

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of The Chronicles: God's Preservation Of His Davidic And Levitical Covenants

XIX. Heeding Scripture Above Our Personal Interests

(2 Chronicles 1:13-17)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

There is a great temptation for us Christians today to compromise Scripture for our own interests:

(1) Brannon Howse in his work, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 16, reported, "Numerous members of the New Religious Right refuse to publicly refute [sic] the false Jesus and false gospel of Mormonism and the Catholic Church because to do so would cost them financial contributions and destroy their political coalitions."

(2) Doctrinal compromise for personal interests afflicts our Church from the distant past: last Sunday, a member asked me if Jesus descended into Hades at His death to release Old Testament saints confined there so they could enter heaven. His question reflects a belief mentioned in the Apostles' Creed that is also reading number 622 in our Church hymnal, a creed that claims Jesus at His death "descended into hell." (Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church, 1966, p. 33-34) In Roman Catholicism, this belief is the doctrine of *lymbus patrum*, "limbo of the fathers," or limbo of Old Testament saints. (britannica.com/topic/limbo-Roman-Catholic-theology#ref222486)

The forerunner of the Apostles' Creed was "The Old Roman Creed," a baptismal creed for the Roman Church (340 A. D.), and it made no mention of Christ descending into Hell or Hades (Ibid., p. 33). However, "(t)he descent into Hades is a common motif in ancient religions. The heroes or the gods descend into Hades to perform rescue, to triumph over death, or as part of the recurring seasons of the agricultural year." ("Descent into Hell (Hades)," Baker's Evang. Dict. of Bib. Theol.; biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/) This belief of Christ's descent into Hades or Hell thus entered the creed by way of pagan influence in the "Catholic" Church that Constantine had made the state religion. "Catholic" Church leaders were eager to avoid government persecution of the past and secure Constantine's financial bounty, so they heeded the emperor's will to unify the empire, compromising with pagans for his support. (Williston Walker, A History of the Christ. Chch., 1959, p. 102, 105; Dave Hunt, A Woman Rides The Beast, 1994, p. 157-158)

Three Bible passages are often used to support the view that Christ descended into Hades: (a) Ephesians 4:9 KJV that states: "Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"; (b) 1 Peter 3:19-20a KJV that states: "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah . . ." and (c) Acts 2:27 that cites Psalm 16:10 to state: ""Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

We will provide the correct interpretation of these passages and explain the truth on the matter in the sermon Conclusion, but this illustration shows how Christian leaders even from the distant past of Church History have compromised the Bible's truth for the sake of their own personal interests to the harm of God's people even today!

Need: *So we ask, "How necessary is it for us today not to compromise Scripture for our own interests?!"*

I. The author of 2 Chronicles noted that after God had promised to give Solomon riches, wealth and honor unlike any king before or after him, Solomon worked to acquire these things himself, 2 Chron. 1:12-17:

- A. When God asked Solomon what he desired from Him, and Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to be able to rule the empire of Israel, the Lord encouraged Solomon to look to Him for all his blessing by abundantly giving him riches, wealth and honor in addition to what Solomon had asked, 2 Chronicles 1:12.
- B. However, following his conversation with God, Solomon returned to Jerusalem and worked to provide for himself the wealth and the honor that God had promised to give him, 2 Chronicles 1:13-17:
 1. Solomon returned to Jerusalem after meeting with the Lord in Gibeon and proceeded to accumulate 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, placing them in chariot cities around Israel, 2 Chronicles 1:13-14.
 2. He also acquired silver, gold and cedar lumber, making them commonplace in Jerusalem, 2 Chron. 1:15.
 3. Indeed, Solomon's extensive, lucrative trade in acquiring these horses and chariots provided for the gold, silver and cedar, for he imported horses from Egypt and Kue in southern Asia Minor and exported them at great profit to Hittite and Aramean kings, 2 Chronicles, 1:16-17 NIV; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 620.

II. However, Solomon's efforts to acquire what God had promised to give him actually violated God's Scripture commands that Israel's kings not THEMSELVES try to acquire these things, Deut. 17:16, 17b:

- A. Moses had directed that Israel's kings were not to multiply horses to themselves, nor cause the people of Israel to return to Egypt to multiply horses to themselves, Deuteronomy 17:16.
- B. In addition, Israel's kings were not greatly to multiply to themselves silver and gold, Deuteronomy 17:17b.

