



May 2024

Editor, Keith Sharp

Designer, William Stewart



- unless otherwise noted, answers to questions by Keith Sharp -

In This Issue...

- **Is Homosexuality Natural?** | *Keith Sharp*
- **Do You KNOW God?** | *Jefferson David Tant*
- **Is Jesus Just Explaining the Divorce Law of Deuteronomy 24:1-4?** | *Patrick Donahue*
- **The High Price For A Free Gift** | *Jim Mickells*
- **Claiming 'Victim' Status** | *Greg Gwin*
- **Is There An Architect?** | *Wayne Greeson*
- **Other References to the Anggel of the LORD** | *William Stewart*
- **By Grace You Have Been Saved Through Faith** | *Ethan Jennings*
- **Become Complete** | *Keith Sharp*

Finally, brethren

WHATEVER THINGS

are true
are noble
are just
are pure
are lovely

PHILIPPIANS
4:8

are of good report
IF THERE IS ANY VIRTURE AND IF THERE IS ANYTHING PRAISEWORTHY –
meditate on these things.

You can download this month's Meditate On These Things as a PDF file by clicking [here](#). Also, an archive of past MOTT issues is available at christistheway.com.

Sinners love wealth and use people to gain wealth; saints love people and use wealth to help people.
(adapted from comment on Proverbs by Bruce Waltke)

Is Homosexuality Natural?

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

In an article in our local newspaper, columnist Tina Dupuy defended homosexuality by needling, "Remember those gay penguins?" Sorry, Tina, missed that one. But a little research turned up the existence in the Oslo Natural History Museum of "the world's first exhibit documenting cases of 'homosexual' behavior in nature" (Kyle Butt, M.A., www.apologeticspress.org. "Gay Birds and Bees: Is Homosexuality Really Unnatural?"), including displays about such activity among "penguins, parrots, beetles, whales, giraffes, and others."

Tina, anyone raised around a farm is an eye witness to such behavior among dogs, cattle, etc. The same animals also have "straight" sex. Animals also kill and eat their own offspring, have sex with any available partner, fight and kill rivals, etc., etc. And, if the General Theory of Evolution is true, as Ms. Dupuy alleges, and humans are nothing more than apes with big brains and opposable thumbs, then there really is no such thing as a moral standard, the survival of the fittest is our highest law (Remember Hitler?), and we might as well behave as the brutes we are.

But, thankfully, humans are the only creatures on this earth the Lord God made in His own image (Genesis

1:27). Thus, we must not behave “like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed.” In fact, those who so act “will utterly perish in their own corruption” (2 Peter 2:12). Yes, homosexuality is indeed “against nature” (Romans 1:26-27).

Ms. Dupuy conceded, “If you can choose being gay, then homosexuality can be condemned as a shortcoming”, but countered, “If you can’t choose to be gay, and it’s something you’re born with - then being against homo-sexual civil rights is just plain (sic) old-fashioned prejudice....”

Certainly some people are predisposed to homosexual behavior whether by a prenatal problem or by childhood experiences. They have our sympathy and understanding (cf. Matthew 9:10-13) but not our approval of their sinful behavior (Ephesians 5:11).

Homosexuality was an accepted practice among Gentiles in the first century (Romans 1:26-27), because they willfully refused to acknowledge God (Romans 1:18-25). But those who became Christians chose to turn away from this depraved lifestyle to live godly lives (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Each of us has sins to which he is predisposed, things which are special temptations, things that each formerly practiced, and for which every one of us deserves condemnation (Romans 1:18-19, 28-32). To come to Christ for salvation we must repent of this behavior (Romans 2:1-11). We must learn to live with virtue and self control so that our lives become reflections of the moral nature of God (2 Peter 1:2-11).

Humanism is a message of hopeless despair - You’re an animal, and you can’t change. The gospel extends the love of God and the hope of Christ. You were made in the image of God. Christ can change you (Romans 7:24 - 8:4). You can have eternal life in heaven (1 Peter 1:3-5). I hope you will reject humanism and accept the gospel.

Do You KNOW God?

Jefferson David Tant | Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA

Well, I don't think any of my readers have ever met God in person, so one might say that no one alive on earth today actually "knows" God. But there are various uses of the word "know" other than just meeting someone personally with the result that you then "know" that person.

