

Why Christians Differ Doctrinally - Part XII, The Origin of Doctrinal Differences

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Date: 21 March 2010

Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior, I know for sure, All of my days are held in your hand, crafted into your perfect plan.

You gently call me into your presence, guiding me by your Holy Spirit, Teach me, dear Lord, to live all of my life through your eyes.

I'm captured by your holy calling, sets me apart, I know you're drawing me to yourself, Lead me, Lord, I pray.

Take me, mold me, use me, fill me.

I give my life to the potter's hand. Call me, guide me, lead me, walk beside me.

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Isaiah 64 8 But now, O Lord, thou art our Father. We are the clay, and thou our potter. All of us are the work of thy hands.

[5 : 06] Thank you, ladies.

I really appreciated the message conveyed in that. Thank you for conveying it so well. Gary and Carolyn are bicycling someplace down in the Carolinas.

And when I hear their stories about bicycling, and how far they ride on those bicycles in one day, it just makes my calves ache to hear them talk about it.

But I'm sure they're having a great time. And Carolina, this time of the year, would have to be even nicer than it is here. So, in Gary's absence, open your Bibles, please, to Genesis chapter 12.

We'll just be reading a few verses from this chapter, and then we will be returning a little later on to Genesis 15 for our primary text for the morning.

[6 : 23] Genesis chapter 12. Genesis 15 Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee.

And I will make of thee a great nation. And I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.

And in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. I cannot tell you how utterly important and critical these few verses are.

And how they actually set the scene for the outworking of God's program throughout the remainder of Scripture. This is absolutely key and critical.

It has to do with the primacy of the nation of Israel, and the way they figure into the plan and program that God has devised.

[7 : 38] So prior to our going to Genesis 15, where we will be a little later, I have some propositions that I want to put on the table and ask you to consider.

And this will give you also an idea of where we are going before we actually engage the text. So here is the first. There is no valid nor rational basis for believing anything about anything other than being convinced of its truthfulness.

That ought to go without being said, but it doesn't. Too many people operate on a different basis.

This is the only valid basis for believing anything about anything, is that you are persuaded that it is true, that it corresponds to reality.

To base one's beliefs on traditions, wishes, or family ties is pure folly and will ultimately bitterly disappoint you.

The issue is, always has been, and will continue to be, authority. Who or what is your authority for what you believe?

[8 : 53] Eve. It all began with, yea, hath God said? It all began with the issue of questioning God's authority, and placing the authority of a created being above that of the Creator himself.

Eve was confronted with an important decision. Whom to believe? God said, thou shalt not. The evil one came back with, well, of course God said that you're not to eat it.

You know why, don't you? Because if you partake of that, you will be knowing like he is. God doesn't want the competition.

That's why he told you that. And Eve succumbed to the temptation, and all she did was supplant God's authority and God's word with the word of a created being.

God's word. There's a lot of that going on today. That is still man's principal area of conflict and difficulty. We accept virtually everything else and everyone else as authoritative other than the maker and sustainer of everything.

[10 : 21] We accept the authority of psychiatrists and psychologists and pastors and preachers and rabbis and so on, while often rejecting the authority of God.

Because after all, these human beings are well-educated. They are experts. Aren't they? We would all do well to sweep aside as well-meaning but unauthoritative all of men's ideas, pronouncements, demands, results of the latest study, be believed.

Whether they come from preachers and pastors or popes or priests or bishops or gurus or imams or rabbis or church councils or denominational ecclesiastes, such as synods and presbyteries and all the rest of it.

Just sweep it all aside as well-meaning but not authoritative with the kind of authority that you have to have to depend on.

With the authority that you're willing to stake your eternal future on. There is only one, only one, who has that kind of authority.

[11 : 41] And we would do well to make him our final court of appeal for whatever. No matter how noble or how well-intentioned these others may be, they can only speak about God.

They cannot speak for God. God speaks for himself and he has spoken and he has not stuttered.

Many, of course, would answer this assertion that I have made with a charge that they would say is bibliolatry. Oh, you know those folks out there at Grace Bible Church, they worship the Bible.

They are a bunch of Bible worshipers. Well, that is a charge that is often made by those who ignore it. I want to give you a brief word study.

Today, the word worship is related to the word...

[13 : 12] Worship. Worship comes from the word. Worship. What is there about God that is worshipful?

It is related to his worth. His being. His character. His glory. His honor. His person.

