

TESTING CHRISTIANITY

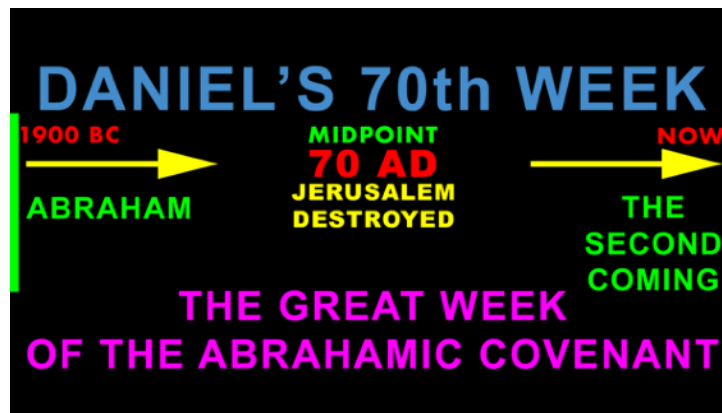
JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH EXPLAINED

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PROLOGUE: THE 'MARK OF THE BEAST' IS HERE!

STARTING: WITH DANIEL'S 70th WEEK

In the past, at the beginning of each page in the **Prophecy Section** of this journal, I used to ask this question: 'Do you know what time it is?' I then explained the 70th Week of Daniel, and how close at hand the second coming of Jesus Christ truly is.



I explained how that, after examining Daniel chapter 9 and Jesus' Olivet Discourse, we can realize that the **MIDPOINT** of Daniel's 70th Week is Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in **70 AD**. And then I explained that, after examining the **FOUR VISIONS** of John's Little Book (Revelation 11-13), we can fully understand the entire Week:



ADDING: CLARIFICATION ABOUT THE 'MARK'

But now after more recent Bible study, and my continued observation of world events, I have concluded that another important aspect of 'the last days' has come; the 'Mark of the Beast'. It is a 'Mark' that the False Prophet will impose upon the entire world:

The False Prophet causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a **Mark FROM** their right hand or **FROM** their foreheads. And that no one may buy or sell except one who has the **Mark**, or an official name from the Beast, or an official number associated with his official name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number from the Beast, for it is the (identification) number of each man. That number is 666. Revelation 13:16-18

Until recently I had suspected that the 'Mark of the Beast' might be a bar code or QR code tattooed upon a person's skin. Or that it might be an RFID chip inserted underneath a person's skin. But with more recent study I have discovered that, in the original Greek of Revelation 13:16 (above), the words 'forehead' and 'hand' were not written in the **DATIVE** case (indicating that something is being done **TO** them). Rather they were written in the **GENITIVE** case; indicating that something is being taken **FROM** a person's forehead or hand.

And the Greek word translated 'mark' can also be translated as an 'image' or 'impression' of something. And so I now believe that the Beast's 'Mark' is actually a scan taken from people's faces and hands. These comprise the biometric data being collected today by many nations. And it will all come together in a worldwide system of human registration.

This registration of people will be comprised of three things; all three of which are described in Revelation 13:17:

- 1) Biometric scans (markings or images) taken from faces and hands.
- 2) An official legal name assigned by the Beast system.
- 3) An official number connected to the person's official name.

And that no one may buy or sell except one who has 1) the scan (mark, image or impression), and 2) an official name from the Beast, and 3) an official number associated with his official name. Revelation 13:17

I have not yet identified the Beast's official numbering system, based upon a 6-6-6 format. But God is just and fair. And so when the Beast's 'number' does come, I trust that it will be obvious.

My concern, however, regards the fact that all of us are already accustomed to using facial recognition and fingerprint technology. And so the Mark (**SCAN**) of the Beast will just seem like a harmless improvement upon the status quo. For a further discussion of the False Prophet and his 'Mark', I refer my visitor to my page titled '**Understanding the False Prophet**'.