For example, my college major was a study of Biblical Greek. So you could say I “know” Greek. I take my car to the service center where the mechanic “knows” how to take care of my engine.

Now note what John said about knowing God.

“By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:” (1 John 2:3-5) .

So, how do we “know” God? John says we know God by keeping His commandments.

In a sense, we might say that one who strives to keep God’s commandments acknowledges that he or she respects God by obeying the Word of God, which has been given to us in a book we call the Bible. And that’s how the inspired writer says that we “know” God.

Another passage that has bearing on the subject is John 14:21: “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” So. loving God involves obeying Him.

Now, consider. In my daily walks, I come in contact with neighbors, store clerks, even strangers. From

time to time, I engage them in conversation about spiritual matters. In our conversations, I may ask them if they believe in God, and ask if they are Christians. The usual answer I get is “Yes.” Then I may ask, “Where do you go to church?” And more and more I get the answer that they don’t go to church. In other words, you don’t have to go to church to believe in God.

Is there a problem? I open God’s Word to Hebrews 10:24-25:

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Can it truly be said that they “know God” when they refuse to obey this exhortation?

Then consider some “Christian” denominations that do not practice baptism, such as the Salvation Army and Christian Science churches. Jesus said in Mark 16:16: “He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned.’ Or what about the many denominations that baptize by sprinkling or pouring water, when the New Testament Greek word “baptizo” literally means “to dip, plunge or immerse.” That’s why we see Bible references of baptisms taking place in rivers and the sea. It was centuries after the New Testament was written that men decided that baptism by a burial in water was too inconvenient, so the change was made. But is “sprinkling” water “keeping His commandments?”

We could go on for page after page, but I hope you see the point. Any church doctrine or practice that differs from what is written in the Bible is in truth evidence that those who practice these things do not know God. There is a church that is seeking to follow the teaching of the Bible without adding to, changing or subtracting from. If any readers have questions, feel free to write to me. – jdtant3@juno.com

Is Jesus Just Explaining The Divorce Law Of Deuteronomy 24:1-24?

Patrick Donahue | Harvest, Alabama, USA

In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus said:

“It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”

The obvious approach to take on this passage is that Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy 24:1, and then giving his new covenant teaching on the subject in contrast to that old covenant teaching of Moses. But many brethren among us are now rejecting this understanding, and instead are teaching Jesus was just explaining the true meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in Matthew 5:31-32 (and Matthew 19:3-9). They then make a jump (with no justification), and say therefore the teaching contained in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 applies to us today under the new covenant.

Jerry Bassett used this approach as a basis for his false teaching on the subject that is presented in his book “Rethinking Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage.” Samuel Dawson teaches the “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 is adultery, and since the woman put away in Deuteronomy 24 could remarry (and since the teaching of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 still applies today according to him), the put away guilty fornicator can remarry under the new covenant. Others teach the “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 is not adultery, and since the woman put away in Deuteronomy 24 could remarry (and since Deuteronomy 24:1-4 still applies today), an innocent put away person can remarry under the new covenant.

Jesus Is Contrasting The New Law With The Old Law

It is strange to me how so many could believe that in every instance in Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus is just correcting false interpretations of Moses’ law, when all in six cases that He speaks of what “was said by them of old time,” Jesus essentially quotes Moses’ law (verses 21, 27, 31, 33, 38, and 43a). Since when is a false interpretation of God’s word correctly represented by an exact quote from God’s word? Let’s look at

one of the cases in detail to illustrate what is going on in all six cases - the case that is perhaps the clearest of all in showing Jesus is in the (preparatory) process of establishing a new law in this section. In Matthew 5:33-37, Jesus says:

“Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: ... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

Is Jesus just correcting a false interpretation of Moses’ law here by giving the true understanding? The clear answer is no. What Jesus presents in verse 33 is not a false interpretation of Moses’ law. Leviticus 19:12, Numbers 30:2, and Psalm 15:1,4b clearly taught it was wrong to “forswear thyself” (swear to do something and then fail to follow through on that commitment). And Jesus’ contrasting teaching in verse 34, “Swear not at all,” is absolutely not the true meaning of Moses’ law; instead it is plainly different than Moses’ law. Moses’ law taught it was right to swear, but just wrong to forswear thyself. Jesus’ teaching is stricter than that. He is teaching you shouldn’t even swear to start with. His is new covenant teaching. We see the same thing taught in James 5:12.

