

Oct. 10, 2009

*All passages from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.*

Summary: The Shabbat of the seventh day of each week is a memorial that God is the Creator [Gen. 2:2–3; Ex. 20:11] and Redeemer from bondage [Deut. 5:15] and Sanctifier [Exod. 31:13–15], or the One Who sets apart His people from the ignorant or rebellious world. One of the great last messages to the whole world is to “worship Him Who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.” Yet today, most children are learning — in school and/or from popular culture — to doubt God because His people are increasingly more afraid of appearing intellectually backward by accepting His testimony of being the Creator than being strong and standing by the only testimony that makes intellectualism possible.

“And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear [φοβέω *phobeo* G5399] God [φοβήθητε τὸν θεόν], and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.’” (Rev. 14:6–7)

- The first messenger “flying in midheaven” is akin to the “eagle” of Rev. 8:13 warning of the remaining trumpets to sound.
- The imagery of “flying” proclamations points to the imagery of the “flying scroll” vision of Zech. 5:1–2, in which a proclamation was to go to across the face of the land.
  - In Rev. 14:6, the Greek word for gospel is *euaggelion* [εὐαγγέλιον G2098], which can be “good news” but it also is just “news.”
  - The word *preach* comes from the verb form, *euaggelizo* [εὐαγγελίζω G2097].
- This is an “eternal” proclamation, it went forth first at Creation and has continued going forth each Shabbat thereafter.
- Message
  - Fear God: Give Him reverence because He is taking charge of planetary affairs.
  - Give Him glory: He deserves praise as the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier.
  - The hour of His judgment has come: He is ending the destructiveness of anarchy against Him.
  - Worship Him: Show Him subservience and allegiance.
    - The Greek word for *worship* — προσκυνέω *proskuneo* G4352 — means “to kiss,” as in to bow down and kiss the feet of a superior.<sup>1</sup>
  - Who made ... earth ... sea ... springs of water: God made them, He wasn’t just the “prime mover” of Greek philosophy, which was the necessary “first cause” to get the material world moving toward creating itself.
    - Earth: The source of sustenance from crops, livestock and shelter (wood, stones, metal, etc.). The “raw material” God made from which to form Adam and the creatures.
    - Sea: Source of sustenance from fishing but something so massive that even modern know-how can’t fully understand or subdue it.
    - Springs of water: Sources of life in arid lands.
      - God called Himself a “fountain of living water” in Jer. 2:13 and 17:13.

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.’” (Rev. 14:8)

- Quotations from the TaNaKh (Torah, Prophets and Writings, a.k.a. the Hebrew Scriptures) in the Apostolic Writings most often were from the Greek version, called the Septuagint. This proclamation has a snippet of the Hebrew version of Isa. 21:9:

נִפְּלָה נִפְּלָה בָּבֶל וְכָל־פְּסִילֵי אֱלֹהֶיהָ שָׁבַר לְאָרֶץ  
“And one said, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon; And all the images of her gods are shattered on the ground.’”  
(Isa. 21:9)
- The context is a “burden” (v. 1) about “Elam/Olam” and Media coming to crush Babylon.
- It may have been just a “changing of the guard” from the perspective of the “threshed” people of God still in the Land of Israel. God was telling them that He had shattered the power of the foreign gods, i.e. those deities weren’t really in charge, so they shouldn’t be given homage.

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<sup>1</sup> BDAG.

- In Rev. 14:8, people have come up with different ideas about what is referred to by “Babylon.”<sup>2</sup>
  - Literal Babylon.
    - There are the references to the river Euphrates in Rev. 16:12 and “sitting on many waters” in Rev. 17:1 (cf. Jer. 51:13).
    - However, Rev. 17:15 defines the symbol of the “waters” as peoples, nations and languages, and the prophets foretold that Babylon wouldn’t be rebuilt (Jer. 25:12; Isa. 13:19–22; Jer. 50:1 – 51:64).
  - Rome.
    - *Babylon* was a code word for Rome in writings both apostolic (1st Pe. 5:13) and rabbinical.
      - *Babylon* was a euphemism for Rome in Pseudepigrapha (2 Baruch 11:1, 67:7; Sibylline Oracles 5:143, 159).
      - Midrash Rabbah on Song of Songs 1:6.4 states directly, “One calls Rome ‘Babylon.’ ”
  - A wicked world system.
    - This was the topic of Revelation 12–13, with the description of the anti-Messiah’s work.
    - This is the context of the third angel’s message (Rev. 14:9–11).
  - The ungodly in general.

“Fear of the the LORD” is a common phrase in the Bible, and it’s connected to discernment between truth and error similar to the discernment needed in the Day of the LORD to choose between the Creator and the false worldview.

