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The Use and Abuse of the Holy Scriptures

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Read the accompanying "[April 2023 Newsletter](#)"



The Use and
Abuse of the
Holy
Scriptures

Those who honor the teachings of the Bible can use them to liberate individuals from religious oppression and tyranny in today's world. Or the Bible can be used to make humans slaves of religious leaders. God wants Christians to have absolute FREEDOM from all human control as far as religious doctrines, customs or ceremonial rites are concerned. He also wants Christians to be free from their own wrongdoing which make captives of many people today.

The final teachings of Christianity are designed to release Christians from all rulership by other human beings and to allow them to live decent, productive and abundant lives on earth. In this research study, I show how an abuse of Scriptural teachings can subject humans to a servitude to other men, or to domination by their own vices as a misery to themselves and to others. But for those who properly use the teachings of the Bible, the Word of God can lead the mature Christian to a thorough **FREEDOM** from any abuse of the Bible that is commonly practiced today. This is one study that all should read who want to obey the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

Understanding Our Salvation

In order to use the teachings of the Scriptures properly (and never abuse them), it is necessary that we first recognize what the New Testament reveals regarding the salvation that we have in Christ. To use something properly first requires we comprehend the subject matter. This is especially so in regard to our salvation in Christ. Let us first look at what the Scriptures teach about salvation. This will set us on the right track in recognizing what real **FREEDOM** Christians have from all the religious requirements of man or the angelic powers. God has granted mankind a wonderful salvation.

Somewhere near the year 63 AD a new revelation was given to the apostle Paul and to other Christians that transformed the way Christians understood their legal standing before God and all men on earth. This new revelation was a glorious message which was known by the Father and Christ even before the foundation of the world (and Paul tells us this was the case), but it was a mature teaching that could only be revealed by God once Christ had died and was resurrected from the dead.

The whole concept of the revelation depended upon a thorough understanding of what the death and resurrection of Christ actually entailed. Thus, we find that the Father and Christ (some 33 years after Christ's

resurrection and 7 years before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD) revealed to the apostle Paul and others what the full and final plan for man's salvation in Christ was all about.

Among other things, this new revelation settled for all time to come the legal rights, the principal responsibilities and the exalted position of authority that Christians now have in Christ. The teaching is marvelous and wonderful beyond compare and it places humanity within a level of legal jurisdiction on earth (in the eyes of God the Father) which is as majestic as it is awesome. It grants to all mankind a complete freedom from every rule and regulation demanded by the religious organizations of men or the angelic powers. It even goes so far as to place Christians on the same throne of glory that is now occupied by Christ Jesus Himself.

This Teaching Was NEW!

Let us look at Paul's own words about this new development in doctrinal understanding that God revealed to mankind. The apostle Paul called it:

“[T]he Mystery ... which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is NOW revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit that the nations are **TO BE**

[1] co-heirs, a

[2] co-body and

[3] co-partakers of the promise in Christ.”

• *Ephesians 3:5–6, Greek*

Note that the verb “**to be**” is grammatically in the present infinitive and it shows a “**now**” relationship.

Look at this teaching of Paul in the above text. If one reads this promise carefully, it will be seen there is not the slightest contingency of works that is necessary for the nations of the world to perform in order to experience the co-heirship, the co-bodied relationship or the co-partakership of the promise in Christ. Paul said in the same context that the promise of these blessings was secured through grace (Ephesians 2:8–10) and not through the works (either good or bad) of the nations of the world. Paul simply stated that all Gentile nations were NOW reckoned by the Father as having in their possession the wonderful promise of co-heirship with all the other saints of God.¹

Why Is “The Mystery” Different?

This approach by the apostle Paul was quite different from the previous promises of God in that (before 63 AD) only Israelites were given such assurances of an unqualified salvation in Christ. But now, Paul showed that all the nations on earth (all humans, no matter who they were in the world) are equally promised the same benefits and a co-bodied relationship with Christ. With the revelation of “**the Mystery**,” all Gentiles (and this meant all races on earth) were now reckoned by God the Father as having the same promise of salvation in Christ that was given to Israel and that (from now on) there was no longer the slightest difference in the two peoples as far as salvation was concerned.

This new revelation was only made known to the apostles about 63 AD because all the former writings of the apostles written before that time show that only Israel was believed to possess those wonderful promises. Paul had taught some seven years before in the Book of Romans that “**all Israel shall be saved**” (Romans 11:26). This statement by Paul was written without any qualification attached to it. Paul simply meant that all Israel (that is, every man, woman and child — no matter in what time period or under what circumstances they lived) **shall be saved!** No works (whether good or bad) were involved in the issue because Paul understood that salvation was not based on man's works but upon God's grace (Romans 11:5–6).