Nowhere in Matthew 5:21-48 is Jesus only giving the true interpretation of Moses’ law. He is giving new covenant law. And this includes Matthew 5:31-32, where Jesus is contrasting (with the contrast word “But”) his new (same as in the beginning, Matthew 19:3-9) law on divorce with Moses’ old law. Jesus’ and Moses’ divorce laws are critically different.

Jesus’ Divorce Law Is Different Than Moses’ Divorce Law

Many differences between Jesus’ law on divorce and Moses’ law on divorce can be pointed out. In Deuteronomy 24:1-2, the one who was divorced had the right to remarry another, while Matthew 5:32b and Matthew 19:9b specifically forbid the remarriage of the put away spouse. In Deuteronomy 24:3-4 the put away woman could not go back to her first husband if she remarried and the second marriage ended in divorce or death, but the new testament demands she must go back if the first divorce was unscriptural (Matthew 5:32, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11). Leviticus 20:10 teaches the adulterer was to be stoned, while Matthew 19:9 teaches, not that they are to be stoned, but that they could be divorced. In addition, Deuteronomy 21:11-14 allowed a man to get rid of a foreign wife simply if he had “no delight in her.” The New Testament allows no such thing, not even close.

Here the debate turns to whether or not “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 refers to adultery. The point has been made correctly for many decades that “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 cannot refer to adultery, because adulterers were not divorced under Moses’ law; they were stoned (Leviticus 20:10). But Samuel Dawson and others say the adulterer was only put to death when there were two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 17:6); that Deuteronomy 24:1 is talking about divorce for fornication when there were not two witnesses. Thus they think they have Matthew 19:9 and Deuteronomy 24:1 equivalent on this point. This idea, that Deuteronomy 24:1 could be talking about divorce for adultery, when the adultery was not witnessed by two or more, sounds plausible on the surface, but Mr. Dawson and others are overlooking the significance of two important test cases found in Moses’ law, and another important verse concerning two or three witnesses.

Two Tests For Sexual Immorality

It is true a person could not be put to death under Moses’ law without incontrovertible proof. But there was at least one other valid form of proof (a test of God) that was acceptable in addition to the proof of two or more actually witnessing a woman caught in the act of adultery. In Deuteronomy 22:13-21, we are given the case of what is sometimes called the “tokens of virginity” test. If a man suspected his wife had not been a virgin when he married her, then he could bring it up before the elders of the city. The parents of the wife then had the opportunity to bring the tokens of their daughter’s virginity (bloody sheets) to the elders to prove her innocence. If they could not produce these tokens of virginity, their daughter’s guilt was assumed. Now normally someone wouldn’t be stoned without two or three witnesses to the act, but in this case, because she failed God’s test, that was considered good enough proof, and the people were

instructed to stone the immoral woman (Deuteronomy 22:21).

In Numbers 5:13-27 we have another test given. This one was for sexual immorality after the marriage. It is generally called the “bitter water” test. If a man suspected his wife of adultery, but there were “no witnesses against her” (verse 13), the man was to take his wife to the priest. The priest was to cause the woman to drink the bitter water (holy water with dust put in). If the woman was guilty of adultery, then the Lord would (supernaturally) cause her belly to swell, and her thigh to rot. If this did not happen, she was considered to be innocent of the charge. Here is valid proof of sexual immorality just like in Deuteronomy 22:13-21, and I think it is safe to say the instructions of Lev 20:10 (stoning) were to be carried out in this case also. Numbers 5:30-31 seems to indicate such, and divorce is certainly not mentioned.

Remember, Deuteronomy 24:1 is talking about a woman “found” in uncleanness. This indicates there was not just some suspicion of guilt, but that there was valid proof. But if adultery was involved, valid proof would lead to death, not divorce. So Mr. Dawson’s point that Deuteronomy 24:1 could be talking about adultery (witnessed by less than two), because no one could be put to death without two witnesses, is falsified. Deuteronomy 22:13-21 clearly gives a case where another form of proof, in absence of two witnesses, was good enough for stoning. Therefore the proposition that Deuteronomy 24:1 cannot be talking about divorce for adultery (because the sentence for adultery was stoning, not divorce) still stands. And that leads again to the conclusion that Jesus is not explaining the true meaning of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 in Matthew 5:32 and 19:3-9, but instead is teaching something different (His new law).

