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CAN WE PASS THE TEST?

by Jim Stauffer

Moses writes in **Deuteronomy 13** about God testing His people by allowing those with hearts turned toward idols to live among them. It is interesting when we read this text that God does not purge the people of the evil among them, but instead commands them to stone to death any prophet, relative or just plain evil person among them who turns to idolatry and encourages others to follow. This, you see is part of the test. Not only must they reject the ideas of the dreamers, but they must put them out of their midst. In the case of Israel under the Law of Moses that called for stoning them to death.

Much is said about testing in the Scriptures. Jesus was tested by the Pharisees. The idea of testing is to prove the genuine nature of something. The Pharisees often came to Jesus with questions they thought would stump Him, testing Him, hoping to prove Him fraudulent rather than genuine (**exa. Mat. 22:15-22**).

Something we learn about testing in Scripture is, we do not test God. He is the King and we are the servants. He has set the agenda. Our role is to follow it. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness and Jesus' reply was, *Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"* (**Mat. 4:7**) Paul teaches the Corinthians to look at those who tested God in the days of Moses and use the results to discourage similar behavior on their part. He tells them to avoid all the pitfalls of Israel when they wandered in the wilderness and suffered many plagues from the hand of God because of their failure to

pass the tests of faithfulness (**1 Cor. 10:6-11**). Paul goes on to say those who cause divisions among God's people serve to prove the faith of those who reject their divisive positions by standing firmly on the word of God (**1 Cor. 11:19**).

The story of Genesis is that God created the heavens and the earth and all in them in six days and rested on the seventh (**cf. Gen. 1 & Ex. 20:9-11**). An atheistic world full of very intelligent men fully aware of *some* facts of science have decided this is myth. Notice the emphasis on being aware of *some* facts of science. Each day men learn more about the Universe. Yet, I am supposed to rely on the small amount they know compared to the word of the One who created it? That is unreasonable. And men who choose scientists over the Bible should know they are not only making ignorant choices, they are rejecting the reliability of God's word.

Yet, we have some dreamers among us who want us to challenge the word of God by suggesting it does not mean exactly what it says about the creation. They try to explain how it was not a literal 6 days. They would have us believe those days were longer than 24 hours. And on and on it goes because they are the dreamers among us and their desire is to be accepted for their intellectual thought processes by their peers in the world. We live under the new covenant instituted by Christ and are not required to stone the dreamers among us. But make no mistake, Paul tells us we will be proven by our response to their erroneous conduct.

These same men have no qualms about accepting

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what Scripture says about the relationship of baptism to salvation. At least not at this point.

We, like Joshua, need to make a choice as to whom we shall serve. The choice he offered was between God and the idols their fathers had served in Mesopotamia (**Josh. 24:15**). Our choice is between God and the dreamers of our day and age who wish to find a brotherhood with men of the world while still claiming to stand for God.

It is quite simple. We cannot *examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good*; (**1 Thess. 5:21**) and at the same time compromise the very word of God for the approval of the world. We must pass the test!

EYE FOR EYE, TOOTH FOR TOOTH

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away" (**Matthew 5:38-42**).

This well-known section of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount comes from **Exodus 21:24**: *"eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."* It is sometimes called the *lex talionis*, or the "law of the tooth" or the "law of the claw/talon." It is part of many instructions from Moses designed to help regulate the vagaries of Israelite society; some, though, see this as guidance that a judge might use in deciding cases of dispute between neighbors (*Exodus*, Cole, IVP, 168). Sevenfold vengeance (**Genesis 4:24**) seems to be eliminated. Later in the Law of Moses, judges would use the same principle in deciding cases of malicious injury (**Leviticus 24:19-20**). If **Exodus 21:24** *proscribed*, it also *restricted*. Today, we probably know this passage not because of the OT, but because of Jesus' teaching about how kingdom citizens are to act. By the 1st c. Jewish twists and turns on the matter needed correction.

Again Jesus dives deeper into the heart. Private revenge has no part in the life of the Christian. "I'll get even with you" are words not to be uttered. Jesus does not abolish the military or the police or civil government. He says: Work on your attitude, even when you are wronged. Show generosity in the face of injustice, in the wake of insult, in the presence of maliciousness. Rise to a higher standard.

A slap to the cheek would be an insult, perhaps the ultimate insult (insult not injury). In a lawsuit you might lose your tunic, the garment worn over your cloak (needed at night to stay warm). A Roman soldier (in the

1st c.) might conscript you for some task. Remember Simon of Cyrene (**Mark 15:21**)? Someone may ask for money from you. How do you respond in these situations? Prophets sometimes endured a slap on the cheek—an insult (**1 Kings 22:24**; **Isaiah 50:4**). Beggars and begging are common OT themes. Laws about charging interest and lending to the poor were well known. The question is: What do we do? Do we just roll over and give away everything we have to some who might ask? Do we ever have the right to stand up for our rights?

Our world is often (largely) a world of violence, bloodshed, injustice, and just downright meanness. Maybe standing "up for our rights" is our reaction to all of the misery we see in the world. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth places limits on vengeance. It prevents matters from getting out of hand. In fact, Jesus says do more than you are asked to do. If so, your actions will not be the norm. And in all fairness, going the extra mile seems like a crazy idea. Or, is it? Is there someone, somewhere, at some time, who went the second mile?