True enough, the apostles knew that all Israel were destined to be saved, but nowhere in Scripture did the

¹ See my July 2021 Commentary, “[The Mystery, A Definition](#).” Read “[The Mystery of God](#)” and the “[January 2004 Newsletter](#),” both of which give background to Dr. Martin's 1992 article “[The History of the Revelation of the Mystery](#).” That article goes into further detail about the timing of this new revelation to mankind. DWS

apostles find that any salvation was promised the Gentiles if they continued to live in this world as Gentiles. In the earlier period of the apostles, it was believed that **only** Israelites (or those adopted into Israel) could be saved. As far as individual Gentiles were concerned, their salvation could only be granted if they became an adopted child of Abraham (Galatians 3:29) and be grafted officially into a national citizenship status as an adopted Israelite (Romans 11:11–36).

In the period before 63 AD, it was thoroughly recognized by the apostles in matters pertaining to the Gentiles:

“... that at that time [before the revelation of “the Mystery”] you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

• *Ephesians 2:12*

But when the new revelation of **“the Mystery”** was given in 63 AD, this former requirement of having to become an Israelite was made redundant for all future Gentiles who were converted to Christ.

A New Type of Human?

In this **new** revelation of **“the Mystery,”** God then brought into existence a different type of human being on earth who was reckoned by God as no longer an Israelite and no longer a Gentile. Out of these two divisions of humanity on earth, God now made **“a new man [person]”** who was in God’s eyes neither Israelite nor Gentile. God set out **“to make of twain [two] one new man”** (Ephesians 2:15) which resulted in the creation of a body of people on earth who actually possessed a heavenly citizenship.² This new type of human was reckoned as now being a member and citizen of **“the household of God”** (Ephesians 2:19) and each person was acknowledged as having a **co**-bodied relationship with Christ.

This **new** body of individuals represented a Temple:

“... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord: in whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”

• *Ephesians 2:20–22*

This brand **new** revelation of **“the Mystery”** given in 63 AD was something that changed the apostles’ understanding of the scope and manner of our salvation in Christ that humans are destined by God to experience. This revelation was a totally **new** concept that had not been made known to humans in the previous ages of the world. It simply meant that no one in the world (whether Israelite or Gentile) had any longer to journey through the stage of being an Israelite (either a born-Israelite or an adopted-Israelite) to be a member of the Body of Christ.

All humans on earth, through their acceptance of Christ, could now be initiated directly into **“the household of God”** without being channeled through any intermediate stage (such as first becoming an adopted “Israelite”). Though such a procedure was viewed as necessary **before** the revelation of **“the Mystery,”** the **new** teaching given to the apostle Paul in 63 AD circumvented the need for this transitional stage.

This **new** and **mature** way to salvation for all people on earth (irrespective of their racial make-up) had never before been revealed in a precise sense to any human being in the history of the world.

➤ It was not taught specifically by Abraham, Moses, or by the prophets of old

- (except in a clandestine manner that they or their hearers could not comprehend — 1 Peter 1:10–12).

² That citizenship includes a great responsibility for us to live a life of good Christian behavior toward other people.

- Nor was this **way** clearly taught by Christ while He was on earth
 - (except, again, in the same clandestine manner because the world was not yet ready for its disclosure).
- Nor was it taught by the apostles themselves in all their epistles written before the revelation of **“the Mystery”** in 63 AD.
 - This is certainly the case, because in the earlier letters of the apostles (e.g. Acts, Romans, First and Second Corinthians and Galatians) they still insisted that Gentiles had to become children of Abraham or reckoned as Israelites in order to have a salvation in Christ. (Read all of Acts chapter 15; Romans chapter 11; Galatians chapter 3 and Ephesians 2:12.)

It is true, however, that once the fulness of **“the Mystery”** is understood by man, it is possible to see all types of inferential references to this grand teaching of God from the Book of Genesis onward. It simply means that the great secret of God was only **new** to the apostles because God in the past deliberately blinded the eyes to its truths even from His most devoted servants (e.g. Isaiah 29:9–24; Daniel 12:4, 9).

God thought it best to wait until 33 years after the resurrection of Christ to reveal fully to mature Christians the final revelation of His glorious purpose for all mankind. In 63 AD the blinders were taken away from the apostles, and with **new** doctrines never before disclosed, the majestic teachings of **“the Mystery”** became emblazoned before all Christians and people in the world.

Did Angels And Other Spirit Beings Know About the Mystery?

Even the angels in heaven (the principalities and powers) became aware of this wonderful plan of God for **all** mankind (Ephesians 3:8–10). This was the time for the final revelation of God to be given to humanity which showed how all mankind would come to a certain salvation in Christ. Though the **new** method was based on the earlier teachings of the prophets and apostles, it was now formally inaugurated as the official teaching of Christianity. It showed how **all** mankind (both Israelites and Gentiles) were now in a co-heirship, a co-bodied relationship and a co-partakership in the promise given by the Father to Christ. [Read again Ephesians 3:5–6 in page 2 above. DWS]

With **“the Mystery,”** God was then making of twain [two racial and spiritual groups on earth] **“a NEW man”** who was neither an Israelite nor a Gentile as far as God was concerned. The apostle Paul said he had been given a special calling to be a minister of this **new** revelation of the grand secret [**“the Mystery”**] kept hidden by the Father from the foundation of the world. Paul said God gave to him [Paul]:

“... this grace, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery [Greek: *the secret*], which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now [from 63 AD onward] unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church [*ekklesia*] the manifold wisdom of God.”