How do you learn those things about God? How do you learn that God is worthy of your worship?

You will not learn that by looking at the trees and the mountains and the rocks and the rills and all the rest of it and the great oceans.

All of these things can tell us that there is a God. But it cannot introduce us to the God that is. It can only reveal the existence and the power of this being.

But it cannot introduce you to an intimate knowledge of this being. Only the revelation that he has given of himself can do that.

[14 : 21] And there is only one place where you find it. That is not in general revelation that we all appreciate and admire for which we are grateful. But it is very limited in what it communicates about God.

God wanted us to know certain things about himself. And he had them recorded in a book. Provided for us. Given to us.

By inspiration. It is folly to say this is worship of the Bible. But it is accurate to say there is no such thing as intelligent worship of the deity.

Apart from understanding and considering the revelation that he has given of himself on the printed page. The Bible is absolutely indispensable.

Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven. And it is because we of Grace Bible Church, along with hosts of other believers.

[15 : 28] Because we continue to see scripture as our singular and necessary authority. That we are forced to take the positions that we take in our doctrine.

And for starters. As to why Christians differ doctrinally. We have posed the subject. Of the nation of Israel. And the Jewish people.

As God's original chosen people. Who also remain. As God's chosen people. The ironic thing about this is.

Many of today's Jews. Many of today's Jews. No longer believe this. It's remarkable. Israel. Israel. Israel. As a nation. Is primarily. Not. A religious state. It is a secular state.

[16 : 28] You heard me correctly. A great many people throughout the world. Think that the nation of Israel. Is occupied. By.

A population of Jews. And. They are all. Jewish. In their religion. They are not. They are not at all. There is.

But a small percentage. Of the Israelis. Who live in Israel. Who actually. Practice. Judaism. The vast majority of them. Do not.

And. And. They make no bones about it. They consider themselves. A. Secular. Jew. And they will say things like. I'm not a religious person. But wait.

You have to be a religious person. You're a Jew. Aren't you? Oh yes. I'm a Jew. But I'm not religious. In other words. They no longer.

[17 : 24] They no longer. Accept. The tenets. Of their scriptures. They no longer. Believe. In the. Validity. And the authority.

Of their own. Old Testament. Most of them see it. As. Highly. Poetic. As just.

Spiritual. As. Just. Interesting. Um. Historical. Revelations. About life. By. A group. Of people. Who lived. A long time ago. But not inspired of God. No. No. No. No. No. Not directly inspired of God. Are the Orthodox. And the.

The. The Hasidim. Who would be considered the ultra Orthodox. And they of course. Do. But the vast majority of them. Do not. And most of them.

[18 : 19] In Israel today. Would prefer. Not even to close their shops. On the Sabbath. They do so. Only because. They are forced to do so. By the laws that exist there.

Not because they are in sympathy with them. So. As a result. Many Jews have also succumbed. To atheism. You will find.

A higher percentage. Of Jewish people. Who are atheists. Than you will. A percentage of people. In any other ethnic group.

Throughout the world. And. There are a number of reasons. For that. But the chiefest of which. I think. In our day. Of course. The Holocaust. Under Nazi Germany.

In the 1940s. Is something. That they simply. Cannot get beyond. And. A great many. Of the Jews. Today. Believe. That the God.

[19 : 16] Revealed. In their scriptures. Which is the Old Testament. Because they. Reject the new. Altogether. Many of them. Now reject the old. As well. But they believe. That the God.

Who is revealed. In the scriptures. In their scriptures. Old Testament. Cannot possibly be. A God. Who really is. A God of love. And compassion. And mercy.

And a God. Who has special designs. For Israel. Because. If such a God. Existed. There is no way. In the world. That he could possibly. Justify. Hitler's Holocaust.

So. Their conclusion is. This God. Must not exist. Matter of fact. Probably. No God. Exists. And their. Ill treatment. By the world.

Does not. In their minds. Compute. With God's. Providential care. That's the position. Of a great. Deal.

[20 : 13] Of Jewry. Throughout the world. Not just in Israel. On the other hand. We. Of the. Dispensational. Method. Of interpreting. The Bible.

Hold. The Jew. In high. Esteem. We. View. The Jew. In the same way. That God. Views. The Jew. That is. As the beloved. Of the Lord. The apple. Of his eye. That's. How we see. The Jewish people. Are we then. Of grace. Bible church. A bunch. Of Jew lovers. Lovers. Absolutely. Of course.