Randy Harshbarger

What The Work Of The Church Is Not

All who know and respect Bible teaching realize the work of the church is spiritual in nature and is done in view of the salvation of souls. However, many churches, including many identifying themselves as churches of Christ, have gotten caught up in the social gospel movement and are involving themselves in activities designed to satisfy and please the carnal desires of men rather than pleasing and glorifying God. In this article we wish to call attention to those things which are not authorized by God as the work of the church.

Political issues are not the work of the church. Even though there are issues such as abortion, homosexuality, etc. that we must oppose and teach against (as we would any other sins) we must recognize that it is not the work of the church to develop or carry out a political agenda. These same issues may be political issues for some, but as the people of God we deal with them the same way we deal with other sins, i.e., by teaching the word of God and seeking a change of heart in those who hear.

Secular education is not the work of the church. I am sure all agree that proper education of a secular nature is good and beneficial. However, it is not the work of the church to build, support or maintain schools or colleges to provide such education. This is the responsibility of the home rather than the church. Paul acknowledges that there are responsibilities to be fulfilled by individuals *"and let not the church be charged"* (**1 Timothy 5:16**). This could be applied to

each of the things discussed in this article.

Social activities are not the work of the church. It is good for brethren to get together and enjoy one another's association whenever possible. However, we need to remember the words of the apostle Paul as he addressed the problem of the Corinthians perverting the observance of the Lord's supper. He said, *"What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?"* (1 Corinthians 11:22). It is not the work of the church to provide for social meals and gatherings. Several years ago I presented a lesson in which I made the point that the church should not be using "coffee and doughnuts" to entice people to attend. A relative of mine objected and said, "James, if it takes coffee and doughnuts to save souls then I think we should use coffee and doughnuts!" I think she was surprised when I answered, "I totally agree with you!" And I still agree with her statement. If it takes coffee and doughnuts to save souls then let's buy all the coffee and doughnuts we can find. However, if we were to do that all we would have is a lot of people full of coffee and doughnuts. If we wish to save souls we must use that which will accomplish such. Paul said, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Romans 1:16). Yes, the gospel of Christ is God's power to save. To resort to gimmicks and carnal attractions is not only without authority but demonstrates a lack of faith in God and His will.

Recreation and entertainment are not the work of the church. Wholesome recreation and entertainment have their place but it is not the work of the church to provide such. This truth has been generally understood and accepted by brethren through the years however, in recent years it seems that many are more desirous of turning the church into a country club or health spa than letting "the church be the church." As a result of this thinking we see churches sponsoring ball teams, building gymnasiums and sponsoring various forms of entertainment. I have received announcements of "clowns for Jesus," magicians, puppeteers, body builders or singing groups all being used by churches to reach the masses. The one thing lacking in all these announcements is the scripture or scriptures that would authorize the church providing such. Paul tells us that God has provided all that is necessary *"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:12). Note that all he lists in verse 11 have to do with the revelation and proclamation of God's word. Note the parallel between **Ephesians 4:11,12** and **2 Timothy 3:16,17**.

The inspired scriptures are all we need. When Paul had warned the Ephesian elders of the dangers they would face after his departure he said, *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified"* (Acts

20:32). We, today, need to put our faith in God and His word and not in the schemes and gimmicks of men that appeal to the flesh.

by James Hahn

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Idiotic Things People Say, VI

When dealing with people who do not really want to submit themselves to the demands of the Gospel I often hear them say, almost jokingly, "Well, if THAT'S my only fault I'm not too worried about getting into heaven." This is so wrong on so many levels.

First the question of your eternal destiny is no laughing matter. It is a once forever conclusion. Once you are in eternity, and you WILL GO, there is no alteration.

Second, judgment is not a weighing of your good deeds against your bad to see which weighs most. That image, taken from Daniel five, is a twisting of scripture. The passage is speaking of an earthly judgment of a king and his kingdom, not his eternal destiny though, barring repentance, his destiny is pretty well spelled out in the passage. No, the judgment we are all to endure (**2 Cor. 5:10**) is an examination of our life for a trusting obedience to God (saving faith) which results in a state of forgiveness of our sins, of which we all have many, **Romans 3:23**. God's standard is absolute perfection, which I cannot meet by myself. My only hope is to have my sins FORGIVEN BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS. There will be no balances or scales. There will either be the presence of love for Jesus as evidenced by obedience (**John 14:15 & 21-24**) or there will be something else, something insufficient to enter heaven.

Satan, our real enemy, has done such a good job of selling this "scales" misconception of God's judgment to the masses of humanity. Even many who claim to believe operate in such a way as to show they've swallowed Satan's ploy. It is such a shame since it's so clearly spelled out.

Cleveland Reddinger

Supreme Court Justice Horace Gray once informed a man who had appeared before him in a lower court and had escaped conviction on a technicality, "I know that you are guilty and you know it, and I wish you to remember that one day you will stand before a better and wiser Judge, and that there you will be dealt with according to justice and not according to law." Surprised while burgling a house in Antwerp, Belgium, the thief fled out the back door, clambered over a nine-foot wall, dropped down the other side, and found himself in the city prison.

Oops: The Book of Blunders, 1980.

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1 Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10