

Where I Am

On occasion, the topic for a study may pop into my head during our Sabbath fellowship. If you see me type something, I am noting it as I'd forget it by the time we finish lunch! This week's subject is one of those examples.

In our efforts to have a ready answer, knowing the full meaning of scripture and how it is taken out of context can aid us in knowing the answer to possible questions we may be asked. Witnessing to those God sends our way, more often than not, deals with explaining away the misconceptions they were taught their whole lives as we were. Such mistaken beliefs are, “going to Heaven, the Old Testament is for the Jews, the Sabbath, it was nailed to the cross, and substituting holidays for God's Commanded Holy Days,” to name a few.

Satan is a clever enemy and any way he can deceive those seeking God's truth, he will (**Revelation 12:9**). For most of those desiring to know God, they will take the effortless way out. We discussed last week saying the “sinner's prayer” and disregarding the Commandments of God are foundational for so many of the

Protestant “religions.” If you want to fill the pews, the warm and fuzzy stories sell more than rotting in the ground waiting for a resurrection.

Without knowing scripture in its entire context, it is easily distorted to support a false doctrine. When we read we are to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4, Luke 4:4) we need to take the time to break down scripture. Taking any word out of context can send someone off in the wrong direction.

Isaiah 28:10- “For precept *must be* upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little;”

1 Thessalonians 5:21- “Prove all things. Hold fast to *that which is good.*”

Who is The Lord (or prophet/disciple) speaking to? What are His instructions? In what tense is being spoken (future/past)? Look for associated supportive scriptures. According to Merriam-Webster, *precepts* are a command or principle intended especially as a general rule of action. When sharing God’s truth with those who seek it, His Words should flow from your heart. Misleading or misquoting

scripture has grave consequences. Maybe that's why James warns us in **James 3:1-**
“My brethren, do not many of you become teachers, knowing that we will receive
more severe judgment;”

It is critical that we have **full knowledge** of what we share. We learn and grow in
the Word when we dig deeper than just reading, we are actively “on the hunt,” to
know, live by, and understand every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Acts 17:10-11- “Then the brethren immediately sent away by night to Berea both
Paul and Silas, who, when they arrived, went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now
these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, for they received the Word with
all readiness of mind *and examined the Scriptures daily to see if these things were*
so.”

Teachings and instructions are throughout scripture. The “here a little, there a
little” is inclusive of both Old and New Testaments. Nothing was done away with
or is “Jewish.” Complete understanding will result in knowing what each word
and its use means. Again, scripture is of **no private interpretation.**

2 Peter 1:20-21- “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture originated as anyone’s own *private* interpretation; Because prophecy was not brought at any time by human will, but the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by *the* Holy Spirit.”

This is a major hurdle to overcome. What *you* “think” the Bible says may not be what God is saying. Developing your personal relationship with God increases His presence and raises your level of understanding. Pray before, during, and after studying God’s Word.

As part of our on-going mission to have a ready answer, this scripture is what I wrote down last Sabbath. It is one of numerous scriptures taken out of context to support the “going to Heaven” doctrine. Breaking it down can easily dismiss this belief.

John 12:26- “If anyone will serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant be also. And if anyone serves Me, he shall honor the Father.”

Taking line upon line and precept upon precept we will begin with, “**If anyone will serve Me.**”

Who Jesus is talking to? We have to go back to **John 12:20-22**- “Now there were certain Greeks among those who had come up to worship at the feast (*tells us when*). And *these* (Greeks) came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee; and they asked him, saying, “Sir, we desire to see Jesus.” Philip came and told Andrew, and Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.” In reading John 12, we know that this is before the Passover. Jesus had been in Bethany before leaving for Jerusalem.

Jesus is providing instructions and conditions to be obeyed. “**Anyone**” is not limited to just the Jews or Greeks but anyone who desires to serve Him. Serve seems to be a portion of the phrase that is omitted and overlooked by saying the sinner’s prayer. To serve in this context (according to Merriam-Webster) is a transitive verb meaning to “**comply with the commands** or demands, to be a servant, to give service and respect to a superior.” Skipping commandments by choice is *not* serving Him. Every act of our service to Him is time spent in His company.

“Let Him follow Me.” Continuing with this phrase, “*let* (allow/authorized) him follow Me” means just that. To follow someone is to walk in their footsteps, seek to attain, to live their way of life, and to act in accordance with **their** instructions and directions. When anyone agrees to serve Jesus, they are agreeing to the conditions required of serving.

1 Peter 2:21- “For to this you were called because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His footsteps.”

They are then allowed or permitted to follow Him. Deviation from Christ’s instructions and following in their own way is **NOT** following Christ.

The closer we follow Jesus the more we experience His joy and peace. When we follow Him, we stay in step, walking and growing in His likeness.

John 10:27- “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The principle of “follow” is overlooked, minimized, or even reduced by a watered down theology. One simply needs to “believe” or just read the Bible or attend a church service on Sunday (**James 2:19**). In my youth, Church attendance was an occasional Sunday and the obligatory Christmas and Easter services. I believed,

like most, I was following Jesus. Coming to know God's truth and keeping His Commandments and Holy Days has revealed just how far *I was* from the truth.

Once joined to Christ through baptism, our focus is now on the heavenly guidance through God's Word and His Holy Spirit. We are no longer a part of the world we leave behind as we are now following Christ. Not just believing but walking in His footsteps. If someone you knew walked across a mine field and didn't blow themselves up and they told you to "follow me," would you agree or make your own course through or step where they stepped? Many say they follow Jesus but want to walk their own path and NOT in His footsteps.

