true righteousness; and in doing this, we are changing the imagination of our own thoughts. Instead of being transformed by the renewing of our mind, we become conformed to this world. (Rom. 12:1-2)

FBS continued on pg 7

Defining Holiness Part III

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

This segment is part three of the answer to the question, "What is the difference between The Holy Ghost and holiness?"

Now, we do not have the space in this writing to go over all the details about what sin is, but one of the basic facts we need to understand is that sin is not just sin because God said so. Sin is sin because it's sin. What I mean by this is, many people think God just came up with these do's and don'ts for humans and anyone who does not agree with them and/or follow them is sinning. This is not the proper way to see the issue. Sin is about how we interact with God and others. "Free will" means freedom to do as we choose, but we sin when our choices are harmful to others. So, with freedom comes great responsibility, and this is why sin demands the ultimate punishment of death. This issue is easiest to see in its harshest forms. For instance, we can choose to kill another person. We have the free will to at least attempt such a thing, and many people have accomplished it, which proves the point about our freedom! However, is it right to murder another person just because you can? No! Why? Because that person has a free will just as we do, and that free will was given to them, by God, just as it was to us.

Another example is something we touched on earlier. Can we have physical relationships outside the bonds of marriage? Yes, but even in a modern world of devices and drugs meant to keep it from happening, people still conceive children. Is it right to kill the child just because you did not intend to give it life? No! That child deserves all the love and nurturing all children deserve! Children are people too, and one person does not have the right to use their freedom to squelch another. The people who chose to have a relationship, made a choice which greatly affects the life of another. Whether they want to or not, they have a responsibility to put aside what they may want to do with their time and care for the life they chose to bring into this world!

Simply put, it's not possible for everyone to have everything they want. Thus, there are natural rules which exist when it comes to interaction with others. This point should be obvious to us all, but what we often forget is that these rules are not just about the big obvious interactive offences like murder, they are also about small, not so direct things, like doing something which tempts others to do something wrong. This is why the knowledge of good and evil suddenly caused Adam and Eve to be concerned about being naked. Wrong is not just doing wrong, but also the failure to do right! That brings us to a discussion about righteousness.

Righteousness is a very hard thing to obtain and it takes a lot of effort on our part. For many, this is the reason they simply go back on their relationship with God or fall into a liberal, religious state of mind. (Hosea 4:15-19) Most people simply do not want to put forth the effort to be right in their actions; and if salvation is a free gift, many ask why should they care? The problem is that many people have went to church their entire lives or for many, many years and never been taught the basics of salvation. Far too many people believe salvation is something you receive by saying a sinner's prayer - or the like. People are also often told they are "born again" at this point. I like to call this theology "The magical ticket of salvation." Simply put, you are not saved until you are born again, and being born again has to do with receiving those new forms we have been talking about. So, again, we must die; and the hope we have for salvation from death is the opportunity to be, "born again." This is not a birth which is according to the will of man (like our first birth) but according to the will of God! (John 5:21-24)

Again, we are saved by the fact God, in His grace, still wants to have a relationship with us even though we are not perfect as He is perfect. This is why we say God forgives sin. God is willing to put the past behind us and walk with us in spite of our past failures. However, because God is Holy, and we walked away from the innocence we were created in, He cannot be close to us in the way He created us to originally be. This is why for the tabernacle, given to Israel in "The Law," God's presence rested on the mercy seat which was behind a thick veil which separated it from the rest of the tabernacle. The tabernacle itself was enclosed with a courtyard which had only one gate, and standing between the tabernacle and the gate were the brazen laver and the altar of gold. (Ex. 40) This entire structure was separated from the everyday lives of the Children of Israel by the priestly tribe of Levi encamping around it, and the tabernacle was separated from the world at large by the rest of Israel camping on all sides of the Levites. (Num. 2) God stands back from us to a great enough degree that we are not consumed by His Holy Presence. If He did not, we would be consumed, because the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23) By standing back, God is putting off the inevitable - so to speak - and allowing us to live our life span. This is why He did not kill Adam and Eve in the garden but only separated them from The Tree of Life. This means we will still die someday, but this is a problem God can work with if in our life span we choose to let Him. The bottom line is this, if God, through His grace, is willing to forgive our sin, and our sin will ultimately be dealt with by the death of our flesh,

then all that is needed to overcome the consequences of sin is for us to be born again! Jesus took care of that, and so we say the blood of Christ covers all sin! (I John 1:7)