• ***Ephesians 3:8–10***

Even the angels in heaven (who are the principalities and powers) were from 63 AD onward suddenly able to understand through the *ekklesia* what the manner and scope of God’s salvation was all about and that it included every human being on earth.

The apostle Paul continued this same theme in his companion epistle on the subject of **“the Mystery”** (the Book of Colossians). Paul said that he had been:

“... made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but NOW is made manifest to His saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you [Gentiles] the hope of glory.”

• ***Colossians 1:25–27***

Truly, the revelation of **“the Mystery”** was the disclosure of a brand-new method for reaching salvation that had been in the mind of God the Father from the very beginning but only in 63 AD was clearly made known to the apostles through the Spirit of God. This is what the plain teaching of Ephesians and Colossians states. I see no reason why Christians should not accept this revelation of the apostle Paul which he said had its origin with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5).

Holding To The Old Ways

But true to our natural habits, we humans have the tendency to hold onto our old ways of thinking.

- The Israelites did not want to give up the earlier laws that governed Abraham’s relationship with God and adopt the **new** ways (more stringent ways) that Moses was advocating at the time of the Exodus.
- After Christ’s resurrection and ascension during the first 33 years of Christian teaching, the Scribes and Pharisees (even those who became Christians) did not want to give up those ways of Moses and adopt the New Covenant teachings based on faith advocated by the apostles.
- The same thing occurred when the brand new revelation of God was finally given to Paul and others in 63 AD which gave the full manner and scope of God’s salvation in Christ.

Many people balked at accepting this new and final revelation. So reluctant were people to change their belief patterns they had been used to, Paul said all the people he once taught in the province of Asia (the central area of Christian influence around Ephesus, Asia Minor and Turkey today) departed from him after he taught the revelation of “the Mystery.” They refused to believe him any longer and to embrace this new revelation from God. It changed the whole procedural method in obtaining salvation that they had been accustomed to for the previous 33 years. Most could not accept the change and they gave up on Paul and what they considered to be “his” new-fangled teachings. Paul grieved over this. **“This you know [Timothy], that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me”** (2 Timothy 1:15).

The simple truth is people find it difficult to deal with **brand new** revelations from God which drastically alter their former belief structures. All of us naturally have this problem to contend with. If we have been used to keeping Sabbaths, New Moons and the Festivals of the Mosaic Law, we want to continue keeping the Sabbaths, New Moons and the Festivals of Moses.³

If, on the other hand, we have been used to keeping Sundays, Christmas and Easter, we want to continue keeping Sundays, Christmas and Easter. Humans do not like change, and this especially applies to the religious and traditional customs that our societies have ardently and reverently observed over the generations.

We humans naturally want stability and constancy in our belief systems. We find it irritating that God should reveal His truths in stages. We like to get the teaching of His truth all at once and be done with it! But in reviewing the historical accounts in the biblical revelation, we find that this is not the way the Father dispenses His truths to mankind. Throughout the Scriptures we find God progressively revealing His teachings to man and He often changes many of His former laws and ceremonies as mankind develops to a more mature spiritual understanding on the vital aspects of His divine plan and purpose. This is certainly the case with the revelation of “the Mystery.” God delayed the giving of that glorious revelation until a time when He knew man would be able to handle its theme in a mature and intelligent fashion.⁴

Even today there are hosts of people who still want to hold on to the elementary teachings which were given by Christ to the Jews before His crucifixion, and there are also multitudes of others who desire to retain

³ See Dr. Martin’s discussion about the initial rejection and eventual acceptance of **“the Mystery”** given first to Paul and later to other apostles and disciples. It is found in [Restoring the Original Bibl: The Design and Development of the Holy Scriptures](#), Chapter 15: [“The Book of Acts and New Testament History.”](#)

⁴ See this explanation expanded in [“Chapter 3: Progressive Revelation”](#) in Dr. Martin’s book [The Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#). **Click** on the book title to view the list of chapters. DWS

only those early teachings of the apostles given in the first 33 years of Christian instruction. But holding on to these elementary teachings of the developmental stages of Christian doctrine should not be the chief desire of Christians. We should have a willingness to adopt the final and mature doctrines of God when God chooses to give them to us. Peter echoed this when he said that Christians ought to be willing to **“grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”** (2 Peter 3:18).

When God the Father revealed His final and complete understanding of the Gospel message to the apostle Paul in 63 AD, Christians should have been willing to accept it. This also applies to us today. Christians ought to show a willingness to embrace the new (and final) teachings of the Gospel of Christ that were given to the *ekklesia* with the revelation of “the Mystery.”

If and when those glorious teachings from God the Father are accepted, we will find our legal relationship to God and Christ has freed all of us from any form of domination by mankind, in every aspect of religion and rituals, no matter what the rules and regulations are. We will discover we have been placed by God the Father and Christ Jesus into the highest position of power and honor in their eyes and without the slightest works on our part to attain it. Indeed, the final teaching of God in the Bible is almost too awesome and wonderful for us to fathom as it relates to the scope of the legal standing that we have with our Father and Christ, and also with mankind. But this final truth of **“the Mystery”** should be understood by all Christians today.