How can we not be. How can we not love those whom God loves. But.

[21 : 08] Say you. They crucified Jesus. The Messiah. Yes. They did. And they did it. Ignorantly. And. In. Unbelief.

And. With. Our. Help. Because we all. Crucified. Their Messiah. We. Put him on the cross. As well. As. As. As. As. The Jew. The Sanhedrin. Crucified. The Messiah. Presided over by. Annas. And. Caiaphas. Judas. Crucified. The Messiah. The Roman soldiers. Crucified.

The Messiah. We. Crucified. The Messiah. Humanity. And. The Father. The Father.

[22 : 05] The Father. Delivered him up. For us all. All were instrumental.

In his crucifixion. And. Last but not least. I lay down my life of myself.

No man takes it from me. I have power to lay it down. And. I have power to take it. Up. Again. Christ. Willingly. Yielded himself.

As. Our substitute. Amazingly. We Gentiles. This is. This is really ironic. We Gentiles. Of the dispensational approach.

To the interpretation of scripture. Of scripture. Have higher regard. For the Jewish people. And their future. Than what many of the Jews. Themselves have.

[23 : 03] Isn't that something. We see. Judaism. In a positive vein. That most. Jews. Do not see. Of themselves.

And would say. Of us. Well. You go. You're just. You're just crazy. You just. You're just crazy. You're just crazy. Everything. That would be.

The response. Of many of them. When we talk about. The glories. That God has. In store. For the nation. Of Israel. And of course. It will be. Via.

Repentance. On their part. And they will. Reverse themselves. Which right now. Is completely. Unthinkable. That they could. Come over. And embrace.

This. One. Who is. The focal point. Of the Gentile world. Of Christianity. That they could. Come to embrace him. As unthinkable.

[23 : 58] For most of them. But we would remind you. That. In the beginning. Those whom we would call Christians. Were. Exclusively.

Jewish. There were no non-Jewish people. Who believed in Jesus. As the Messiah. Savior of the world. Until sometime. After his death. Burial. And resurrection.

So. We are. Lovers. Of Israel. Without apology. And we have seen. In chapter 12. In the first few verses. That blessing. And cursing.

Is promised accordingly. Based on how. They treat the Jew. And I would also. Be quick to add. We are. As well. Lovers.

Of Arabs. And Muslims. And that. Without apology. Our desire. Is for both. Jew. And Arab. Muslim.

[24 : 53] And Israelis. Gentiles. And whomever. To embrace. Jesus Christ. As Lord. And Savior. Of all. Who trust him. And that. As well.

Without apology. That's the end game. Of the Bible. And that's the end game. Of biblical Christianity. And that. Is what we are about. And why we are here. And what we are trying.

To propagate. This. However. These sentiments. That I have just expressed. Regarding the nation. Of Israel. Is a major sticking point. As to why.

People. Or why Christians. Have doctrinal. Differences. Most. Of Christendom. Does not. Embrace. The dispensational.

Approach. To the interpretation. Of the Bible. What I just shared. With you. Regarding. The Jew. As being. The continued. The continuing. Apple.

[25 : 49] Of God's eye. And the continuing. Focal point. Of God's. Future plan. And program. Whereby. They will come. Into incredible. Blessing. And honor.

And glory. That is shared. Only by those. Who approach. And interpret. The Bible. Dispensationally. And you need. To understand. That puts you.

In a minority. Most. Do not see it. This way. At all. Most believe. In what is known. As replacement. Theology. As regards.

The chosen. People. Of Israel. And if you want. Something to take. With you. In writing. That will help. Solidify it. In the future. Be sure.

You pick up. A copy. Of James. Shower's. Article. On dispensational. Theology. And replacement. Theology.

[26 : 44] It is a two page. Expression. That really. Explains it. Very. Very. Well. Most. In Christendom. See the present day.

Church. Which they believe. Was launched. On the day of Pentecost. In Acts chapter 2. As having. Replaced. Israel. As the chosen. People. Of God.

And when I say. Most of Christendom. I am talking about. All of Roman. Catholicism. This is one of the major points. Of Roman.

Catholicism. That it has replaced. Israel. Has replaced. Its priesthood. With the Catholic priesthood. Has replaced. Israel's sacrifices. With the sacrifice. With the sacrifice.