The structure of The Tabernacle illustrates to us how necessary death is for those who want to be close to God. God simply cannot be with us in the way He wants to while we are here in this flesh. (Rom. 3:20-26) These kinds of illustrations are why all true believers must study the law to gain understanding. Being Jewish has a lot to do with illustrating the law through acting these illustrations out, but the fact the temple does not currently exist means many illustrations are not currently being preformed for both the Jew and the non-Jew to see. So, now more than ever it is important that we study and know the scriptures for ourselves, especially the first five books of the Old Testament. This should make another part of Revelation understandable to us. The Word of God is the little book John is instructed in Revelation to take and eat. It was sweet as honey in his mouth but made his stomach bitter. (Rev. 10) The last Jewish temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. It would become the job of those who believed in God to take the written Word into all the world at all costs! (Rev. 20:4) Why? Because "...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

The more we can rebuild what God laid out in the law, inside our head, the clearer it becomes that God is not trying to hide from us. He is trying to be with us! Our sin is holding our relationship back, but that does not stop God's desire to be with us; thus, He offers to every man a measure of faith. Faith does not stop us from dying someday, but through Jesus, the ultimate opportunity has been opened to us through the truth of death. Death not only takes away sin but it envelops the consequences of it. Jesus' work pulls us out of the jaws of death, and in our new state we can, once again, be with God exactly the way He created us to be. The catch is that after death is removed from the equation, our new state will be permanent! (I Thess. 4:16-18)

At first glance, eternal life may sound like a good thing, but God did not provide eternal life just so we could all go on living. He only provides eternal life for those who desire to be free from sin: for those who desire to be with God in the way He created us to be. There is no point in providing new forms to those who only want to continue living a life of sin. In fact, that would be unrighteous because that would allow individuals to continue harming other individuals, which again, is why the wages of sin is death in the first place.

Holiness has to do with the fact our actions and choices, in the here and now, reveal what we really want! We were created to be freewilled beings. God will not force us to live forever with Him in a place where sin cannot be. So, the bottom line is, God will not rebirth any human who has not chosen for themselves that being with God, in an environment void of sin for all eternity, is what they want! Humans

cannot have an eternal relationship with God just because heaven sounds better than hell. To have a relationship with God, there must be a desire to be as God is. It's like the old saying, birds of a feather flock together! As individuals, we must desire holiness to obtain an eternal relationship with God. (Rev. 17:10-14)

Now, what is holiness? Actually, something very simple, but as I mentioned earlier, language tends to fail us. Look at the word "faith." The true definition of "faith" is a relationship with God. So, instead of "faith," why do we not simply say "relationship?" Because we need a name which denotes something more specific than just "a relationship." We need a name which tells us we are talking about a relationship with God! This is what the word "faith" is meant to be. Now, people have tried to distort or change the meaning over the years, and almost no one in today's world would tell you the definition is, a relationship with God. Today the English word "faith" is used to denote any number of religious beliefs, but that should not keep us from understanding the truth! (Hosea 4:6) As the word stands in scripture, "faith" means: a relationship only with The One True God, and that is what the word should mean to us!