Freedom From Religion, Responsible Only To God and Christ

When we comprehend these mature, spiritual principles of salvation found in the revelation of **“the Mystery”** (and apply them in our lives), we will be granted a release from the rulership of all men or angelic powers who presently control the religions of this world. Christians today, as a result of realizing the teaching of **“the Mystery,”** will find themselves responsible only to two personalities in the entirety of the universe in all matters of religious belief and practice. Those two are our Father and our elder brother Jesus Christ. There are no others!

And while Paul wanted Christians to know their elevated and majestic standing with God, the realization of their exalted authority has the potential for Christians to abuse it if they do not also adopt strong principles of right living to accompany it. Paul demanded that Christians must live righteous lives commensurate with their present status as being members of **“the household of God.”** Christians were expected by Paul to exercise the utmost caution in their manner of living. This spiritual attitude would allow them to not abuse the power and authority Christians presently possess in their divine relationship with God.

Paul insisted that Christians should not relax (even in the slightest) the practice of observing the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Ephesians 4:17–32). Paul continually emphasized righteous living among Christians. Why? Because he realized that the knowledge of the exalted position that Christians now have with the Father could result in a great abuse of proper conduct if they became haughty and irresponsible with their new-found knowledge. With the cautions of the apostle Paul in mind, let us understand what the Christian’s legal standing is with God the Father and Christ Jesus now that **“the Mystery”** has been revealed.

The Legal Standing of Christians Now

Let us understand one thing clearly; though Christians have been instructed (indeed, commanded) by the Father and Christ to practice an outward and inward righteousness in their lives, according to Paul and the other apostles, Christians ought now to be actively pursuing a sin-free life. It must be recognized that Christians have committed sins in the past, they commit sins now, and they will continue to commit sins as long as they are in this flesh. This is a great evil that plagues Christians and the whole of the human race at present.

No matter how hard we try to be righteous and holy in our actions (and I mean in a serious and determined way), we always find ourselves failing to live above sin whether those sins are minor or major. Indeed, the apostle John tells Christians: **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”** (1 John 1:8). This appraisal accurately describes every Christian on earth today, and everyone who has ever lived — including the very apostles of Christ and every other holy man of God (Romans 7:14–25).

In spite of this true evaluation (and all of us know it to be a fact), Christians now have an exalted and a certain appraisal of righteousness from God the Father and Christ that now reckons Christians as being in a state of legal perfection. As the Book of Hebrews plainly records: **“For by one offering He has perfected FOR EVER [to finality⁵] them that are sanctified”** (Hebrews 10:14). The simple truth is, Christians now have a legal standing in the eyes of God that makes them “perfect” and entirely free of sin. There is not the slightest sin that can be charged to their account. This is what Paul confidently taught.

“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God who justifies [declares righteous]. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again.”

• **Romans 8:33–34**

Paul went on to say that no one can condemn Christ! And neither can anyone condemn Christians who are presently reckoned by the Father as being in Christ. We are as free of sin (in a legal sense), as Christ is free of sin. And there is not any limitation of time (past, present, or future) involved in this matter.

The Teaching of the Apostle John

Let us look once again at the apostle John’s teaching on this matter. The same John who said that every Christian is actually a sinner also said in the same epistle (and speaking of Christians who are in the flesh today): **“Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His [God’s] seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”** (1 John 3:9).

The apostle was talking about our legal standing with the Father and Christ in regard to the salvation that God will give to the redeemed saints of God. Though Christians do sin (and all honest Christians know they continue to sin even though they do not want to sin), yet in the eyes of the Father all Christians (all who are begotten of the Father) are no longer reckoned as sinners by the Father and Christ.

In fact, it is impossible for Christians to be acknowledged as sinners in the Father’s eyes! This is because every Christian is considered to be in Christ and in no way can Christ be considered a sinner. Truthfully, all Christians on earth today are reckoned by the Father and Christ to be perfectly sinless because they are in Christ and Christ is in them.

Yes, Christians are reckoned as legally sinless and in no way will the Father and Christ account them in any other fashion but sinless as far as their salvation is concerned! This is what the apostle John stated and he absolutely believed his teaching to be the truth (1 John 3:9).

The Mystery And Sinless Believers

This is also what the apostle Paul taught in the revelation of **“the Mystery.”** Not only were **“all Israel”** to be reckoned as free of sin by their attachment to the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34; Hebrews 8:10–12), but in 63 AD the revelation of **“the Mystery”** extended this same “sin-free relationship” (in a legal sense) to all people in the world.

The teaching of **“the Mystery”** reached out to make all people on earth (no matter of what race they were) share in this divine relationship with the Father through the efforts of Christ Jesus. From then on, all nations on earth were given the final revelation of the Father that He and Christ Jesus had in mind to do for the human race from before the foundation of the world. Simply put, the revelation of **“the Mystery”** meant that all humans who had ever been born on earth or who will ever be born on earth are destined to share in the divine salvation that God the Father accomplished through the actions of His firstborn Son Jesus Christ. The revelation of **“the Mystery”** shows that all humans are in the eyes of the Father and Christ reckoned as legally sin-free in regards to salvation.