Of the unbloody mass. That is celebrated. Each time. They come together. And have a. Have a mass service. And they have replaced. Literally. The nation of Israel. As the chosen people.

[27 : 39] Of God. Most. Presbyterians. But not all. Believe the same thing. They just don't believe. That the Roman Catholics. Are the official ones. They believe that.

Protestantism. In general. And then. Lutherans. Are of the same persuasion. Even. Martin Luther. Who was. Very.

Anti-Jewish. And wrote some. Very. Stinging things. About the Jew. That led. Lutherans. As late. As within the last.

20 years. To offer. A public apology. To. Worldwide. Jewry. For things. That. Their founder. Martin Luther. Said.

About them. That is. The official. Lutheran. Position. They are. Part. Of. What. Came. To be known.

[28 : 34] And what. Is known. As. The reformed. Element. Of. Christendom. It was. The Roman Catholic Church. That underwent. This.

Well. They would say. They did not. They. They were. Talking about. John. Wickliffe. And. William Tyndale. And.

Martin Luther. And. Others. Of. Their. Persuasion. All. Of. Who. Were. Roman Catholic.

Priests. In. The. Roman Catholic. Priests. In. Good. Standing. She. She. This.

■■■■. In. In. Now. to. All. Bull. He. music.

[29 : 30] In. ■■■. ■■■. From. Sc natural. They tend. de■■. dinner. digital. They.

was no longer in tune with Scripture at all, or even close. Corruption is the rule of the day. This is the way things go.

All institutions tend to move from good to bad. They have good intentions and a good start, but corruption is the natural thing to creep in.

It has always been that way, it always will be that way, until we have glorified bodies. The United States, compared to its original founding, is a corrupt institution.

I say that as a saddened American. I'm just trying to be unprejudiced and unbiased, and I consider myself as patriotic as anybody.

[30 : 33] But the nation is corrupt. This doesn't mean every person in it is corrupt, but it means as an institution.

The nation is corrupt. You tell me we kill 40 million of our young, unborn? That is enough to assign us to corruption right there.

You don't have to look any further. That will do it. And the views regarding homosexuality and all the rest of it, this is corruption in major proportions.

We have a Congress that is corrupt. This does not mean every person in Congress is corrupt, but it means as an institution, of course it is.

Open your eyes. We have a Supreme Court that is corrupt. No two ways about it. It is. And that's the natural way things go.

[31 : 39] What is needed in all of these institutions is a massive turnaround, a huge spiritual revival. I'm not holding my breath.

I don't see signs of it coming. I'm not saying it can't happen. But it would be an intervention of miraculous divine proportions if it does.

And nothing else can bring it. Corruption is the order. The Protestant church, in general, is a corrupt institution. Not all Protestant churches are, but as an institution, Protestantism is corrupt.

Catholicism is corrupt. Judaism is corrupt. It was corrupt in the Old Testament. That's the way it is.

And why is all of this? Listen, what else can you expect from fallenness?

What do you do when you fall? You don't fall up. You fall down. It's the only way to fall.

[32 : 44] There is a moral and spiritual gravity as well as a physical gravity. And it's always downward. It's always deterioration. Only one thing will keep corruption from creeping in.

Only one thing will keep our liberties and freedoms from evaporating. What is it?

What is it? It's always a moral and spiritual? Our forefathers told us. The price of freedom, price of liberty, is eternal vigilance.

You take your eye off the ball. You take your eye off the ball and you're going down. Harvard has. Princeton has. Yale has. Dartmouth has. Ohio State has. Ohio State has. That's the downward progression.

[33 : 46] Nothing can change it. Nothing can turn it around except the injection of spiritual values that come only by way of revival. And more often than not, that never happens unless an institution is faced with a crisis of huge proportions that they cannot possibly deal with.

Only when institutions and individuals come to themselves and see themselves as morally bankrupt and undone is there any hope. But we look out upon our institutions today and no one is claiming to be close to that.

We are so smart and so sophisticated and so technological and so modern. And everybody that lived before is a bunch of yokels and hicks compared to us.

We are the enlightened generation. We are the top of that evolutionary totem pole. Didn't you know? We are smarter than anybody has ever been. But that's not very close to revival.

So, many still see the present day church, for what it's worth, as the new people of God. I have here, and I think I shared this with you before, but this is my first Bible.