- “The fear [יִרְאַה *yirah* H3374; φόβος *phobos*] of the LORD [יְהוָה יִרְאַת] is the beginning of wisdom [חִכְמָה *khokmah* H2451]; A good understanding [שֵׂכֶל *sekhel* H7922] have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.” (Psa. 111:10)
  - One must “fear” the LORD before gaining wisdom.
  - One must obey the LORD before gaining understanding, so understanding must come from obedience.
- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge [דַּעַת *da’at* H1847]; Fools despise wisdom [חִכְמָה *khokmah* H2451] and instruction [מוֹסָר *musar* H4148].” (Prov. 1:7)
- “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence [עֲרֻמָּה *ormah* H6195], And I find knowledge [דַּעַת] and discretion [מְזִמָּה *mezimmah* H4209]. The fear of the LORD is to hate [שָׂנֵא *saneh* H8130] evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverted [תַּהֲפֹּכְהָ *tahpukhah* H8419] mouth, I hate. Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine.’ ” (Prov. 8:12–14)
- “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding [בִּינָה *binah* H0998].” (Prov 9:10)
  - *בִּינָה* has a range of meanings related to understanding, including the ability to discern truth from error.
    - “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And do not lean on your own בִּינָה [understanding].” (Prov. 3:5)
    - “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, Cease from your בִּינָה [consideration] of it.’ (Prov. 23:4)
- “The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom, And before honor comes humility.” (Prov. 15:33)
- “By lovingkindness [חֶסֶד *khesed* H2617a] and truth [אֱמֶת *emet* H0571] iniquity [עוֹן, עוֹנָה *avon* H5771] is atoned for [כַּפָּר *kaphar* H3722a], And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away [שׁוּר, שׁוֹר *sur* H5493] from evil.” (Prov 16:6)

What is the result of having no “fear of the LORD”?

- Wisdom personified: “Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but they will not find me, Because they hated knowledge And did not choose the fear of the LORD. They would not accept my counsel, They spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way And be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naive will kill them, And the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely And will be at ease from the dread of evil.’ ” (Prov. 1:28–33)
- Apostle Paul summarized the battle of worldviews — God as Creator vs. nature as the “prime mover” of Greek philosophy: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile [ματαιώω *mataioo* G3154] in their speculations [διαλογισμός *dialogismos* G1261], and their foolish [ἀσύνετος *asunetos* G0801] heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools [μωραίνω

2 Stern, David H. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*.

*moraino* G3471], and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.” (Rom. 1:18–25)

- “The fool [נָבִיל *nabal* H5036] has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; There is no one who does good, not even one.” (Psa. 14:1–3)
  - נָבִיל comes from a verb meaning “wither,” “decay, or “be cast down.”
  - To call someone a “fool” is to declare that the person’s long-term future is nothingness or destruction, hence Messiah’s warning against making that kind of judgment on someone (Matt. 5:22).
    - Some linguists think *fool* in this verse (μωρός *moros* G3474) is a transliteration of מורה *moreh*, or “rebel,” as ρακά *rhaka* (G4469) is a transliteration of the Semetic רִיקָה or רִיקָה in that verse.

Today, believers in God are faced with a huge problem. Those who have decided to reject the knowledge of God and “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” by taking on airs of wisdom in their teachings that “There is no God” or that “There is no God Who cares or will judge” are planting questions in the minds of our children and brothers and sisters in faith.

- America’s Research Group released a report this year on a survey of 1,000 people ages 20–29 who no longer attend services of Bible-believing congregations regularly.<sup>3</sup>
  - When asked, “Do you believe all the accounts in the Bible are true?”
    - 38 percent answered, “yes.”
    - 44 percent, “no.”
    - 18 percent, “don’t know.”
  - Eighty-eight percent of those who stopped believing the Bible were “already gone” by the time they reached college. Asked when they stopped believing:
    - 4 percent said in elementary school.
    - 40 percent, middle school.
    - 44 percent, high school.
    - 11 percent, college.
  - When asked what made them question the veracity of the Bible, 56 percent of them said it was when they had questions about the Bible itself or its application to history and real life that their congregational leaders and teachers couldn’t or wouldn’t answer.
- The Bible provides the answer to this problem.
  - The apostle Peter wrote that when we are challenged we must “sanctify [literally, “set apart”] Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense [ἀπολογία *apologia* G0627] to everyone who asks you to give an account [λόγος *logos* G3056] for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence [φόβος]” (1st Pet. 3:15).
    - One has to decide first that Messiah is No. 1 in the heart.
    - *Apologia* is not just a reply but a reasoned defense.
    - “Truth hurts” must never be the attitude of our presenting our hope in our connection to the Creator.
  - “Do not answer a fool [כְּסִיל *kesil* H3684] according to his folly [תְּאֵלֶת *ivvelet* H0200], Or you will also be like [שָׁוָה *shavah*] him. Answer a fool as his folly *deserves*, That he not be wise in his own eyes.” (Prov. 26:4–5)
    - כְּסִיל *khesil* literally means “plump loins,” which is used in the Bible to communicate impotence, sluggishness, insolence and stupidity.<sup>4</sup>
    - שָׁוָה *shavah* [7737a; 1000d]; a prim. root; “to agree with, be like, resemble.”
    - Messiah quipped parabolically, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (Matt 7:6).
    - Yeshua and the Preacher seem to be advocating a response to the skeptics that casts skepticism on their skepticism rather than just “plugging the holes in the dikes” they create.
    - Rather than a contradiction, the “don’t answer ... answer” proverb shows:
      - Do not provide an answer agrees in any way with the skeptic’s assertion, i.e. don’t be like him.