⁵ The Greek word translated “for ever” has to do with “finality” or “completion.” It has nothing to do with Greek words for time, and has no relation to the Greek words *aion* or *chronos*. Read the Concordant New Testament translation of Hebrews 10:14: **“For by one approach present He has perfected to a finality those who are hallowed.”** DWS

As one can easily see, this knowledge of our legal standing in God's eyes can provide a great potential to carnal-minded people (be they professing Christians or not) to practice wrongdoing in their lives because they can know (and rightly so) that God will one day save them with a salvation that God has promised all people through the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of the whole world.

But what such rebels (and that is the only term that they deserve who adopt such an attitude) fail to realize are the abundant teachings (indeed, commands) from God that all Christians should always be active in doing good works (Ephesians 2:8–10). God will not be mocked by anyone. Christians are constantly warned by Paul and other apostles not to abuse the grace of God in these matters. Jude spoke of such individuals when he said:

“For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the GRACE of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

• *Jude 4*

God will not be mocked by such actions and the people who do such things will be in serious trouble with God in this life. Furthermore, they are in danger of missing out on **“the Kingdom of God”** if they do not repent of their evil ways and return to the practice of good works and righteousness (Galatians 6:7–8).

In spite of the potential for abuse, the teachings of God about His salvation being based on His grace and not human works (whether good or bad) are absolutely true and proper. God does not legally impute sins to the world any longer in regard to their salvation. Let us look at this matter more closely.

God's Imputation Of Sins To Christ

As early as writing Second Corinthians Paul knew that Christ's sacrifice of sins reached out to include the forgiveness of all the sins of mankind. Paul taught that **“the love of Christ constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead”** (2 Corinthians 5:14). Paul realized that **“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them”** (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Though Paul, before the revelation of **“the Mystery”** in 63 AD, knew that all people in the world were no longer having their trespasses accounted to them (as far as salvation was concerned), he still thought at that time that

[1] all Gentiles had to first become Israelites before their sins could be forgiven, and that

[2] they could then be reckoned as sin-free as were Israelites.

But in 63 AD, God gave to Paul and others the understanding that Israelites and Gentiles were now acknowledged by the Father on the same level of standing in all matters involving salvation.

The legal status of Christians as revealed in the Book of Colossians was that by being **“in Christ”**:

- They were now symbolically reckoned as circumcised when Christ was circumcised as an infant (Colossians 2:11).
- They were symbolically reckoned as baptized when Christ was baptized by John the Baptist (v. 12).
- They were symbolically reckoned as having died and as resurrected from the dead when Christ died and was resurrected (verses 12–13).

Paul went on to say: **“If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God”** (Colossians 3:1).

Paul taught that all righteous deeds of Christ while He was on earth have now been imputed (or accounted) to us. See my research study: **“The Way to Salvation in the Christian Gospel”** where this principle is explained in detail. All the sins of the world were placed on Christ throughout His life and at His death on the tree of crucifixion, and if we are **in** Christ all our sins have been forgiven **in** him.

This also means that when Christ was resurrected three days later, He was resurrected sin-free and that God the Father accepts us as equally sin-free since we are now in Christ (Ephesians 1:3 through 2:6).

In the Book of Ephesians Paul shows the present legal status of Christians. God has placed us in the heavenlies in the person of Christ. Paul said God has:

“... quickened us together with Christ (by grace are you saved) and has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.”

• *Ephesians 2:5–6, Greek*

The Father already accounts that all Christians have been (in His eyes) resurrected from the dead when Christ was resurrected, and at that time triumphantly and successfully passed the judgment of condemnation that all people must undergo. Paul taught that Christians are now (legally) sitting on the same throne on which Christ Jesus now sits in heaven!

This is why Paul insisted that our salvation in Christ (whether Israelite or Gentile) is secured solely through the efficacy of **God’s grace** through Christ without the slightest works of our own (whether good or bad) being effective in the matter. **“For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God”** (Ephesians 2:8).

All of us have now been “justified” through the works of Christ who did his works on our behalf. Although Christians are actually sinners (and we are commanded not to commit sin as best we can), we were “justified” through Christ’s actions **for us**. Or, as Paul meant in the Greek, we have been legally “declared righteous” by God the Father and are reckoned to be completely sin-free.⁶

In all matters dealing with religious rules and regulations, Christians are reckoned as **“dead to the law”** (Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:19) and its ritualistic demands of works. There were no religious laws for man on earth that governed the apostle Paul any longer. Paul already understood when he wrote First Corinthians in 55 AD that **“all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not”** (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Paul knew that his salvation was not dependent on what he did or did not do in matters of religion. But he also was well aware that not all things are expedient to do, nor did they edify a person in Christ. Though Paul knew that all Christians were **“dead to the law,”** his command to Christians in all matters of life was: **“Whether therefore you eat, or drink, or whatsoever you do, do ALL to the glory of God”** (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The Great Danger Of Knowing The Mystery

Knowing the Christian’s present legal status with God the Father grants the Christian a complete freedom from being reckoned a sinner in the judgment to come. This is fine, but such understanding could bring havoc to the lives of carnal minded people if they feel they can do anything with abandon and still be saved by God.