In Revelation God has warned that those who embrace this 'Mark' will suffer **never-ending** torment in the 'Lake of Fire and Brimstone'. And so I am placing this message regarding the 'Mark' at the beginning of every page in this web site. What each of us does now in response to the False Prophet's 'Mark' will determine our eternal destinies:

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice "If anyone worships the Beast and his image and embraces his **SCAN**, taken from his own forehead or from his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God; which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. And they have no rest day or night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whoever receives the **SCAN** associated with his own name." Here is the patience of the saints. Here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:9-12

CONCLUSION: WE NEED TO FOCUS

And so combining a knowledge of **1)** how close the second coming of Christ is, together with **2)** a better understanding of the 'Mark of the Beast', my warning is...

DO NOT SUBMIT TO THE MARK (SCAN**) OF THE BEAST!**

So what is it that God is calling Christians to do in this hour? To prepare for death. God now calls upon Christians to follow the three young Hebrew men, who went into the fiery furnace rather than deny their God (Daniel 3). And to follow Daniel, who risked the lion's den rather than to cease worshiping the one true God (Daniel 6). God calls upon Christians to hear His word and to understand the choice that now confronts all of mankind:

If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.
2 Timothy 2:12

And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. Revelation 12:11

As I explain in my four pages on '**The Beast and its Three Allies**', the rise of Constantine to conquer the world under the banner of the Cross was seen by many as the TRIUMPH of Christianity. It represented God finally exercising dominion over the world; taking His great power and reigning (Revelation 11:17) through people and institutions authorized by Him.

This was the 'great falling away from the faith' that Paul said would accompany the rise of a 'man of sin' (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). And so today some 'professing Christians' portray the coming of artificial intelligence and other technologies as 'God saving the world'. It is hailed as the arrival of 'peace and safety' (1 Thessalonians 5:3), and of diversity, equity and inclusion. But the simple choice still confronts us. Will we embrace Constantine's 'victory'. Or will we go outside of the world's 'wide gate' (Matthew 7:13) and meet the Savior there?

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. Romans 8:16-17

Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate (of Jerusalem). Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.
Hebrews 13:12-14

TESTING CHRISTIANITY

At several points, in the other pages of this web site, I have told my visitors that the claims of Christianity can be tested and proven in our everyday lives. I have claimed that Christianity is not simply 'religious theory', but that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is practical and powerful; producing needed changes in the lives of people who have embraced it.

In this present web page I explain how God has made it possible for us to test the Bible, and to know whether or not the Gospel of Jesus Christ is true. How can we test Christianity? By striving to achieve righteousness through our knowledge of right and wrong.

THE TWO CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY

As I have explained in my web pages titled '**Why God Requires Our Faith**', and '**Death and the Judgment of God**', the Christian message is based upon two claims:

Claim #1: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH The Biblical message is that God gave mankind one commandment to live by: 'You shall not learn the difference between right and wrong' (Genesis 2:16-17). The message in that instruction was clear; that righteousness is a matter of believing God (faith), and that righteousness cannot be achieved through a knowledge of right and wrong.

Claim #2: ALL HAVE SINNED The Biblical message is also that when Adam (the father of the human race) disobeyed God's commandment in the Garden of Eden, each and every member of the human race was consciously present within him, simultaneously committing the same act of sin that Adam was committing.

For an explanation of these two claims, I would refer my reader to the web pages that I have mentioned above. In this page I will simply answer two practical and reasonable questions that people have asked in response to these claims:

QUESTION #1:

If God didn't want us to know the difference between right and wrong, then why did He give the 10 Commandments to the world? After all, the 10 Commandments are a knowledge of good and evil in written form!

QUESTION #2:

How can God expect me to believe that I sinned in Eden, when I do not remember being there?