Luke 9:23- "Then He said to all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross daily, and let him follow Me;"

The next portion of this scripture is definitely one misinterpreted to support the "go to Heaven" doctrine.

"And where I am, there shall My servant be also."

There is an excessive focus on “*where I am*” and “*there My servant be also.*”

Knowing that Jesus ascended to Heaven after His resurrection (Acts 1:9), the *mislead* assigned a location to what Jesus said. Jesus stating “where I am” is taken out of context. The inference asserted by Jesus’ statement is to a state of mind, specifically a spiritual condition and not a physical location. Everyday thinking on the way this is read asserts a physical location and not a spiritual state.

When we join “there My servant be also” implies that as Jesus is in Heaven, the servant may be in Heaven too. Jesus wants us to be in the same spiritual place as He is. Without proper adherence to God’s Commandments, Holy Days, searching His Word, prayer and Bible study, the majority of all Protestant religions subscribe to this false doctrine of going to Heaven when we die even though it is nowhere mentioned in scripture and there are numerous references to the contrary (**Genesis 3:19, Ecclesiastes 9:4, Psalm 6:5, John 3:13**). Again, this emphasizes the critical need for close scrutiny of every line of scripture we read.

Jesus *so wants us* to have the relationship with God the Father that He has. His desire is for us to be one with Him. Where He is spiritually is where He wants us all to be. He gave His life for us to make this possible.

John 17:22-26- “And I have given them the glory that You gave to Me, in order that they may be one, in the same way that We are one: I in them, and You in Me, that they may be perfected into one; and that the world may know that You did send Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that those whom You have given Me may also be with Me where I am, so that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me; because You did love Me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world has not known You; but I have known You, and these have known that You did send Me. And I have made known Your name to them and will make it known; so that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

We need to go beyond our earthly thinking of a location and focus on the spiritual context emphasized in Christ’s words.

John 14:1-4- “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father’s house (*family*) are many dwelling (*living*) places; if it were otherwise, I would have told you. I am going to prepare (*arrange*) a place for you (in His Kingdom). And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again (*return*) and receive (*accept*) you to Myself; so that **where I am, you may be also**

(spiritual relationship and condition.) And where I am going you know, and the way you know (John 14:6).”

Revelation 21:1-3- “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, *the* new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from heaven say, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men; and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people; and God Himself shall be with them *and be* their God.”

Our spiritual union with Jesus Christ will place us in the First Resurrection and carry us through our roles in the thousand year Millennial Reign and into eternity. We are joined spiritually to Christ Jesus in baptism. When we die the symbolic death in baptism we join with Him in His life.

Colossians 3:2-4- “Set your affection on the things that are above, and not on the things that are on the earth. For you have died, and your life has been hid together with Christ in God. When Christ, *Who is* our life, is manifested, then you also shall be manifested with Him in glory.”

Even those who are being called at this time will NOT come to the full knowledge of God unless they are keeping His Commandments and Holy Days. Only after baptism and receiving His Holy Spirit within will the veil be lifted and spiritual understanding and growth will begin fully.

John 14:15-17- “If you love Me, keep the commandments— namely, My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that it may be with you throughout the age: Even the Spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive because it perceives it not, nor knows it; but you know it because it dwells with you and shall be within you.”

Through Jesus Christ we have direct access to God the Father.

Ephesians 3:10-12- “So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the principalities and the powers in the heavenly *places*, According to *His* eternal purpose, which He has wrought in Christ Jesus our Lord, In Whom we have boldness and *direct* access with confidence through His *very* own faith.”

Looking at the last part of John 12:26, “**And if anyone serves Me, he shall the Father honor,**” how will God the Father honor those who serve Jesus Christ?

Matthew 10:32- “Now then, whoever shall confess Me before men, that one will I also confess before My Father Who *is* in heaven.”

Jesus Christ told us throughout His Word of how we *are* and *will be* honored by God. Our Love, Trust, and Obedience to God and His Word will lead us to salvation and eternal life in His Kingdom.

John 17:1-20- “Jesus spoke these words, and lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your own Son, so that Your Son may also glorify You; Since You have given Him authority over all flesh, in order that He may give eternal life to all whom You have given Him. For this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom You did send. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory that I had with You before the world existed. I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things

that You have given Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave to Me; and they have received them and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me. **I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.** And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as We are one. When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking while yet in the world, that **they may have My joy fulfilled in them.** I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would keep them from the evil one. **They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in Your truth; Your Word is the truth.** Even as You did send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they also may be sanctified in Your truth. **I do not pray for these only, but also for those who shall believe in Me through their word;**”

As Jesus Christ died for us, we now live for Him. When we choose to serve and follow Him, we have the opportunity to “be where He is also.” We embrace the role of being His servant. We deny ourselves and pick up our cross daily and follow Him, *growing* in His likeness. It is in this spiritual condition that the privilege of being “where He is” comes to completion. Like those in the Bible who have gone before us without receiving the promise (**Hebrews 11:13**), our promise lies ahead too.

Hebrews 10:35-36- “For this *very* reason, do not cast away your confidence, which is bringing a great reward. For you need to have endurance, so that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

For those who genuinely love God, living our lives His way is *not just* for future assurance, but it is a blessing for today. Amen.