The 2 Or 3 Witnesses Rule Applies To All Offenses

An “ungetoverable” problem with Mr. Dawson’s theory that Deuteronomy 24:1 is talking about divorce for unwitnessed adultery, is that under this supposed scenario, a man wouldn’t be able to divorce his wife without 2 or 3 witnesses either. Deuteronomy 19:15 shows the 2 or 3 witnesses rule applies to “any” accusation of sin, not just to capital offenses. So it would take 2 or 3 witnesses (or another form of valid proof) for a man to “convict” his wife of adultery, regardless of whether the penalty was to be death or divorce. If the man had 2 or 3 witnesses (proof), the instruction was for the wife to be stoned. If he had no proof, if it were just his word against hers, he had no right to have her stoned or to divorce her. She wasn’t just assumed guilty and divorced just because he accused her. Proof was required. Divorce for “uncleanness” in Deuteronomy 24:1 had to have been divorce for a proven non-capital offense; so something other than adultery.

Conclusion

Jesus’ law on divorce is stricter than Moses’ law (as previously shown). Those who try to bring Deuteronomy 24:1-4 into the new covenant do so with the intent that the looser teaching of Moses on the subject applies to situations today. But Moses’ divorce and remarriage law does not apply today; Jesus’ law does. Jesus shows this in Matthew 5:31-32 by quoting Moses’ law from Deuteronomy 24:1, and then giving his contrasting (“But”) teaching that divorce is wrong except for fornication. Jesus shows this again in Matthew 19:8-9 by admitting Moses did allow divorce for reasons other than fornication, before pointing out ... “but from the beginning it was not so.” Verse 9 shows Jesus’ teaching was going to be the same as in the beginning, that his teaching was - divorce except for fornication, followed by remarriage, is adultery.

Will the new methods of introducing more exceptions never end? Jesus’ teaching is simple and straightforward. Divorce is always wrong, “saving for the cause of fornication” (Matthew 5:32).

The High Price For A Free Gift

Jim Mickells | Lewisburg, Tennessee, USA

When Paul wrote to those at Rome, he speaks about a free gift which is given to man by the grace of God. “But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man’s offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many” (Romans 5:15). I am so afraid when many people read this verse and the text around it, the mention of a free gift, their thought is

that which cost nothing. That is just not the case at all!

Think of what it cost God, His only Son. In the same chapter in the book of Romans, where the apostle mentions the free gift, notice the price God paid. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). In the gospel of John some people refer to 3:16 as "The golden text of the Bible;" "The gospel in a nutshell;" "Everyman's text;" or "The heart of the Bible." No wonder! Look what it says.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16-17).

Our salvation was extremely expensive to Jehovah.

It cost Jesus His life. Look once again at Romans 5.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly...For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:6,10).

All the physical suffering Jesus had to endure to redeem mankind. Being scourged, beaten, the crown of thorns placed on His head, nails driven through His hands and feet, and left hanging on the cross to die one of the most painful deaths known. There was also the mental anguish which He had to endure. The disciples fled from Him when He needed them the most. Peter denied Him and Judas betrayed Him. His own Jewish people told Pilate to crucify Him, and release to them Barabbas who was a rebel, a robber, and a murderer. One of the seven sayings from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). One thing for sure is meant by this statement and that is the Father did not interfere with the death of Jesus on the cross so that He might be the sacrifice offered for the forgiveness of sin. A very high price paid by the Lord to save us!

The word "free gift" (charisma) is defined as "A gift of grace, an undeserved benefit. The suffix -ma, indicates the result of grace" (The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament). Thayer says, "a gift of grace; a favor which one receives without any merit of his own; the economy of divine grace, by which the pardon of sin and eternal salvation is appointed to sinners in consideration of the merits of Christ laid hold of by faith" (Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament). Wuest gives us this definition, "Free gift" is charisma, "a gift of grace, a favor which one receives without merit of his own," referring here to the gift of eternal life" (**Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament**).