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

The apostle Paul provided God's answers to these questions in his letter to the Christians in Rome. While presenting the two claims of Christianity, Paul also explained the two-fold purpose of God's Law:

PURPOSE #1: A MORAL STANDARD Paul's answer to the first question above was that God gave His written Law to the world to clarify His moral standards; to define the righteousness that is required of us if we are to be accepted by Him and obtain eternal life. Paul began with the claim that all of humanity is sinful, without exception, in our everyday behavior. And thus Paul reasoned that God gave us His Law not as a means of achieving righteousness, but as a 'moral mirror' to show us our shortcomings:

What then, are we better than they? No, in no way. For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good; no, not one. Romans 3:9-12

Now (therefore) we know that what things soever the Law says, it says to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the Law is the knowledge of sin. Romans 3:19-20

PURPOSE #2: TO AWAKEN SIN WITHIN US Paul's second answer to the first question (above) was to say that God gave His Law to the world so that the results of our rebellion in Eden might become overwhelming in our lives:

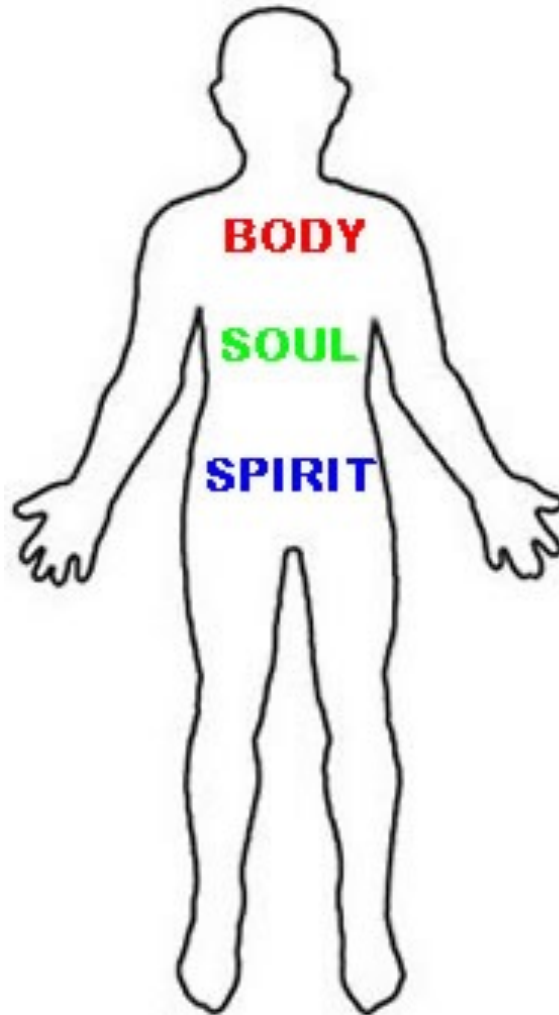
Moreover the Law entered, that the offense (our disobedience in Eden) might abound.
Romans 5:20

What was Paul talking about? As I have explained in my page titled '**Why God Requires Our Faith**', God's original plan in Eden was that, as we chose to perform the primary righteousness of believing and obeying Him concerning the knowledge of right and wrong, He would enter our bodies through the Holy Spirit and share His own righteous character with us; enabling us to truly 'be like God'.

We would be enabled to obey the Law not through a knowledge of right and wrong, but by possessing the righteous 'fruits' of the Holy Spirit living inside of us.

God created us to be three-part beings:

- 1) A Body
- 2) A Soul
- 3) A Spirit



But the Biblical message is that, when we chose to disbelieve and disobey God in Eden, we allowed another spirit to enter and take ownership of our bodies; a spirit that the Bible calls 'Sin'. Sin is not simply something that we might think, say or do. Sin is also a living spiritual being with a mind and will of its own, which fulfills the same role on the side of evil that the Holy Spirit fulfills on the side of righteousness.

Sin's nature is such that it wishes to break God's Law as often and as forcefully as it can. Hence, when the Law enters into a person's life, and that person begins to better understand it and attempt to obey it, the spirit of Sin awakens within him and leaps at the opportunity to deceive the morally awakened person, bringing him to break the Law.