This kind of weakness in language is exactly why it should not be important to us, as believers, to attempt to bring the Bible into more and more modern English phrasing. Instead, we should be looking to find what the words actually mean in spite of the distortions translation and weakening linguistics have already caused. This means, all believers should have a growing interest in learning ancient Hebrew; but even if you never learn the slightest bit of Hebrew, it should be important to us that we know the entire Word, not just pieces here and there. (II Tim. 3:16) The Bible does not contradict itself. If you think it does, then there is some part you are not understanding. We should spend our time seeking The Holy Ghost's guidance and understanding, not just the most watered down modern "translation" of The Word. The Holy Ghost's availability to teach us directly, no matter which language is our native tongue, is what God meant when He told Israel He would write His laws in the heart! (Jer. 31:33) This truth is amplified by seeing the fact that even many Jews were losing touch with Hebrew by the time The Holy Ghost was poured out; and all God's promises are first to Jerusalem, then unto all Judea, then Samaria, and on to even the uttermost parts of the world! (Acts 1:8, Gen. 12:3) With all that in mind, you can stop and take the time to read Acts chapter 2. What happens when a person is baptized in The Holy Ghost should make far more sense to you!

Weakness in language comes from weakness in human understanding. The more fleshly and one-sided we become, the more simplistic, primitive and literally two dimensional we become. This has gotten so bad, we almost do not speak a language which has the words or rules to form words we can use to understand many concepts. However, holiness, like the word faith, if put into context can show us the truth.

The word “holy,” simply means set apart. This is a concept which prevails in many religions, but not in a truthful or real way. Things can be designated as “holy,” but all that means, often times, is the item is only used for certain ceremonial purposes, or it’s looked at in high regard. When it comes to true biblical holiness, just like “faith,” we are talking about things which are not just set apart from other things but set apart specifically for God’s purposes. This means the item also needs to be purified. Then it may be used by God, and God will dictate how the thing is used. This is why the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, and all their elements were called “Holy.” God even told the children of Israel that those things which were touched by holy things became holy. (Ex. 29-30)

Things which are truly holy belong to God, and are to be used for His purposes. They are not to be mingled with the things of the world. This is why God said the children of Israel are holy. They, as a people, were to be set apart from all other people of the world. (Num. 23:8-10) This was so they could serve God’s purpose on this earth. Now this relates to them as a people, holding the oracles of God, which is an earthly service. (Rom. 3:1-2) In heaven, all people will be holy, which is a perfection the nation of Israel is meant to represent here on this earth. All Jews, as individuals, must still choose, as any human must choose, if they desire to be eternally holy!

Simply put, a desire to be holy is a desire to give our lives to God for His purposes. This is why Romans 6:19 refers to righteousness leading to holiness. Righteousness is being right in our actions, but holiness is about separating ourselves for the purposes of God. Many people often get the two confused, and that is a shame; because not understanding what holiness means causes people to miss the fact that desiring holiness is what makes us a true believer. When people do not understand a desire for holiness is what being a “Christian” really means, they miss the importance of seeking after righteousness. Seeking after righteousness is not something true believers do because they think it will earn them salvation. The Bible tells us our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6) Salvation must be a free gift. (Eph. 2:8-10) We could never hope to earn it, and just being a “good person” will never get us to heaven.

We should also understand the fact, just because people choose not to serve the Lord does not automatically mean they have completely failed when it comes to righteousness. All humans since Adam and Eve have had the knowledge of good and evil, and some people care very much about righteousness as it relates to human interaction. Now, we will need God’s help to ever get it truly right, but God’s help does not have to be important to us in order to obtain a fair amount of righteousness. This is why some true believers may not currently live as right as any number of nonbelievers around them. This truth is also why even many people claiming to be Christians think the golden rule is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you, when Jesus

clearly told us the golden rule is to love God with everything you have. Loving your neighbor as yourself is like the first, but it’s the silver rule not the golden one. (Matt. 22:35-40)