When we see the word "free gift" it does not mean there is no cost involved, but it is something we don't deserve, it is unmerited. Notice again what Thayer said of this free gift, "laid hold by faith." That is exactly what Paul said, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The type of faith which saves is one which obeys "the faith" or the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 1:5; 16:26). The Lord never promised the gift of salvation to those who refused to submit to Him, only those who will obey (Romans 10:16; Hebrews 5:9, etc.). My faith in the Lord must lead me to repent, confess Him with my mouth, and be baptized in water for the remission of the sins of which I am guilty (Mark: 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-38; 22:16, etc.).

Even after our initial obedience to the gospel, there is a cost involved in serving the Lord to maintain our relationship with Him. When baptized in water, into the death of Christ where I receive the benefits of His sacrifice, I then arise a new creature to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4-6). I am no longer a slave of sin, but I become slave of righteousness (Romans 6:15-18). In the gospel of Luke, one came to Jesus and said, "I will follow You wherever You go." He warned this man, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nest, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Luke 9:57-58). Please note what is said in verses 59-62 of this text. There are three things I believe we all can learn from what is said by the Lord; (1) There is a cost involved in serving Him (2) We must have our priorities in the right place (3) Our focus must always be upon the Lord and where we are going, heaven.

The question we must answer, are we willing to pay the cost for the free gift which is offered to us? We don't deserve such yet the Lord offers it to us!

Claiming 'Victim' Status

Greg Gwin | Columbia, Tennessee, USA

We hear it frequently in the news these days. It has been a common defense in some high profile criminal cases. The basic argument is that people can be excused for committing even hideous crimes if they can demonstrate that something awful happened in their past. Unfortunately, this approach has proven successful in our perverted justice system. Murders, kidnappers and sexual offenders of every sort have been set free or have had their sentences reduced. As a result, we are seeing more and more criminals rush to assume "victim" status.

It is happening in the church, too. It is not uncommon for sinful brethren to attempt to "turn the tables" on those who are trying to restore them. "You didn't show the proper love toward me;" "You were unkind and didn't help me enough when I needed you;" "You were too harsh in the way you rebuked me;" etc., etc., etc. You see, they have learned how to become the "victims."

We agree that brethren can sometimes approach situations in the wrong way. All of us need to show love, forbearance, patience and kindness. Sometimes we fail in these things. Everyone can do better. But, we are weary of sinners turning the whole matter of forgiveness around. If they have their way, the faithful ones are forced to beg them for forgiveness, while their own sins are ignored. This simply will not work!

Observe the case of Peter rebuking Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:18-24). Simon was told that "wickedness" and a bad heart had left him in the "gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity." Surely he could have complained about Peter's harsh words, or unloving manner. Undoubtedly he could have countered with accusations about how he had been mistreated by others. Instead, he humbly accepted the rebuke and requested prayer. Sinners in the church today need to learn a lesson from him. Think!

- by Greg Gwin

Is there any architect?

Wayne Greeson | Connersville, Indiana, USA

Even something as small as an apple

It's simple and somehow complex

Sweet and divine,

The perfect design

Can I speak to the Architect?

This is how the new song of Kacey Musgraves "The Architect" begins. Musgraves recently performed "The Architect" on The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. It's a light and airy melody that caught my ear the first time I heard it on the radio.

As I listened, the words gently unfolded in my mind and then its message hit me. It is beautiful and brilliant. I urge you to look it up and give it a listen.

The arguments for the existence of God are powerful. The most powerful argument is the teleological argument also known as the argument from design.

This argument begins with the observation that the universe exhibits order and design. Since every finite effect has a cause adequate to produce it, an infinite intelligent designer is the only adequate cause to produce the order and design we observe in the universe. Therefore, the universe was caused by an

Intelligent Designer.

The apostle Paul makes this argument in one simple sentence: "For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God" (Hebrews 3:4). Every house exhibits a design which points back to the one who designed/built it. The universe exhibits design which came from the Master Designer, God.

One of the most famous presentations of the argument of design was by an English Anglican clergyman, apologist, and philosopher, William Paley (1743–1805). Paley wrote *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, in which he used a form of the argument from design by the watchmaker analogy.