LIKE GASOLINE ON A FIRE

God's message is simple: Sin owns our bodies. We are born in slavery. As we begin to live our lives, we are not conscious of this evil spirit within us. God wants us to discover Sin within ourselves, so that we will see our dangerous condition and turn to His Son, Jesus Christ, for deliverance.

Giving the Law to a person who has not been 'born again' is like pouring gasoline on a fire. As that person thinks about the Law, and attempts to put that knowledge into practice, Sin roars to life at the opportunity to break the Law more deliberately. Though such a person may agree that the Law is good, and may want to obey it, Sin deceives and overpowers the person, causing him to do the very things that he hates.

The apostle Paul spoke of how Sin uses the Law, and also described the wretched experience of enslavement by Sin within one's own body:

The sting of death is Sin, and the strength of Sin is the Law. 1 Corinthians 15:56

**I find then a principle: that when I will to do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the Law of God after the inward man (in my heart). But I see another law in my body, warring against the Law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin which is in my body. O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
Romans 7:21-24**

This interaction between Sin and the Law is the means that God uses to show us our slavery, and to show us that a knowledge of right and wrong cannot save us. In addition, we come to realize that the spirit of Sin has been present within our body since its first conception within the womb. This is a discovery that King David of Israel described long ago:

Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in Sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5

Both King David and the apostle Paul were Jews who understood and loved the Law of Moses, and desired to serve the God of Israel. But they were ignorant of Sin within themselves, and of the fact that a knowledge of right and wrong could not save them. They were both men after God's own heart, desiring to do what's right, but who ended up doing the very things that they hated.

As king of Israel, David brought great dishonor upon God, stealing a man's wife and then murdering him (2 Samuel 11-12:25). Although he wanted to honor Israel's fathers, Abraham and Isaac, he did the very thing to Uriah that Abraham and Isaac had feared kings would do to them in earlier times; murder them in order to take their wives (Genesis 12:11-13, 20:11, 26:7,9). When David saw that he had done the very thing that he most wanted to avoid, he came to realize that there was another being at work within his body, other than himself.

Paul found himself persecuting the very God whom he wished to serve (Acts 9:4). Paul has explained the inner logic that brings one to realize that he is not the only 'being' inhabiting his body:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwells no good thing. For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I desire I do not do, but the evil which I hate, that I do. Now if I do that which I wish not to do, it is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwells in me. Romans 7:18-20

THE PICTURE OF MOSES

When God sent Moses to lead the Hebrew people out of bondage in Egypt, the impact that Moses first had upon the lives of the Israelites in Egypt was dreadful. Although the Hebrews embraced him as a deliverer, he became the cause of a much more intense bondage.

This is a perfect picture of the impact of the Law in a non-Christian's life. Moses is known throughout the Bible as the great 'Lawgiver', and his initial arrival in Egypt is symbolic of the Law's effect upon a person who does not understand the true purpose of the Law, and thinks he can use it to achieve righteousness.

Moses was at first warmly received by the Hebrew people after they saw the miraculous signs that he performed, and heard his message about God's concern for them (Exodus 4:29-31). But when Moses proceeded to confront Pharaoh and demand that he release the Hebrew people, Pharaoh greatly increased the workload upon them. Instead of being a deliverer, Moses became the cause of intensified bondage and overwhelming misery. The Israelites complained about this to Moses, and he in turn cried out to God about his powerlessness:

And they met Moses and Aaron, who stood in the way, as they came forth from Pharaoh, and they said unto them "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because you have made us to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us." And Moses returned unto the Lord and said "Lord, wherefore have You so evil entreated this people? Why is it that You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people. Neither have You delivered Your people at all." Exodus 5:20-23

It was only after this 'weakness of the Law' became evident, that God proceeded to reveal a salvation to the Hebrews that would not come through 'the works of the Law', but rather through faith in the shed blood of a Passover lamb. Once God had shown the Israelites the powerlessness of Moses (the Law), He was able to turn them toward simple faith in Himself as the true way of salvation.