For such evil people (even if they claim to be Christians) Paul had stern and uncompromising words of warning. Such people who adopt such foolish and devilish attitudes are opening themselves to some severe chastisements from God in this life and a certainty that they would not experience the period of time called **“the Kingdom of God,”** which will come on the earth at the second advent of Christ.

Note what Paul said would happen to those who abuse the teaching that salvation will come to all through Christ without any works by humans. Paul said God would not put up with outrageous living by anyone:

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”

• *Galatians 6:7*

“‘Vengeance belongs unto me, I will recompense,’ says the Lord.

And again, ‘the Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.’”

• *Hebrews 10:30–31 (quoting Deuteronomy 32:35–36)*

⁶ Again I recommend Dr. Martin’s article, [“The Way to Salvation in the Christian Gospel.”](#) DWS

For those people who deliberately commit sin with a haughtiness that they will be saved anyway, the apostle Paul gave some admonitions about the wrath of God that would come their way. Note what Paul said of the Christian man who committed an outward immorality in the midst of the Corinthian Christian community. Paul commanded: **“Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, [why?] that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”** (1 Corinthians 5:5).

Yes, Paul knew the man would eventually be saved through the grace of God’s salvation which is granted to all men through Christ, but the sinner who blatantly commits sin and relishes his evil actions, that man can experience severe chastisements from God. Truly, **“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”** (Hebrews 10:31).

Paul knew that **all** people are destined to be saved, because salvation comes to mankind through grace and not by any works of man, whether good or bad. Yet Paul warned Christians that they could miss out experiencing the grandest reward for right living that can be given to mankind. That reward is to be part of **“the age to come”** which is called **“the Kingdom of God.”** It will appear on earth and in heaven at the second advent of Christ. Only those who are worthy to be in the **first** resurrection at Christ’s return will experience the period known as **“the Kingdom of God.”**

If people miss out on the **first** resurrection, they will not experience (as a reward) **“the Kingdom of God”** on earth or in heaven for the thousand years after Christ returns. One of the prime desires of the Jews in the 1st century was to inherit **“the world [aion, age] to come.”** But if people will not practice a reasonable righteousness in their lives, this thousand year period will be denied to them. Such people will not be resurrected until **“the world [age] to come”** has passed.

Paul warned Christians who received the teaching of **“the Mystery”** to live righteous lives. He powerfully wrote to the *ekklesias*:

“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becomes saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving thanks. For this, you know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

• **Ephesians 5:3–5**

This rule (or kingdom) of Christ lasts until He has subdued all His enemies (1 Corinthians 15:20–28). Those who are not raised up in the **first** resurrection (to occur at Christ’s return from heaven) will have to wait until the very end (**“the dispensation of the fulness of times,”** Ephesians 1:10) to be resurrected from the dead. They will not be able to experience the glorious period of time known as **“the Kingdom of Christ and God.”** Simply put, a sinner who knows of the grace of God in regard to His salvation but continues an unrestrained sinful life, he or she will not be considered worthy to gain salvation at the time of Christ’s second advent.

A person who flaunts his or her freedom in Christ and abuses his or her legal standing with God the Father and Christ by giving up the principles of right living, will not take part in that period of **“the Kingdom of Christ and God”** (Ephesians 5:5).

True, as the apostle Paul said, they will finally be saved (salvation being by grace, not by works, whether good or evil works), but their resurrection to immortal life will come at the final resurrection (called by Paul in Greek **“the telos”**) which occurs at the final dispensation in the salvation plan of God (see 1 Corinthians 15:24 and Ephesians 1:10).

Such evil people can be handed over to Satan in this life to be chastised, and even worse (if they do not repent of their ways), they will miss out on experiencing the **first** resurrection.⁷ Recall what Paul said:

⁷ Could this describe you? If so, it might be time to meaningfully consider repenting and change your ways, as did the Corinthian miscreant. See Dr. Martin’s articles, [“The Corinthian Experience”](#) and [“Graduation to Second Corinthians”](#) where Dr. Martin shows that the problems Paul dealt with in First Corinthians were fixed by the time the Corinthian *ekklesia* received Paul’s letter that is called Second Corinthians in our bibles. The situation of the person who married his former mother-in-law was also corrected. See also as my commentaries: [“Paul’s First Message to the Corinthians,”](#) [“First Corinthians Chapter 15,”](#) and [“Subjection in 1 Corinthians 15.”](#) DWS

“Deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh [at this present time], that the spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord.”

• 1 Corinthians 5:5

This is the type of person who has garnered no good works to his account. The bad or evil works that he or she has done will be burnt up.