Paley wrote that if while he was walking across the heath and "If I stumbled on a stone and asked how it came to be there, it would be difficult to show that the answer, it has lain there forever is absurd. Yet this is not true if the stone were to be a watch." Paley describes in detail the intricate workings of the found watch. He argues that just as the function and complexity of a watch implies a watch-maker, so likewise the function and complexity of the universe implies the existence of a universe-maker.

His argument is so powerful that even in 20th century, atheists were still attempting to refute it.

British evolutionary biologist and atheist Richard Dawkins (b. 1941) wrote **The Blind Watchmaker** in 1986, arguing against Paley's watchmaker analogy. Dawkins denies this world has evidence of design calling it "the power of the illusion of design" and "complex things that appear to have been designed for a purpose." Calling design an "illusion" simply ignores the evidence by calling it something else.

While I have read and given many variations of the argument from design, Musgraves' song "The Architect" is the best presentation I have ever heard. The song is not a hard edged argument, but a gentle, beautiful and heartfelt journey to understand our world and more importantly ourselves.

Kacey begins by asking us to consider something common and so familiar to all of us, an apple. It's small and simple, and yet is amazingly complex in its color and flavor and how it can surprise and delight us. We would even say it is divine, it comes from God.

An apple is so perfectly designed to eat, entrance and satisfy us that there must be a divine Designer! Like a satisfied restaurant diner who wants to congratulate the chef, Kacey asks "Can I speak to the Architect?"

But then Kacey turns from the small to the grand.

There's a canyon that cuts
Through the desert
Did it get there because of a flood?
Was it devised or were you surprised
When you saw how grand it was?

The stunning size and beauty of the Grand Canyon cutting deep into the Arizona desert is an awesome sight. Kacey asks whether it was planned or devised by a "flood"?

Those who believe in a Grand Architect, see the Grand Canyon as evidence of the Flood spoken of in Genesis as "the waters receded continually from the earth", which came about by God's decree. Genesis 6-8; 8:3.

Is it thought out at all?
Or just paint on a wall?
Is there anything that you regret?

I don't understand,
Are there blueprints or plans?
Can I speak to the Architect?

Kacey asks more questions in the chorus. Are the small to grand designs evidence of intelligent thought or just splattered paint on a wall?

She turns to our inner design: "Is there anything you regret?" When you feel regret or guilt, then there is further evidence of the design or plan of the Architect. Again, Kacey asks to speak to the Architect to understand His plans.

Sometimes I look in the mirror,
And wish I could make a request.
Could I pray it away,
Am I shapeable clay
Or is this as good as it gets?

Kacey turns her thoughts inward to herself as she looks in the mirror and considers herself and her regrets, she wants to ask some important questions. Can she pray to the Potter, who shaped her, to take away her faults and regrets? Or is there no Potter to pray to and reshape her, and she cannot become better?

One day, you're on top of the mountain
So high that you'll never come down
Then the wind at your back carries ember and ash
That it burns your whole house to the ground.

Even though you may be at a pinnacle in your life, on top of the mountain, yet from behind you comes the bits and pieces of your darkest regrets that ignite and burns your whole life and well-being down. There are few things that are more devastating than when one's house is destroyed by fire.

I thought that I was too broken
And maybe too hard to love
I was in a weird place,
Then I saw the right face
And the stars and the planets lined up.

Kacey's inward search brings her to think that she is so filled with regrets and guilt for her sins, she was lost, too broken and unlovable. Being broken and lost is a strange and horrible place, but then the "right face" or person came and all the stars and planets lined up. The design and purpose of the Architect's plan brought love and changed her life.

Does it happen by chance?
Is it all happenstance?
Do I have a say in this mess?
Is it too late to make more space?
Can I speak to the Architect?

The life that we make, is it random or fate?
Can I speak to the Architect?

Is there an architect?

The last lines of the song become a series of questions to get us to decide whether we live our lives by

random chance or within the design and plan of the Architect. Do our lives, our regrets, our self-destruction, our brokenness and our finding love just happen by random chance? Or is there a design and a plan in which I have a choice to make my mess better? Is it too late to make my life fit the Architect's design better?

Kacey asks the question she wants us all to be asking: Can I speak to the Architect? After all of these reflections and questions, she closes her song by asking each one of us the biggest question of all: Is there an architect?

"God, who made the world and everything in it ... gives to all life, breath, and all things. ...[S]o that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring'" (Acts 17:24-28).