It is in this experience of Moses that we see the proper use of the Law; as a means of showing people their guilt and bondage. While the Law defines righteousness, it is not the means of achieving righteousness. Faith in Jesus Christ, and in His shed blood, is the only means of finding real righteousness. This was a point that Paul constantly sought to reinforce in the early church:

I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not oppose the grace of God. For if righteousness come by the Law, then Christ is dead in vain.

O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn from you. Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 2:20-3:3

But we know that the Law is good, if a man use it lawfully. Knowing this, that the Law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient; for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers (kidnappers), for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. 1 Timothy 1:8-10

MORAL AND SPIRITUAL REASONING

It is commonly taught that when Adam sinned, he brought himself into spiritual bondage to Sin, and that this bondage is inherited by all of us through biological reproduction (a concept known as 'hereditary depravity'). This is largely based upon a misinterpretation of the words of David:

Behold, I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Psalm 51:5

It has been assumed that, because David possessed sin and iniquity when his body was first being formed within his mother's womb, that he must have received it from somewhere else.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT DAVID DID NOT EXIST BEFORE HIS BODY WAS CONCEIVED IN THE WOMB.

And therefore being 'shaped in iniquity' and 'conceived in sin' must have been the result of somebody else's choice, not David's. Morally speaking however, this idea contradicts the word of God and the God-given conscience that each one of us has. God would never create a situation where one person's sinfulness could be passed on to another as either guilt or bondage:

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying "What mean you, that you use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?'" "As I live", says the Lord God, "you shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sins, it shall die".

Ezekiel 18:1-4 (see also Jeremiah 31:29-30)

And the moral error of those who make God the author of mankind's guilt and bondage is built upon a spiritual error. It is a failure to understand the Trinity, and a human race made in the image and likeness of the Trinity.

During its history, the Christian church has struggled with the claims of a man named Arius (the father of 'Arianism'). Arius argued that, since the Son of God is the Father's child, He cannot be as old as His Father. And therefore the Son cannot be eternal like the Father, and truly 'God'.

What Arius overlooked was the pre-existence of the Son and the Spirit **WITHIN** the Father (as conscious and independent Persons), before coming forth from within Him in eternity past. It is this idea alone that explains how the Son and the Spirit can both be 'the eternal God', and yet also have Their origins within the Father.

And it is this same two-stage experience that defines our own connection with our human 'father', Adam. Although Adam alone had a body, and he alone physically experienced the act of eating the forbidden fruit, yet every member of the human race existed within Adam, in perfect **ONENESS** with him. And so his decision to disbelieve God and his act of disobedience were simultaneously the independent decisions and actions of every member of the human race. Only later did we begin to come forth from within Adam, to live in separate bodies.

Our connection with Adam was not like having our spiritual 'legs' tied to his, in some kind of three-legged race. It was not a situation where Adam might have decided to jump off of a cliff, and thus drag all of the rest of us off that cliff with himself. It is this kind of thinking that characterizes Augustinian and Reformed theology.

But the opposite is true. While existing within Adam and being perfectly **ONE** with him, we were also at the same time fully conscious and independent persons making our own decisions. We had a Trinitarian connection with Adam, not an Augustinian one. For a further discussion of the Trinity, see '**God is a Family Called the Trinity**'.

And so an understanding of the Trinity comes from discovering ourselves. Through the impact of the Law upon the spirit of Sin within us, we discover Sin's presence. And then, both through our conscience and the word of God, we realize that Sin could not be there unless we ourselves had made a moral choice **before** our conception in the womb. Through this 'image' of our own pre-existence within our human father, we discover the pre-existence of the eternal Son within His Father.

This is the fatal error of theologians who have been chasing their own tails for centuries, writing creeds about the Trinity that never get down to the simple truth. They talk endlessly about 'homoousios', 'hypostasis', and eternally proceeding and begetting. And they insist that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, rather than acknowledge the wholesome facts; that God is a heterosexual Family, and that the Son of God has two Parents.