<sup>3</sup> America’s Research Group. *Already Gone*. Master Books, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> HALOT.

- The skeptic’s assertion is based on an ultimate assumption.
- For those who assume there is no Creator God, they assume the Bible is wrong when it says that God created, God sent a global flood, Messiah rose from the dead, etc.
- For those who believe in God yet defer their understanding of His words to those whose conclusions are ultimately based on the assumption that the LORD described in the Bible — creating and sustaining all things and seeing all things from the beginning to the end — their ultimate assumption really isn’t that God exists.
  - Otherwise, they would reject the conclusions that challenge the truth of God’s words.
- Do provide an answer that shows the underlying absurdity of the skeptic’s assertion, i.e. show how his presuppositions — his ultimate assumption — leads to absurdity.
- Consider that the knowledge of God the skeptics of God and His words reject are foundational to any knowledge at all. God is required for knowledge to be possible.
- The skeptics’ basis for knowledge — what is came from what is — would make knowledge impossible.<sup>5</sup>
  - The preconditions for knowledge are uniformity, logic and morality.
    - Uniformity in the material world, regardless of time and location in the universe.
      - Uniformity in the natural world is expressed in our memory being generally reliable.
      - Uniformity in nature also leads to our senses being generally reliable because they function according to uniform laws.
      - We need reliable memory and senses to be able to learn anything about the world around us. We use them to observe and remember something at one moment and compare it to what we observe and remember at the present and at any point in the future.
      - The LORD testified that there would be uniformity from past to present to future: “ ‘While the earth remains, Seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night Shall not cease.’ ” (Gen. 8:22)
        - That the LORD declared this after the Flood, when events over a number of months radically reshaped the world, counters a popular justification for materialistic origins of the universe, life and geological features such as the Grand Canyon — a concept called uniformitarianism.
          - Uniformitarianism teaches that present processes — a river flowing through a valley, how fast layers of sediment are deposited in the ocean — are the key to discovering the past.
        - The LORD’s name expresses this timelessness (Ex. 3:14-15).
          - His timelessness is connected to His faithfulness and mercy: “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Ya’akov, are not consumed.” (Mal. 3:6; talking about Israel’s continual backsliding from His teachings)
          - Messiah, Who bears the Name, also is timeless: “Iesus Christos is the same yesterday and today and forever.” (Heb. 13:8)
    - Logic. To be able to reason — to apply our reliable memory and senses in systematically exploring a concept — requires uniformity in thinking processes, which is called logic.
      - The law of noncontradiction is one of the universal laws of logic: Something cannot be both true and not true.
        - In this battle of worldviews foretold in Revelation 14, it cannot be true that the universe came from both the LORD, as He testified in Genesis 1–2 and memorialized in the weekly Shabbat, and from the sun, as popularized by ancient Babylon.
          - Modern evolutionary theories still include the Babylonian teaching that the Sun is our “creator.” Stars are seen as generators of heavier elements that come together to form planets and water that are heated to the right temperature for chemical reactions to start that create life.
      - I used to think that passages in which God is His own witness were circular arguments, which assume what they are arguing.
        - “For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself” (Heb. 6:13)

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<sup>5</sup> For an in-depth study of the preconditions of intelligibility, read Jason Lisle’s *The Ultimate Proof of Creation: Resolving the Origins Debate* (Master Books, 2009).