[35 : 12] I was only a couple of weeks old as a Christian, 1956. When Barbara and I picked out this Bible in a bookstore in Olympia, Washington.

And to show you a little bit about my spiritual immaturity then, do you know why I bought this Bible? Not only because it was brown and covered, but it had a zipper on it.

And I thought, that is so cool to have a Bible with a zipper. Well, after I got into it for a couple of years, one day I thought, you know, this zipper is not cool.

It's just a nuisance. And I had her take it out. And it was the best thing that ever happened. But this is an old Oxford Bible. And I have great sentimental attachment to it.

It's King James, of course. And all these translations that we have now didn't even exist in 1956.

There were just three or four and that was it. But I guess a really soft spot in my heart is when Her Majesty and I came home from our honeymoon, one of the first things we did was to go downtown and open a joint checking account.

[36 : 39] And we were, I was 21 and she was 19. So for all practical purposes, we were just a couple of shaved tail kids. But we were so excited about opening that joint checking account.

And this was the first purchase we made. This is the first check that we wrote at the bookstore was for this Bible. And as you read through it, you get an appreciation historically for how many people, even today, regard the Old Testament.

And I'm now in Psalm 45. And up at the top page of my Bible here in Psalm 45, there is a notation that says, The church complaineth to God of present evils.

And you read what that is all about. And it says something like, Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long.

We are counted as sheep for the slaughter. Awake! Why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise! Cast us not off forever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

[37 : 51] For our soul is bowed down to the dust. Our belly cleaveth unto the earth. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercy's sake.

Of whom is this speaking? Who is talking here? Well, it looks like the psalmist. It looks like he's talking about himself and his covenant people, Israel.

Well, that's what it looks like. But only because you don't understand that this is not Israel. Israel. This is the church.

The church. How is that the church? Well, here is the thing. See, when this was originally written by the psalmist, it was about Israel.

Israel. And David wrote it about himself and Israel. Israel. But, this has all changed.

[38 : 59] The update version is, this is no longer about Israel. This is about the Christian church. Huh?

How do you get that? Well, you see, it was originally written about Israel, but that's when they were on good terms with God.

And when they rebelled against God and rejected the Messiah and crucified Jesus, God wrote them off as his chosen people. And what you think you are reading about Israel here in the Old Testament is really about us.

This is speaking about you. Now, let me add one thing to that. That is the majority interpretation of Christendom today.

That's what most Christians throughout the world believe. And even a lot of individual Christians who don't know it or understand it might not believe that. But their ecclesiastical headquarters and the machinery does.

[40 : 03] That's their official position. This is where all Roman Catholics are coming from. This is where all the Lutherans are coming from. This is where most Presbyterians, but not all, are coming from.

There are exceptions. There are Bible Presbyterians like Donald Gray Barnhouse and those of his persuasion who are premillennial and dispensational in their approach to Scripture.

But as Presbyterians, they are a tiny minority and rare birds and generally disowned by other Presbyterians. And this is the official position of the Anglican or Episcopal Church, wherever it is throughout the world.

This is the official position that Israel has been replaced by the church. So when you read all of these passages, and I've got several of them marked here.

They're all throughout the Psalms and Isaiah. And here's judgments wherewith God avenges his church in Isaiah. And you read that and it sure looks like Israel, smells like Israel, walks and talks like Israel.

[41 : 10] But no, it's the church. Isn't that incredible? It's amazing. This is the basis of replacement theology.

And can you not see then how this gives rise to anti-Semitism? Can you not see how it makes the Jew more and more hated, ostracized, persecuted?

That's one of the predictable results of replacement theology. And do you know how far back it goes? It goes all the way back to about the second century.

Maybe even the end of the first century. When people became persuaded that God did nothing to prevent the destruction of Jerusalem, the temple, the crucifixion and murdering of thousands of Jewish people.

By Titus, the Roman general. And left the whole city of Jerusalem just in ruins.

[42 : 30] And then, years later, went to Masada and pursued them there until 900 plus Jews chose the route of suicide.

By jumping from the height of the Masada rather than being taken as prisoners and slaves of the Romans.

And Gentiles stand back and they look at all of this and they say, Wow! These are God's chosen people? These monotheistic people?

And the Jew was a rare bird in his day because the Jew believed there was one God. Here, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. Whereas the Romans and all of their cohorts were pagans and into many gods.