These scholars cannot explain the Trinity to a three year old. And if we cannot explain God to a three year old, then we ourselves do not understand God:

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. All things have been delivered to Me by My Father. And no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

Luke 10:21-22

But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." Luke 18:16-17

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God (the Father). He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him. For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. 2 John 9-11

What is this 'doctrine of Christ' that John refers to in the verse above? It is the doctrine of the Trinity. And it is vital not only because it is the correct understanding of God, but also because it is the correct understanding of how we all sinned in Adam, and of how we can be redeemed if we choose a similar **Trinitarian Union** with the last Adam.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him (God) a liar, and His word is not in us.
1 John 1:10

WHOSE PROPERTY DO WE WANT TO BE?

We, as human beings, don't like the idea that we do not belong to ourselves, but to somebody else; that we are 'property' or slaves. But this is our place in the universe, and the way that God has set things up.

When He created us, God embraced us and invited us to be partakers of His own glory. We belonged to Him, and He had every right to expect that we would trust in Him and embrace our wonderful opportunity:

Know that the Lord, He is God. It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Psalm 100:3

In comparison to God we are indeed sheep, and in need of a divine Shepherd. But we rejected the whole idea of our dependence upon God. We chose to believe that, by learning right from wrong, we could cast off God's 'restraints'. We did not realize that in rejecting God's ownership, we were giving ourselves to be the property or slaves of someone else:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever commits sin is the slave of Sin. John 8:34-35

Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his slaves (property) you are to whom you obey; whether of Sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Romans 6:16

The real question is 'Which slavemaster do we wish to serve? A righteous, gracious and loving Master, or a murderous tyrant determined to take us down into the Lake of Fire with himself? This is really the choice. The apostle Paul always referred to himself as a slave or 'bondservant' of God. That is a notion that Christians need to be comfortable with:

Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden (under the tyranny of Sin), and I will give you rest. Take My yoke (of servitude) upon you, and learn from Me. For I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Matthew 11:28-30

What? Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, who you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit (soul), which are God's. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

For a Christian to deny that he has been 'bought' or redeemed out of the slavemarket of Sin, and that giving himself to God is his obligation, is to commit the gravest of sins:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God; which is your reasonable service.
Romans 12:1

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you. Who secretly shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2 Peter 2:1

CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN FREED

Many people have believed that Romans 7:14-24 is Paul's description of a Christian struggling with Sin. But in Romans 6:1-7:13 Paul made it absolutely clear that Christians have been freed from the bondage of Sin through union with Jesus in His death.

Because every born-again Christian has been crucified with Christ, his old body (and the Sin that lived within that body) is dead. Christians have new bodies indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul gives no reason for anyone to think that he is describing a Christian in Romans 7:14-24. He describes Christians as victors over sin:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of Sin and death. For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin; He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

In Romans 7:1-6, Paul used the concept of marriage to describe the union between a person's body and soul. When Paul refers to the law in this passage, he is referring to the law of marriage, which says that a husband and wife are joined until death.

Paul used the analogy of marriage to explain that a non-Christian's soul is 'married' to a Sin-possessed body, and that he cannot be set free from that 'marriage' until that old body has died. Because the Christian's old body has been crucified with Christ, he is free to be 'married' to a new body indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and to experience a wonderful new life.

Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law (of marriage) by the body of Christ. That you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead. That we should bring forth fruit unto God. Romans 7:4

There is a broad erroneous belief among evangelical Christians that people are condemned because God has imputed Adam's sin to them, and not because of anything that they themselves have done. And the corollary to this is that Christians are justified because God has imputed Christ's righteousness to them, and not because they themselves are actually righteous.

It is this unscriptural separation between justification and sanctification that has left some Christians believing that they can be 'positionally righteous', while not actually being victorious over Sin. This runs directly contrary to the word of God:

GOD SPEAKING TO ISAAC: "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven. I will give to your descendants all these lands. And in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; **BECAUSE** Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Genesis 26:4-5

And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bring forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Matthew 3:10

For I (Jesus) say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:20

Then Peter opened his mouth and said "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him". Acts 10:34-35

Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as God is righteous. 1 John 3:7

Jesus went on to define this righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes. It is not 'positional' or imputed. It is a righteousness that does not think or speak disrespectfully of others. It is a righteousness that does not lust inappropriately with the eyes. And it is a righteousness that turns the other cheek to an enemy.