III. The reasons for these commands coincided with God's intent HIMSELF to give Solomon these things:

- A. The prohibition against a king's accumulating horses and chariots was meant to keep the king relying on the Lord instead of relying on other powers for national security, *Ibid.*, p. 295; Deuteronomy 20:1.
- B. The prohibition from returning to Egypt from which God had delivered Israel was meant to keep her and her king reliant on God instead of faithlessly trusting in a nation from which God had delivered them, *Ibid.*
- C. God's prohibition against a king's accumulating large sums of silver and gold was to inhibit him from indulging in a lust for material wealth and to keep him dependent on the Lord, *Ibid.*
- D. After all, it was God's intent that **He HIMSELF** might provide these bounties **FOR Solomon**:
 1. We learned in our last message in this series that God's *reason* for providing Solomon abundant wealth and honor was to teach Solomon his need to trust in **GOD** for **ALL** of the blessings he needed.
 2. Prohibiting Solomon from seeking these blessings himself by the Deuteronomy 17:16-17 commands would keep Solomon constantly looking to God for these blessings, keeping him rightly aligned with God.

IV. In the end, when Solomon gained wealth independent of God in violation of His Word, such disobedience left Solomon vulnerable to violating God's Deuteronomy 17:17a command not to multiply wives to himself, what led to his marrying pagan women who influenced him to commit idolatry, 1 Kings 11:1-9.

Lesson: *Though God had promised to PROVIDE Solomon great wealth and honor, when Solomon HIMSELF WORKED to accumulate that wealth and honor, he VIOLATED God's Word as Israel's king, opening the door for his eventual disobedience of God's marital prohibition of multiplying wives to himself which led him into apostasy.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) May we put uncompromising obedience to God's Word above our own interests, for only by doing this can we be rewarded with God's true blessing.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

In addressing the belief that Christ descended into Hades at His death, we note that correctly interpreting Scripture in its context counters this pagan-based error in Christendom that is also in our Church hymn book:

(1) **Before** His death on the cross, Jesus taught that Old Testament patriarch Abraham was in a place the Jews termed "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22; Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, v. ii, p. 280) "Abraham's bosom" was also called "Paradise," (*Ibid.*), and Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 called "Paradise" the "Third Heaven," the abode of God. Abraham was thus in God's presence before Jesus went to the cross, so there was no need for Christ to descend into Hades at His death to liberate Abraham and other Old Testament saints for heaven!

(2) As for Ephesians 4:9 KJV that claims Jesus descended "into the lower parts of the earth," the genitive "of" can be understood to be (a) a genitive of comparison, to read, "Into the parts lower than the earth," that is, Hades, or (b) a genitive of possession, to read, "Into the lower parts which belong to the earth" like the grave where Christ was buried or (c) a genitive of apposition, to read, "Into the lower parts, namely, the earth." (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 634) Since the immediate context speaks of Christ's ascending from "the lower parts of the earth" (Eph. 4:9b KJV) far above the heavens to fill all things (Eph. 4:10b), the same idea Paul expressed back in Ephesians 1:20-23, and the "lower parts of the earth" in Ephesians 1:20 would correspond to Christ's resurrection from the tomb of the earth, it is best to view the genitive in Ephesians 4:9 as a genitive of possession to refer to Christ's resurrection from the tomb.

(3) As for 1 Peter 3:19-20a KJV, (a) the spirits to which Christ preached were at one time disobedient in the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:20a), so they were not Old Testament saints who were in need of deliverance from Hades to heaven when Christ had died and allegedly descended to Hades to deliver them. Also, (b) Christ could not have preached to the lost in Hades to get them to repent, for Hebrews 9:27 claims that it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment, countering the idea that the lost have a second chance in Hades to trust in Christ to be saved! (c) Thus, the only way to interpret 1 Peter 3:19-20a is to see Christ as having preached through Noah to Noah's generation when that generation was still physically alive on earth, which generation was physically destroyed in the Genesis Flood and whose souls ended up in prison in Hades awaiting God's final judgment. (*Ibid.*, p. 851)

(4) As for Acts 2:27 that in turn cites Psalm 16:10, (a) the KJV word "hell" in Acts 2:27 translates the Greek word for "Hades," but this word sometimes means "grave" as it does here. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Acts 2:27. (b) "Hell" in Psalm 16:10 KJV translates the Hebrew word *sheol*, what means "grave" here though it can also refer to the place of departed spirits of both the righteous and the wicked. (*Ibid.*, fns. to Psalm 16:10 and Gen. 37:35) In these verses, God simply promised not to leave Christ in a state of physical death, but that He would raise Him!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we put heeding Scripture without compromise above our own personal interests, knowing that God's way is always the only true way of blessing!