- “Then Yeshua again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.’ So the Pharisees said to Him, ‘You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.’ Yeshua answered and said to them, ‘Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. “Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. “I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.”’ (John 8:12–18)
- A similar question the P’rushim posed comes today, both from honest questioners and skeptics, “Who made God?”
- Any worldview has an ultimate assumption, a starting point.
  - For the believer, it is that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
  - For the unbeliever, it is “In the beginning, the heavens created the earth.”
  - For some, it’s “In the beginning, God created the heavens, which created the earth.”
  - Others start with, “There was no beginning; there will be no end.”
  - We all have assumptions. The question is which assumption fits the real world, in that we can observe and learn about the universe.
- Those who reject God do use logic, but there is no explanation or justification for logic without the uniformity of the material world that God created and sustains.
- Morality. The concept that certain behavior or events are “good” and others are “bad” presupposes some overarching, supreme standard.
  - God established at the very beginning (Genesis 1–3) what is “good” and “bad” (often translated by the loaded word *evil*) and that God’s standard and goal is “goodness.”
  - Even those who reject God’s word will say that some things are “good,” such as helping people who have no food and saving animal species from extinction, and some things are “bad,” such as Nazi Germany’s extermination of millions of Jews, other “undesirables” and dissenters.
  - However, the secular standards of “whatever brings the most happiness to the most people” or “whatever the majority of people in a society determine to be moral” is arbitrary and not rational. Definitions of “happiness” and “popular morality” can change, especially when the majority is deceived.
    - Yet deception itself requires an ultimate standard for truth and error, else the propaganda that convinced the majority of Germans to back Hitler’s policies can’t be considered “bad” or even “evil.”
  - If the universe were created by just material processes, with biological systems progressing to higher forms of life via goal-ignorant natural processes, utilitarianism (do what works) would be the guiding principle, rather than veracity (habitual truthfulness).
    - Utilitarianism can bring short-term success, but it is also a short-sighted and self-destructive principle.
      - There always is a stronger power that will exert its strength if there is no self-interest or virtue to restrain it.
    - Veracity is an intangible yearning in people.
  - Morality is important for knowledge, because there must be a concept of truth and uniformity, else we’d not know whether our knowledge is false or transitory.
  - Those who reject God still can live moral lives, but their worldview has no justification for universal morality, because anything could be “right” or “wrong” in a universe without goal.
- No other view of the origin of all things, which by implication would include knowledge itself, would allow knowledge to be possible.
  - Mormonism teaches about different gods, with Heavenly Father being a different god from the Messiah, who is a different god than we will become. These gods are provincial, with Messiah being the god for our part of the universe.
    - These gods’ laws and revelations change over time, such as with polygamy being

- foundational and now prohibited.
- Eastern religions have no Creator, and their cycles of reincarnation fit well with evolutionary theories.
    - Hinduism “is a diverse family of devotional and ascetic cults and philosophical schools, all sharing a belief in reincarnation and involving the worship of one or more of a large pantheon of gods and goddesses, including Shiva and Vishnu (incarnate as Rama and Krishna), Kali, Durga, Parvati, and Ganesh.”
    - Buddhism “has no creator god and gives a central role to the doctrine of karma. The ‘four noble truths’ of Buddhism state that all existence is suffering, that the cause of suffering is desire, that freedom from suffering is nirvana, and that this is attained through the ‘eightfold’ path of ethical conduct, wisdom, and mental discipline (including meditation).”<sup>6</sup>
      - Karma is “the sum of a person's actions in this and previous states of existence, viewed as deciding their fate in future existences.”
      - Nirvana is “a transcendent state in which there is neither suffering, desire, nor sense of self, and the subject is released from the effects of karma and samsara.”
        - Hindu nirvana is “liberation of the soul from the effects of karma and from bodily existence.”
      - Samsara is “the cycle of death and rebirth to which life in the material world is bound.”
  - Islam has the principle of *tanzih* from Sura 42:11: “The Creator of the heavens and the earth. He made for you pairs of yourselves, and of the cattle also pairs, whereby He multiplies you. Nothing is as His likeness; and He is the Hearer, the Seer.”
    - In other words, we are not made in Allah’s likeness, with the ability to comprehend his Creation, so it is heresy to even attempt to investigate it.
  - Whenever a skeptic challenges us with “Did God really say...?” or “Is the Bible really accurate when it says ...?” we must “hit the restart button” found in 1st Pet. 3:15 and Prov. 26:4–5.
    - Knowledge would be impossible without uniformity, logic and morality.
    - We have knowledge and gain more by relying on uniform laws of nature, logic and morality.
    - Uniformity in nature, logic and morality are possible only if the God revealed in the Bible exists.
    - Therefore, the skeptic’s original assumption that the Bible is fallacious about its foundational first statement is irrational.
      - From God’s first statement comes answers for:
        - Why is there pain, suffering, death and evil in an otherwise ordered universe?
        - Is there hope amid the pain?
        - If there is such a thing as “wrong” in a universe governed by a law-upholding Creator, and that Creator says there will be judgment on wrong-doers, is there any hope?
        - Why did Yeshua have to die on the cross?

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6 “Buddhism.” *New Oxford American Dictionary*.