Other References to the Angel of the LORD

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

William Stewart | Kingston, Ontario, Canada

2 SAMUEL 24:16-17

David had sinned against the LORD by numbering the people. The prophet Gad came to David, giving him a choice of three things which would come as a result. That day, the LORD brought a plague upon the land, and seventy thousand men of Israel died (1 Chronicles 21:14). After this great number had died, the LORD restrained the Angel of the LORD, for it was enough. In 1 Chronicles 21:16, we read,

...David lifted his eyes and saw the Angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, having in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. So David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their face.

1 KINGS 19:7

Elijah just heard that Jezebel planned to kill him because of what happened to the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 19:2; 18:40). He had given up (v 4). As he lay there, an angel touched him (v 5). A couple verses later, the one who touched him came back, and is called "the Angel of the LORD" (v 7).

2 KINGS 19:35

The Assyrians, having defeated Israel thought they would also rise up against Jerusalem. The Lord stated, "...I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake" (2 Kings 18:34). A verse later, we find the Angel of the LORD entered the camp of the Assyrians and killed 185,000 of their men, leaving Sennacherib their king to flee away to Nineveh. Note, Isaiah 37:36 also attributes this to the Angel of the LORD.

PSALM 34:7; 35:5-6

Psalm 34 was written while David pretended madness before Abimelech, the Philistine king (34:1). It is a Psalm of praise, for God hears, answers, and protects His people. Verse 7 declares, "The Angel of the LORD encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them." In Psalm 35, David likens his enemies to chaff in the wind, chased by the Angel of the LORD.

ECCLESIASTES 5:6

Solomon stressed the importance of keeping our vows (v 5). God has no pleasure in fools (v 4) and does not want excuses (v 6). The writer says not to sin by excusing ourselves before "the messenger of God" (KJV, "the Angel of God.").

ISAIAH 63:9

Isaiah spoke about the LORD, who became the Saviour of His people (v 8). The One who provided salvation is identified as the Angel of His Presence.

HOSEA 12:3-5

Hosea contrasted the unfaithfulness of God's people in his time (v 1-2) with the greatness of Jacob's faith. Jacob struggled with God, the Angel, and prevailed (Genesis 32:24-28).

ZECHARIAH 1:11; 3:1-6

Throughout the text, an angel is Zechariah's guide to the visions that he sees (1:9). Like John experienced in Revelation, an angel guided Zechariah, but the LORD also spoke and appeared to him. The prophet saw a man standing among the myrtle trees (1:8). He is identified as the Angel of the LORD (1:11). In chapter 3, Zechariah saw Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD (v 1, 3, 5, 6), who is the Lord Jesus.

ZECHARIAH 12:8

The prophet spoke of God's protection for Jerusalem against her enemies (12:1-4). At verse 8, their strength is revealed - for the Angel of the LORD would be before them.

ISAIAH 6:1-10

Isaiah saw the Lord sitting on a throne (v 1). He feared, for he was of unclean lips, but had seen "the King, the LORD of hosts" (v 5). The Lord gave him a message to give to the people; a message which Jesus would quote a few times in His earthly ministry:

Keep on hearing, but do not understand, keep on seeing, but do not perceive. Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.

(Isaiah 6:9-10)

John 12:37-41 reveals that it was Jesus whom Isaiah saw. Jesus participated in the fulfillment of the word He had given to Isaiah (Matthew 13:13-15; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10).

Are there more texts that speak about the appearances and activities of the Christ in the Old Testament? Likely. But the texts in the past 8 lessons are ample evidence of His presence and activity in every age, not just during His earthly ministry.

TAKEAWAY POINTS

Having considered the evidence for the Lord's work in the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, David, Solomon, Elijah, Isaiah, Hosea, Zechariah, and more, we should understand the Lord Jesus has been present and active in every age.

He promises that He is active in our age too. He told the disciples, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). The Scriptures reveal the Lord as both the protector and provider of His people. He is alive, He is present, He is active!

By Grace You Have Been Saved Through Faith

Ethan Jennings | Olney, Illinois, USA

Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." This passage is probably one of the most misused in our world today. Folks will often turn to these verses and say that this proves salvation is by faith alone. However, this is not what the passage teaches us. If this were so, it contradicts many other passages in the Bible – including other writings of Paul (Romans 6:1-6, Gal. 3:27)!