Righteousness is something we must learn to pay attention to, something we must care about, before we will truly begin to grow in it; and righteousness can be greatly affected by the kind of family we are raised in. The bottom line is that obtaining true righteousness is a long, hard road, one which we may or may not get very far along in our lifetime. What can be said with certainty is that no amount of it will make up for the mistakes we have already made and are making by currently not being perfect in righteousness. We must desire to be righteous because we love God and His ways. All this is why the Bible tells us God counts faith in place of righteousness. (Rom. 4:1-8)

Faith and righteousness can work hand in hand. Faith is a relationship with God which we are attempting to grow; but in order to draw closer and closer to God, we need righteousness. Thus, faith begets righteousness. What God is willing to look at in place of our being righteous is actually a process for gaining righteousness; and as faith pushes us to be righteous, it also examines whether we truly have a desire for holiness! (1 Pet. 1:5-9) In the same way God can forgive our past failures, He can forgive our current failures as we seek to grow in righteousness. This is why James 4:17 tells us simply, “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” This verse is talking to the one who is walking in faith. Those who do not care to walk in faith are what we call “dead in sin,” already. (1 Pet. 4:1-7) The path to salvation is by grace through faith, and this is why we are told that without faith it’s impossible to please God. He who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6) If we believe God is out there, we will find faith, but we must still understand that God does not simply reward us for finding faith. He rewards those who diligently seek Him.

To put it in the simplest terms I know how, let me say it this way, you can seek after righteousness without desiring holiness, but you cannot desire holiness without seeking righteousness. We do not even have to be desirous of God to put our spirit to work. This is not to say yielding to God is not the best way to do such a thing and the best way to grow in righteousness, it’s only to also point out, not everyone who claims to be, or even tries to be, “spiritual,” cares about having a relationship with God. Everyone has a spirit just as they have a mind and body. So, we must understand while Jesus’ work on the cross overcame death, hell, and the grave for all humanity, a desire for holiness is what separates the sheep from the goats! (Matt. 25:31-34)

Holiness is separating yourself unto the service of God and for His purposes. There is no way for one to do this who does not care about being right in their actions. Sinfulness is not in the plan of God, nor can it be. (James 1:13-15) Jesus

simply put it this way: you cannot serve two masters because you will either hate the one or love the other. (Matt. 6:24) It's just not possible to serve unrighteousness while at the same time serving the will of God. This is what holiness is about. We should not simply seek to be righteous for the sake of being a "good person." We should seek to be righteous first and foremost because we desire to draw closer to God. In doing this, we begin to separate ourselves out from the world and yield ourselves to the plan of God. In Biblical language, we should seek to be "holy"!

Now, this discussion brings us to another word which often is confused in doctrine, and that word is "sanctification." Sanctification is not a separate issue or thing from righteousness and holiness. It's simply what we have been talking about. Sanctification is a name for the process of attempting to be holy. Christians like to say things like, "I'm sanctified," but that is really a silly thing to say. Sanctification is the name for the process we are continuously in throughout this life, which leads to holiness. One of the reasons we use it is because obtaining full holiness while struggling daily with our sinful flesh is really not possible. Our flesh can never be truly holy and that is why it must die. This is why God describes sacrifices as a "sweet savour." (Ex. 29:18) The process of burning the flesh and blood of animals and plants upon fire, is symbolic of the dust to dust truth of our lives. (Gen. 3:19) Once the flesh is gone and the life of it poured out, (Gen. 9:4) sin is destroyed. (Rom. 6:5-7) The spirit and the mind are then freed to return to God, if that is what we have desired. This gives God an opportunity to make us truly holy so we can live with Him, and that is what God and every true believer hopes for.