People need to be mindful of the warning that God gave to Cain. Cain was angry because his self-righteous offering to God was not accepted. God warned Cain about the necessity of overcoming Sin:

If you do well, shall you not be accepted? And if you do not well, Sin lies at the door. His desire shall be for you, and you must rule over him. Genesis 4:7

For if you live after the flesh, you shall die. But if you through the Spirit do put to death the deeds of the body, you shall live. Romans 8:13

PROVE IT FOR YOURSELF

God has no fear in the marketplace of ideas. He knows that truth will prevail, and that His way of righteousness is the only way. The question is not 'Do we have to keep God's Law?', but rather 'How can we keep the Law?'

When people believe that they can fulfill the Law through their knowledge of right and wrong, and doubt that righteousness is a matter of faith, God simply points them to the Law and says 'Do this, and you shall live'. (Leviticus 18:5, Romans 10:5).

This is why, when people asked Jesus what they must do to enter heaven, He often pointed them to the Law (Matthew 5:17-30, Mark 10:19, Luke 10:25-28). Jesus knew that the Law would 'instruct' such people, leading them to faith in Himself as the starting point of righteousness. He commented on the testability of His words:

Jesus answered them, and said "My doctrine is not mine, but His that sent me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself". John 7:16-17

This is also what the apostle Paul was referring to when he wrote that the Law was not given as a means to achieve righteousness, but as a means of showing sinners their true condition. Are people obligated to keep God's Law? Yes, absolutely. But a knowledge of the Law cannot enable us to obey it. It can only show us our guilt and bondage, and point us to the One who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6); Jesus Christ.

Wherefore the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Galatians 3:24

Some people believe that Christianity is based upon a poor self-image and low self-esteem. It is indeed true that many professing Christians have used false guilt to manipulate people, supposedly 'winning them to Christ'. Many of these 'guilt-mongers' have then proven to be hypocrites themselves, committing the worst of sins. As a result many people have been turned off regarding evangelical Christianity.

God, however, does not want to build a relationship with us based upon false guilt and false faith. We have real guilt, and we are in real danger. God wants us to come to Him willingly, and because we have discovered and understood the truth for ourselves.

If we reject His message concerning our sin in Eden and our need for the Savior, He challenges us to put His claims to the test; to use our knowledge of right and wrong to be the kind of people that we ought to be. Those who do not care enough to take up His challenge will have no one to blame in the day of judgment but themselves.

Some say that they will believe in God if they can be shown that the Bible does not conflict with science. Others demand that miracles be shown them. But God's Law, codified for mankind in the 10 commandments of Moses, and then further simplified by the Lord Jesus into two commandments, has always been the primary tool that God uses to bring people into a right relationship with Himself.

Then one of them who was a lawyer asked him a question, testing him and saying "Master, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus said unto him "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind'. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets".

Matthew 22:35-40

It is in the moral realm of the conscience that our sins and our need for a Savior are seen, and genuine faith in God can form. Jesus told the story of 'The Rich Man and Lazarus'. Both the rich man and Lazarus died. Lazarus went to paradise to be with Abraham, and the rich man went to a place of torment.

In torment, the rich man called out to Abraham and begged him to send Lazarus to warn his brothers not to come into that place. But Abraham gave God's own answer to the rich man's request. It is the same answer that God gives to a skeptical world today; that the Law of God is all that any of us need in order to discover what is true:

Then he said "I pray thee therefore, father Abraham, that you would send Lazarus to my father's house. For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment". Abraham said unto him "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them".

And he said "No, father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent". And Abraham said unto him "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead". Luke 16:27-31