Before we look at other passages that say salvation is not dependent on faith alone, let's look at the context of what Paul writes. The last part of the verse says, "so that no one may boast." That's the key to understanding the passage. When Paul says, "not as a result of works," he means works of merit. We are

saved by grace through faith, not because we earned it – then man could boast! We can be saved because God’s grace allowed us to be saved from our sins (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The following verse says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). What are these good works? How can we know what a good work is unless it comes from God’s word (2 Timothy 3:16-17)? Thus, these good works are what we need to follow. We’re saved by faith, but not faith alone (James 2:14-26). Our faith motivates us to obey God. Yet, these are not meritorious works. That’s what Paul was saying!

Brethren, the scripture does not contradict itself. Salvation occurs apart from works of merit because if men could merit or earn salvation, they would have something about which to boast. Instead, we’re saved by God’s grace and through faith in Christ that motivates us to obey God’s precious word.

Become Complete

Keith Sharp | Mountain Home, Arkansas, USA

The apostle Paul had a stormy relationship with the brethren in Corinth. He began the church there on his second preaching journey to the Gentiles (Acts 18:1-17) and returned twice more (2 Corinthians 13:1). The church there had many sins which Paul strove mightily to eradicate (e.g., 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21).

But in conclusion to Second Corinthians he gave them a brief, friendly farewell that, if heeded, would mend the church.

“Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you” (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Though Paul was bidding them farewell, he was giving them the keys to being a people pleasing to God.

The term translated “Farewell” (“chairō”) in the **King James Version** and **New King James Version** is rendered “rejoice” in the **English Standard Version** and **New American Standard Version**. The “finally” before the word and its placement near the end of the letter confirms Paul is telling them goodbye, but the word does primarily mean “rejoice.”

This is a theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. He exhorted them, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

“Rejoice” is the verb form of “joy.” “Rejoice” is what we do; “joy” is what we have. It is a commanded action as well as a promised blessing. “Joy” and “happiness” are not exact synonyms. Happiness is caused by good outward circumstances (“happenstance”). Joy comes from within regardless of outward circumstances. A great blessing we have in Christ is “joy,” the feeling that all is well regardless of the problems and circumstances we face. It is our duty to rejoice in all life’s tribulations. We may be “killed all the day long,” but in and through Christ “we are more than conquerors” (Romans 8:31-39).

Become Complete

The word translated “become complete” is the term used for mending nets (Matthew 4:21; Mark 1:19). Arndt & Gingrich translate it “mend your ways” in this passage and give the definition as “Put in order, restore ... restore to its former condition” (418). It’s what we do when we “restore” a brother who has sinned (Galatians 6:1). It is to be “fully trained” (Luke 6:40), to “perfect what is lacking” in our faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10), to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10), and to be “complete in every good work to do His will” (Hebrews 13:21).

Be of Good Comfort

If we become complete we will be “of good comfort, be of one mind,” and “live in peace” (2 Corinthians 13:11). The **English Standard Version** translates “be of good comfort” as “comfort one another,” expressing the obligation we have to bring solace to each other as a loving spiritual family.

Be of One Mind

To be of one mind is to think alike. We do this by having the same attitude, faith, toward the same standard, the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). As the result we will “all speak the same thing,” there will “be no divisions among” us, but we will be “perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Live in Peace

There will be no turmoil, arguing, or tension in the church as we believe and practice the same thing and demonstrate mutual love and concern.

The God of Love and Peace Will Be with You

Thus, the God who is Himself love (1 John 4:8, 16) will extend to us His fellowship through His Son (1 John 1:3) and will share with us “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3) including peace and joy (Romans 14:17).

Conclusion

Dear brethren, let us become complete.

Works Cited

Arndt, W.F. and F.W. Gingrich, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.**

Bible

English Standard Version

King James Version

New American Standard Version

New King James Version

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line or simply click on the following link: [Unsubscribe](#)

[Click here](#) to forward this email to a friend

Meditate On These Things (MOTT)
2950 Hwy 5 S
Mountain Home, Arkansas 72653
US

[Read](#) the VerticalResponse marketing policy.

vertical DELIVERED BY
response
Try It Free Today!