Death, in other words, is the ultimate sanctification for our physical forms. This is why we celebrate the work of Christ through water baptism. Water baptism is not the sprinkling or pouring of water on someone's head. Biblical water baptism is a full emersion in a flowing body of water. This is why John the Baptist used the river Jordan. It is also intended to be done in a public place where all who care to take the time can see. Water baptism is a proclamation; and it celebrates the fact we believe, if we die in Christ, we will rise again just as He did, in a form which is holy! Going under the water is symbolic of going into the grave. The running water symbolizes our sin being washed away through the death of our flesh, and coming out of the water is symbolic of being resurrected just as Christ was resurrected! (I Cor. 15:42-45)

Again, death is ultimate sanctification for our physical forms; but what about our mind and spirit? They do not die and are not raised in a new form! This is why we are instructed to walk in newness of spirit. (Rom. 7:6) While we seek to be righteous in our actions, we must also work to sanctify our mind and spirit. As we do this, we will see the fruits of the spirit begin to emerge. Many people think when

the Bible speaks of the fruits of the spirit it's talking about The Holy Spirit; but while it's true that The Holy Ghost is here to develop those fruits in our lives, the fruits are of our spirit. Again, we have come to a subject which deserves its own book. The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. (Gal. 5:22-23) As we seek after righteousness, we will begin to be right in our actions; but as we seek to sanctify our mind and spirit, we will see the development of qualities which superseded just being right. These fruits make us more and more useful to the work of God, and this is important to the true believer. True believers in God desire to be used of God in the here and now as much as they can. They desire to know God and grow in faith as much as they can. If we truly desire to be holy, we are not going to wait until heaven to care about working for and knowing deeper the God who created us, and whom we are committing our lives to spend eternity with!

Simply put, holiness is the whole package God is looking for in man; and because no man is truly holy in the here and now (with the exception of Jesus, of course) only God can judge who is truly seeking after holiness. Man can only see the outward appearance of another man, but God can see the desires of the heart, in spite of how crude the outside way may be judged by other men. (I Sam. 16:7) This is why God tells us not to judge. (Luke 6:36-38) We can attempt to instruct to the best of our ability, but we should never judge, because we never know when we may be putting ourselves at odds with God, and we never want to do that!

Now, when it comes to the subject of righteousness, holiness, faith, sanctification and, of course, The Holy Ghost, the teaching can go on for many, many, pages; but hopefully, the pages we have gone through here are sufficient for the purpose of understanding the difference between The Holy Ghost and holiness. Just remember, God's Spirit is Holy. God does not need a process like sanctification, He has always been Holy; and this is why our spirit is simply our spirit, but God's Spirit is The Holy Ghost. Holiness is being separated out from others for the purpose of God, which requires pureness. We show we desire this by holding fast to the faith God has offered us. Through seeking righteousness, we can begin to sanctify every part of our being unto God. If this is what we desire to do, then we have chosen the ways of God, and what we cannot accomplish, God will complete; but make no mistake about it, there is no magical ticket of salvation. There is no formula which will get us into heaven. We either desire to be holy as God is Holy, or there is only death and then the eternal place God prepared for those who desired not to be separated for His purposes. (Isa. 5:14)

Questions submitted to the Institute, answered by Philip Busby.

FBS continued from pg 2

Now, when it comes to the time period of Noah, God does not just determine some imaginations of their thoughts were evil, but that “..every imagination..” was going in the wrong direction. This did not mean every thought was intended to be directly against God, but everything man intended to do with his life and world was taking man in an opposite direction from the plan of God. To make matters worse, these were not just the thoughts in man’s head, these were the thoughts of man’s heart. It can be bad enough when we choose wrong actions because we feel it’s convenient and or better for the present, momentary circumstance, but the night has truly come when we actually desire to do the wrong. This is why Revelation tells us the Mark of the Beast can be taken in our right hand or our forehead. (Rev. 13:16-17) We can be the ones promoting and pushing for certain imaginations because we believe in it or we can simply be going along with it. In the end, it does not matter why we went along with the wrong, only the fact we did. The reason there is a distinction made is to make it clear that if we do not turn back, the end result is the same regardless of the why. Don’t be a fool; God is not mocked; what a man sows is what he will reap! (Gal. 6:7-10)