More gods than you could name. And they looked at Israel having just this one God. Boy, he sure doesn't take very good care of them. Look at what's happened to them.

[43 : 37] You know why, don't you? God is so incensed and ticked off that the Jewish people, he just kicked them out for good.

They're gone. And he's replaced them forever. God is finally fed up with the Jew and he's written them off for all the rest of time. And now, the church has taken the Jews' place.

Well, I'll tell you what. If it were true on that basis, he would also have written the church off a long time ago.

Because our faithfulness has not outstripped theirs by any measure. We are as bad as they. And in many instances, worse. Now I want you to turn to Genesis 15.

Genesis 15. God's original covenant was given to Abraham in chapter 12 when he called him out of Ur of the Chaldees.

[44 : 42] And in chapter 15, we're going to find it reiterated. After these things. The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision saying, Fear not, Abraham.

I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me? Seeing I go childless. And the steward of my house is this Eleazar of Damascus.

I really appreciate you looking out for me, Lord, and choosing me like you have. And it's all wonderful and good. And you promised that out of my loins would come those who would bless nations.

But I don't have any children yet. Sarah's womb is still barren. And how are you possibly going to make this come true? You've given me no seed.

This one born in my house, Eleazar of Damascus. He is mine heir. When I die, everything goes to him because I don't have any children. So I've got this adopted servant, Eleazar.

[45 : 45] He's going to receive everything. And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir, but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels.

Your loins shall be your heir. And Eleazar was not blood to Abraham. And he brought him forth abroad and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars if thou be able to number them.

And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And all the while Abraham's thinking, That's all great, but right now I'd settle for just one.

Instead of having progeny as the number of the stars. You've got to start somewhere. And I haven't even started. I only have one. Not even a... So shall thy seed be.

And he believed in the Lord. And he counted it to him for righteousness. He said, I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees to give thee this land to inherit it.

[47 : 05] And he said, Lord God, Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? Now, don't you see a problem there? Verse 5, Verse 6 says, He believed in the Lord.

He believed what God told him. And in verse 8 he says, How can I know this for sure? Well, wait a minute.

Did he believe or did he not believe? Yes, he believed and he did not believe. Well, what kind of double talk is that? I'll tell you what kind of double talk it is. Same kind you have.

I believe, Lord. Help thou mine unbelief. We believe to a degree. We believe certain things. We believe up to a point. But there is a point at which our faith begins to falter.

And it's so hard to hang in there with more and more belief. Especially when you see what's happening around you. And Abraham is just looking at what is.

[48 : 12] Okay, I believe. I believe. I believe you. But, would you mind giving me some kind of a guarantee?

Would you put that in writing? That's what he's asking for. And do you know what God is doing here? This is just amazing. I tell you. This is just amazing.

How the deity, creator of heaven and earth, is so tender and so patient and so long-suffering, with Abraham, with Abraham, he stoops.

I can't think of another word. He stoops. He condescends to meet Abraham on Abraham's terms. Why doesn't he just say, Look, Abraham! I'm God!

[49 : 19] I told you! Take it to the bank! Just believe it! Okay? He has certainly been within his right to do that. How dare you question me when I tell you what I'm going to do?

How dare you, you puny upstart of a human being, say you have a little trouble believing me? What an insult. But do you know what God does? I wonder, I wonder sometimes if the Almighty doesn't sigh. Okay, Abraham.

Okay. I'll do it your way. Now that's condescension, and God doesn't have to do that.

How shall I know that I will inherit it? And it is as if Abraham is being told by God, Look, I know you have trouble believing me because I am God and you are not, and I am coming from the heavenlies, and you are an earth-bound creature, and you are accustomed to earthly ties, and earthly experiences, and earthly verifications.

[50 : 50] Okay, I'm going to give you one of those. And he implements a well-known, customary, everyday practice that Abraham was very familiar with when it came to entering into contractual agreements with other human beings.

And in Abraham's day, when you and another individual settled on some kind of an issue and made a pact or made an agreement, here is how you verified it.

Now, we today have a signature. We sign on the bottom line. They sign on the bottom line. In triplicate. And we have somebody who witnesses it, and they sign as well.

They didn't have that. They did something different. And here's what they did. God said, Okay, we'll verify this your way. You take an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon, all the customary animals that you use for signifying a contract.

And he took unto him all of these things and divided them in the midst and laid each piece one against another. But the birds divided he not. He took these animals, these four-legged animals, slaughtered them, and cut them in half.