“If any man’s work abide [the fire] which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

• 1 Corinthians 3:14–15

From Paul’s point of view, it was most important that Christians practice good works (Ephesians 2:10). If one does not, then all such Christians are in danger of not being resurrected at Christ’s second advent (at the **first** resurrection) and they will miss out on the thousand year reign of **“the Kingdom of Christ and God.”** It is just that serious!⁸

Another Abuse Of The Holy Scriptures

While the Word of God shows that **all** mankind is destined one day to be saved through the grace that the Father gives through Christ Jesus, there are special time periods when this salvation will be experienced by mankind. Those who are resurrected when Christ returns will not only enjoy **“the Kingdom of Christ and God”** as a reward (this is the thousand year Millennium when Christ rules with His saints on this earth and in the heavens), but they will also gain their salvation at the same time. Others, however, will not experience **“the Kingdom of Christ and God”** (the Millennium) and they will receive their salvation only after the reign of Christ is over (1 Corinthians 15:25–28).

Even if people miss out on this period when **“the Kingdom of God”** will be in effect, **all** mankind are promised a salvation experience in the dispensation of the fulness of times (Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:10–13; Colossians 1:15–20; John 12:32; Hebrews 2:9). Note that the apostle Paul stated that God:

“... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be given in its own time periods [note the plural: ‘periods’].”

• 1 Timothy 2:4–6, see original Greek

A proper understanding of Scripture shows that salvation will not be given to all people at the second advent of Christ. There are other periods when **all** men (in their own time order) will come to their salvation. But for us who are called during this present age, we have the opportunity of being in the **first** resurrection as long as we do not blatantly and concertedly abuse the wonderful privileges and legal position that God has granted to us through His grace.

Not only can we gain the reward of experiencing **“the Kingdom of God”** (either on earth or in heaven — see 2 Timothy 4:18), but having a present knowledge of **“the Mystery”** also grants to us an immunity from religious rules and regulations of men or of those of the angelic powers on this earth today who influence human beings in various ways.⁹

After all, we are now reckoned as resurrected from the dead in Christ and we are already, symbolically,

⁸ My article, [“Losing Your Salvation”](#) approaches this topic from a different perspective than Dr. Martin does in this article. Yes, you can lose your salvation — temporarily — even after you accept and learn the truth of the Gospel of God. If you know the truth and do not use that truth to let God **“make you free”** (John 8:32), you will be raised to a physical body. Your salvation to a glorified body will be postponed until you are mature enough to accept God’s Words as truth. DWS

⁹ Not all angels are “good,” and not all rules given by “good angels” are beneficial for human beings. Some rules and regulations were added to Israel because of their sins. See Dr. Martin’s second chapter, [“The Law Was Given by Angels,”](#) in his book [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#). DWS

sitting on the same throne of God in heaven as now occupied by Christ Jesus. This is a **real** heavenly citizenship that we have **in** Christ. It means we have been released from **all** religious requirements for human beings on earth no matter what they are.

What Criteria Will God Use To Determine If We Will Be in the First Resurrection?

The only requirement for Christians to inherit the reward of **“the Kingdom of God”** (along with salvation to immortality) at the second advent of Christ, is that we seriously walk in the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).

But where or what is the “line” of sinfulness in our lives that we must not pass if we hope to be in the **first** resurrection? That is easy to determine. If we truly want to be in that resurrection and respect God and Christ for the opportunity of being in **“the Kingdom of Christ and God,”** we can apply the same criterion that the apostle Paul did in regard to our present sins. Read Romans 7:14–25 and apply it to yourself. Paul thanked God (verse 25) that he knew Christ would see him through to the very end. And God will do the same for you and for all of us (1 Corinthians 1:8–9; Philippians 1:6). There is no need for anyone who loves and respects Christ Jesus to fear in these matters.

More Abuse Of Scripture: Ruling People

Look at what most people today who claim to be Christians openly subject themselves to by not understanding their legal position of perfection as revealed in “the Mystery.” Instead of believing and relying on the teachings of the apostle Paul that **“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”** (1 Timothy 2:5), they make all sorts of mediators out of various human beings (and even angelic powers) who influence church denominations on earth today. People readily submit to their religious rules and regulations.

In fact, many today who claim to be “ministers of God” maintain that they have been called by God to rule over God’s saints. This goes far beyond teaching the Scriptures. They demand you submit to them in what you do on your job, in your home (even entering into the affairs of your kitchen, bathroom, and bedroom) to rule over you. Some even have the gall to state or imply that God and Christ put them over other Christians and that if they are not obeyed then people under them cannot be saved.

Such teachings by so-called “ministers of God” are directly opposed to the command given by the apostle Paul that there is no mediator whatever (be he a man or an angel) who is now “over” you or any other Christians to dictate what to do in matters of religious belief or conduct.¹⁰

Abuse Of Scripture: Equating Salvation And The Kingdom of God

One of the most harmful abuses of the Holy Scriptures today, is the teaching by many Christian denominations that there are certain human authorities on earth who must act as mediators in teaching you about God or to act as intermediaries in granting you a special relationship to God and Christ. This abuse is directly contrary to the Word of God as shown by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5.