Here in Genesis, God was saying there was no one who even intended to go in the right direction, and this was not a temporary or intermittent problem, it was man’s continual state. This means, no matter how much the opportunity was presented for man to do the right and reject the wrong, man’s imagination was to use every opportunity to do wrong. It was not just an impulse, it was his heart’s desire! When we look at all this, we see God did not lightly make the decision to destroy man. We should be clear on the fact it was not God’s desire to destroy man! This is why verse 6 tells us, “And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” “Repent” is a very sorrowful word. It’s not just the idea that one has changed their mind and wishes to go in a different direction, but there is deep sorrow about what the action has brought about. It repented God that He had made man because if He had not made man, He would not have to take the action of destroying man.

This is further emphasized by the statement, “...it grieved...” God at His very heart. There is not simply a part of God which is invested in humanity. We are not some kind of pet project. God made us in His image. He breathed the breath of life into us. We are not the cattle of the field or the birds of the air which God spoke into existence; we are formed by His hand. God has high expectations and there is high potential for what we can be. However, when we use our freedom to choose things which are in the opposite direction of what He created us to be, it’s a waste of our God created potential in a way which we just do not even comprehend! In Noah’s day this had gone so deep and

gotten so bad, it grieved God He had ever given man existence in the first place; but even God abides by the rules He Himself established from the beginning.

Verse 7 tells us God’s determination. God would not go back and wipe out man as a whole, but He would destroy mankind from the face of the earth. This is a very interesting subject which is actually too large to thoroughly cover without writing a book; but stop and think about what you believe as a Christian and what is being said, point blank, by God Himself here in this verse. God did not say, I would like to destroy man, but that “I will destroy man...” God emphasizes here that man is His creation. It doesn’t belong to anyone or anything else. God has the full undisputable right to destroy man if that is what He determines is the proper thing to do. He doesn’t have to consult with anyone or anything. In other words, there is no other power which holds authority over God when it comes to anything in this creation, and that is a fact which we do not often understand or accept. Note here, there is no mention of the need for any further action on God’s part before He takes man from the face of the earth; and if you are wondering what I’m getting at here, let me be blunt! When the Bible tells us, Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, it means it! (Rev. 13:8) When Jesus healed the man sick of the palsy, He pointed out He had used, “...thy sins be forgiven thee.” so those around Him would know He had power to forgive sin. (Matt. 9:1-8) It was also nothing for Jesus to raise men from the dead. We are told Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead so that Jesus, “...might be glorified thereby.” (John 11:4) Then Jesus would give His own life, and just as we so often do not really understand it today, even those who had literally seen Jesus raise men from the dead, still did not understand it then. Once Jesus had given His life on the cross, many believed it was over. They did not wait in anticipation of Jesus’ resurrection which should have been a foregone conclusion. Instead, they feared for their own lives and acted as if Jesus was gone for good.

Humans misunderstanding this simple fact, is why the women went early on Sunday morning to anoint the body of Jesus in the grave. They believed Jesus was still in the tomb, and so they debated about who would move the stone for them; but when they got to the tomb, they found an angel had already moved the stone. That angel had one simple question for them, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?” Luke 24:5 Today, we still portray the story as if Jesus came forth when the stone was rolled away, but that is because we still don’t understand the angel’s question! Why would you come looking inside a grave for someone whom death never had any power over? Jesus died to prove the point that even the physical death of God in human flesh was nothing God couldn’t overcome. God created this world and everything in it. He sacrificed His life to erase any doubt - He is, and always has been, Lord of all! (Rom. 6:1-12)

It's also important to recognize the part of the statement here in Genesis which says "...from the face of the earth..." God was not going to destroy humanity, nor was He eternally judging all those who currently walked the earth. God's determination was to bring this earthly existence to an end. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, "...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." We all have to die someday and leave this earthly existence. It's on the other side of death that we await God's ultimate judgment as to where we will spend eternity. Here in verse 7, God was saying it was time for all men's earthly existence to end as a whole. This life of marrying, giving in marriage, having children, and choosing how we wished to shape a world all our own was of no value any more. Thus, God would put an end to it. Then we come to a statement which emphasizes again just how much all of this creation is about humanity. If God was going to wipe humanity from the face of the earth, there was no reason to leave the beast of the field, creeping things, and fowls of the air. Because it repented God that He had made man, it was time for it all to go!