[52 : 13] Cut them in two. Now, here is a heifer of three years old. And what we've got is a side of beef here, and a side of beef here.

This is a female cow that has been cut in two lengthways. and a she-goat.

Now, I don't know why these were females, but that's what was required. A she-goat, three years old, cut in half, and a ram, there's a male of three years old, cut him in half, lay half of it here and half of it here.

And then, to verify or to ratify the covenant, the two parties who were involved making the contract would link arms like a husband and wife at a marriage altar.

They would link arms and walk between those animal pieces together with half of them on this side, half of them on this side, and the couple would walk between the animal pieces.

[53 : 27] And as they walked, they were saying something like, may it be so unto me as these animals if I violate this covenant. Now, that's pretty serious business.

You were saying, you know what, if I do not keep my terms of this covenant, I deserve to have happen to me what has happened to these animals. Their lives taken, sliced in half.

Now, that would put some stiffness into any covenant, I can promise you. That's the way they ratified a covenant. Now, God doesn't require that.

God just gives his word. And that ought to be sufficient. And what God does here, as best as I can understand this, is he just steps down and says, okay, Abraham, if you're having trouble believing me, you know what I'll do?

I'll make my promise to you contingent upon a human, earthbound covenant, the kind with which you are familiar and comfortable, and maybe this will really convince you that I mean business.

[54 : 38] Because it would have among men. But the amazing thing is, the utterly amazing thing is, that in verse 12, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abraham, and lo, and horror of great darkness fell upon him.

And he said unto Abraham, know of a surety that thy seed, which you don't even have the first one born yet, your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years.

He's talking about the Egyptian slavery way off in the future. He hasn't even had Isaac yet, much less Jacob and his twelve sons, one of whom will be Joseph and down in Egypt, and also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, that's the Egyptians, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance, that's the gold and silver we were talking about this morning in the Sunday school class, and thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace, and thou shalt be buried in a good old age, but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full, and it came to pass, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold, a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, that passed between those pieces, and what does that represent, that's the deity, that is the God of heaven and earth, passing singularly through those pieces, he is the only one going through the pieces, where's Abraham, they're supposed to be joined arm in arm, where is Abraham, he's asleep, he's passed out, he's seeing this vision, he's out, what is this all about?

This is the way a literal, one-sided, unconditional covenant is established, this is what makes God's promise to Israel as a nation, and as a chosen people, good in all perpetuity, that's a forever deal, it does not depend upon Abraham's obedience, it does not depend upon Isaac's obedience, or

Jacob's obedience, or Judah's obedience, or any of the children of Israel, it depends on God, and God alone, that makes it an unconditional covenant, now there were conditions, particularly in the Mosaic covenant, and we will not look there, but as the Deuteronomy document closes out, there is a long list of all of the items that

[57 : 48] Israel is to do and not to do, and God says, if you do these things, I will bless you, if you do these things, I will curse you, and I will drive you out of the land, I will scatter you to all the nations throughout the earth, if you disobey me, and that's exactly what happened, and it is still in force today, but that does not negate the fact that they remain God's chosen people, and even though I drive you to the Gentiles, to the uttermost parts of the earth, I will bring you back again, you are my people, and I'll bring you back to the land, and I will restore you, and I will bless you, wow, that's what's in future for Israel, the covenant is unconditional, everything is riding on this when you come to interpret the scriptures, the majority viewpoint says, oh,

God did make the promise to Israel, but you see, Israel didn't keep their part of the deal, so, God bailed out on them, no, he didn't, it is true, Israel did not keep their part of the deal, but God is not like Israel, he is the faithful God who keeps covenant unto generation after generation, the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance, and our Father, we are grateful for the integrity of yourself, and for your giving your word as a surety, and your word is all that is needed, we confess that we, like the ancient Jews, from time to time, are prone to lapse into a lack of faith, and a lack of trust, especially things aren't going well when there are reverses, when there are situations we can't understand or explain.

In our humanity, we just can't help but wonder, are you really there? Do you really care? do you really know? We understand this to be a foible of our humanity, and that regardless of what happens in our life, you are a God worthy of being trusted.

That's all you want. Thank you for being an undemanding God. We bless you for it in Christ's wonderful name. Amen.

You are dismissed. Thank you for being voi. ■■■ lógico J.