Within the 2nd, 3rd, and early 4th centuries AD, it was commonly realized by many (probably **most**) Christian theologians that the plan of the Father and Christ was designed to save **all** mankind — just like the apostles Paul and John clearly taught.¹¹ But after Roman Emperor Constantine established his form of Christianity from 325 AD onward throughout the Roman Empire, most church leaders abandoned this belief almost wholesale. It was determined by the ecclesiastical authorities that the common people were not able to appreciate or even to understand the teaching of a universal reconciliation of mankind and the angelic powers to God.

¹⁰ See Dr. Martin’s [“Chapter 22: The Curse of Church Authority”](#) from [Essentials of New Testament Doctrine](#). The result of improper use of “church authority” is leading to [“Chapter 23: Chaos in the Churches.”](#) DWS

¹¹ The best book (in my opinion) of books on the ancient history of universal salvation is by John Hanson, [Universalism: The Prevailing Doctrine Of The Christian Church During Its First Five Hundred Years](#) (Boston and Chicago, Universalist Publishing House, 1899). This is a [downloadable and searchable PDF](#) of Hanson’s book. DWS

This true teaching especially became a problem in regard to maintaining a reasonable discipline within society among the ordinary populace of the Empire. Since the *ekklesia* had then become wedded to the imperial government, the ecclesiastical authorities became a part of the state system and they were responsible for disciplining the citizens of the Empire. They found that the use of biblical teachings could make the job easier for them. And they began to misuse the Word of God in governing the people.

Ecclesiastical authorities in the latter part of the 4th century AD began to teach that a disobedience to the church or the state was a crime against God and that such people would be sent to an ever-burning hell for their misdeeds without the hope of release. The tool that the ecclesiastical authorities used was to equate the biblical teaching about **“the Kingdom of God”** as applying to salvation itself.

In fact, they began to teach that **“the Kingdom of God” was itself salvation!** And this erroneous teaching has persisted in Christian society ever since. By making **“the Kingdom of God”** and “salvation” as one and the same (and by teaching that erroneous comparison), they were able to find many scriptures which taught that people could miss out on **“the Kingdom of God”** if they were not living properly in their personal lives. And this is true.

But when the religious authorities equated the period of **“the Kingdom of God”** with salvation itself, the outcome was the erroneous belief that most of mankind could miss out on salvation as well. This was when a great abuse of the Word of God became evident.

Most of those men knew better. It violated the basic teaching of God (which most of them understood) that all men were destined by God to be saved though not all men would attain to the reward of witnessing the period of **“the Kingdom of God”** which would occur at the second advent of Christ. These men falsely merged two different doctrinal teachings (like grafting apple sprigs onto the boughs of orange trees) and their teachings put the matters of salvation itself into jeopardy.

The truth is, such a confusion of doctrines simply will not work if one is honest with the New Testament teachings. But today, almost everyone in Christendom has adopted this erroneous teaching. To this day preachers and evangelists persist in the nonsensical belief that experiencing the period of **“the Kingdom of God” is salvation itself!** Ministers and church denominations who continue in such false teaching abuse the plain and simple doctrines of the Holy Scriptures.

It is time this practice of combining diverse doctrines of the Scriptures into a single teaching (which falsifies both doctrines) comes to a halt! The apostle Paul told Timothy (and all Christians) that one should **“study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [or, partitioning] the word of God”** (2 Timothy 2:15). It is by mixing scriptural teachings that do not pertain to one another that much abuse of the teaching of the Word of God is so rampant today.

Conclusion

The fact is, the Christian’s legal status today is looked on by God the Father as that of a person who is presently sitting on the throne of Christ in heaven in the same condition of righteousness as Christ Himself (Ephesians 2:6).

As far as salvation is concerned, Christians are now acknowledged as being “perfect” in Christ and there is no need of any man, woman, or angel to act as an intermediary between them and the Father (1 Timothy 2:5). They are reckoned as being perfect. **“For by one offering He has perfected FOR EVER [to finality¹²] them that are sanctified”** (Hebrews 10:14).

Freedom In Christ

All Christians should realize — that since the revelation of **“the Mystery”** was given in 63 AD — that all believers are now free individuals in Christ without the slightest sin attached to their character as far as salvation is concerned. Every Christian is accepted in the eyes of the God our Father as having the same perfect

¹² Remember Dr. Martin’s footnote 6 at the bottom of page 9 above. DWS

righteousness now enjoyed by Christ Jesus Himself.

What all Christians need to do at this present time is to learn not to abuse the teachings of the Holy Scriptures in any way. We should never misuse the wonderful teachings of God and live unrighteous lives since we know that we are reckoned in a legal sense to be as sinless as Christ is sinless.

Such knowledge is not an excuse to sin. It is, on the other hand, a revelation that encourages us to live righteously and in conformity to the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Nor should Christians misuse the Word of God by creating slaves out of other Christians in making them to be servants to us.

All Christians now have a thorough freedom in Christ from the religious regulations and rules which govern people in today's world. God wants Christians to have a full freedom that should be enjoyed (but not abused) by every child who is a member of His divine family.

With this in mind, let us remember what the apostle Paul taught us all: **“Stand fast therefore in the LIBERTY wherewith Christ has made us FREE, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage”** (Galatians 5:1).

Ernest L. Martin, 1989
David Sielaff, April 2023

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