Then verse 8 affirms to us, probably more than any other verse in all of the Word of God, that God cares for us as individuals! God said it was not good that the man should be alone, (Gen. 2:18) but in the beginning God only created one man. The fact God gave us the ability to expand our population and shape our world even in group mode, if we so choose to, has never and will never change the fact God sees every life right down to the number of hairs on our head. (Matt. 10:28-31) Sometimes I think we get a little caught up on the idea that eight people survived the flood; but the fact of the matter is, only one man is said to have "...found grace in the eyes of the Lord!"

Somehow, somehow, through all the corruption, even to the heart and core of humanity, this man believed in God and sought to do His will. This is a profound thought! It's easy to see the story of Noah and the ark as a children's tale. Of course, we like to talk about how Noah took all those animals on a boat ride, but there comes a time in our life when the story of Noah needs to come off the colorful wallpaper in the church nursery and become a story which has application in our adult life. When we get discouraged and believe it's tough to follow God, that everything seems to be against us, or that our life has no meaning, the story of Noah should come to our mind. Verse 9 makes it clear, Noah was not given the task of building the ark because he had potential to be a righteous man. God didn't call Noah and then say, "Now let me reveal to you how I need you to walk." Verse 9 tells us, Noah - long before the ark - was a just man! It even tells us he was perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God. These are the basics of living for God. Even with all the laws God gave to Israel, this is all He ever wanted from them. (Micah 6:1-8)

Noah was a just man, and there is no harder place to be just than in a world which is not. Today, true believers see this all the time. It's getting harder and harder to even involve yourself in the system which controls the flow of everyday necessities without compromising your values. However, God will never leave us nor forsake us, and we must keep that forefront in our minds! (Heb. 13:5) Noah was able to do it, even living in a world where literally no one else lived justly. Noah chose the right and rejected the wrong, so much so, we are told he was perfect in his generation. Now, some people will make the argument that Noah was not really a good man in many ways, but because he was good compared to the world around him, God spared the best there was. That is not what the statement "...perfect in his generation,..." is telling us. As we have talked about in this study, it's not just our actions but every person's actions which shape the world. This is what God was looking at in the earlier verses: the condition of mankind as a whole and where it would go from there. Noah could not shape the world by himself. There was simply too much out of Noah's control or influence. However, God was about to change that, and this is why our personal walk matters in all circumstances. We may live in a very good generation, we may live in a very bad generation, but God's promise is that we will never live in a generation which is too much to bear. (I Cor. 10:13) Right and wrong are not subjective. There is a right way to walk and regardless of our generation, we must strive to walk uprightly. That is what Noah did, and so it could be said Noah was perfect in spite of his generation!

God saw in the heart of Noah a desire to know and follow the right path in spite of what everyone else in the world was doing. Verse 9 tells us, "Noah walked with God," which means Noah was ready to do God's will, and that is why the ark was built! Just a few verses back, in chapter 5, we are told Enoch walked with God and was not. This is because God took him. Here in chapter 6 verse 9, we are told Noah walked with God, but Noah would not be taken from the earth even though God had determined to wipe the earth clean. Why? Because to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21) God had a work for Noah to do. God was going to give this singular righteous man a chance to affect his entire generation! So, as the verses move forward, we see God laying out the facts to Noah; and then without hesitation, God goes right into the instructions for building the ark. I can't think of a servant of God who has been asked to take on a more monumental task in the face of such opposing times, and yet Noah, unlike so many reluctant servants of God, goes right to work!

Until next time, Shalom!