

# GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?  
HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

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## Again It Is Written

**IN TEMPTING CHRIST**, Satan quoted scripture: “And the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” (Matthew 4:5,6). The passage quoted by the devil was Psalm 91:11,12. Christ did not deny that this quotation was the word of God. However, Christ did quote another scripture, saying, “Again it is written” (American Standard Version), or “It is written again” (King James Version).

Here the basic principle of Bible interpretation is set forth:

(1) No passage of scripture is to be picked out of its context and used contrary to its obvious meaning. Though the devil quoted scripture, he lifted it from its context and its obvious meaning and omitted the part which said, “to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psalm 91:11).

(2) Each passage of scripture must be interpreted in the light of all other scripture on the same

subject. The passage which Jesus quoted was Deuteronomy 6:16: “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God ....” The devil in quoting scripture in his effort to have Jesus cast himself down from the pinnacle of the temple would have Christ tempting and trying God and would have arrayed God’s word against itself. Satan has always tried to change, or misuse, the word of God. In the very beginning when God told Adam and Eve that in the

After 33 years of publication in printed form, GOSPEL GUIDE now appears in electronic form. It is an eight page publication designed to teach basic principles of the gospel of Christ.

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## IT IS WRITTEN

day they ate of the forbidden fruit they would surely die, Satan said to them, “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 2:17; 3:4). When people today handle the word of God in such a way that it does not give the true thought of the context or of all that God has revealed on the subject, they are following the course of Satan in dealing with the word of God rather than that of Christ in setting forth the principle “Again it is written.”

Let us apply this “again it is written” principle to the impossibility of apostasy— “once in grace always in grace. “There are passages of scripture which seem to indicate that one can come into possession of eternal life even in this present life, and if it is eternal, the possession must continue forever. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36). “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come

into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). The verbs in these passages are indeed in the present tense. But now let us apply the “again it is written” principle that we may see further what God has said on the possibility or the impossibility of apostasy. Isaiah gave a prophecy concerning Christ: “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isaiah 9:2). The verbs in this passage are in the past tense, and yet the prophecy concerned what Christ would do some seven hundred years or more in the future. The language used might leave the impression that the event had already taken place, when actually it still lay hundreds of years in the future when Christ came in fulfilment of the prophecy as seen in Matthew 4:16: “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” Now let us consider other passages of scripture which have to do with God’s promise and man’s hope of eternal life. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). Paul reasons logically that one does not have in possession that for which he hopes: “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Romans 8:24,25). The apostle John in writing to Christians speaks of the

promise which God has made to his people: “And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (I John 2:25). The hope which we have, and the promise which God has made are still hope and promise until the time they become reality. Concerning the faithful, this time is explained by Christ: “But he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9). The reaping comes in “due season,” after the sowing, after the cultivating, after the not being “weary in well doing.”

In observing the principle “again it is written,” let us notice other scriptures on the subject of apostasy. Even Paul, a faithful servant of Christ, could see the possibility of being “a castaway.” “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27). The book of Hebrews shows the possibility of those who have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, who have tasted the good word of God, falling away to the extent that they cannot, or will not, repent, to the extent that they crucify the Son of God afresh. Without repentance there is no hope: “I tell you, Nay” but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Notice carefully the passage in Hebrews:

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“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh,

and put him to an open shame” (Hebrews 6:4-6). Speaking of those who have escaped the pollutions of the world through their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and then have become entangled again, Peter said, “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy command-

ment delivered unto them” (2 Peter 2:20,21). “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

In your study of the Bible apply the great principle Christ used in overcoming the devil: “Again it is written.” Be sure that you search out all that God has said on a given subject and make application of it in its proper context. — BN

# Barricades in the Narrow Way

**IN MATTHEW 7:13 JESUS URGES,** “Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction ... but strait is the gate and narrow the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that go in thereat.”

It is not God’s will “that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9), and therefore He has provided a way of salvation for all, without respect of persons. (Acts 10:34f). But if man would have that salvation, then he must “forsake his way, and...his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah. 55:7).

On the other hand, there is another, the Devil, who, as “your adversary,” is not willing that any should be saved, but that all should end in DESTRUCTION! (1 Peter 5:8). While God was willing to give “his only begotten

Son,” and His Son was willing to die on the cross in order that all might be saved from their sins and finally enter heaven; Satan, determined that none shall enter heaven, has placed barricades and stumbling blocks to keep us from making it! These barricades generally fall into two categories: (1) Those which make it difficult, and thus prevent many from entering that way that leads to life, and (2) those which will cause those who have entered the way to stumble and fall.

**Barriers to the Entrance**  
IGNORANCE of the will of God. Jesus declares, “If ye continue in MY WORD, then are ye my disci-

ples indeed, and ye shall KNOW THE TRUTH, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31f.) One who would be freed from his alien sins, and thus ENTER the Way, must first KNOW the way of Truth. The apostle Paul tells us, “So then faith cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17), that one cannot please God without faith (Hebrews 11:6), and that we are to “STUDY... handling aright the word of truth,” that we might obtain that faith, and show ourselves “approved unto God” (2 Timothy 2:15). People who are “ignorant of God’s righteousness” (cf. Psalms 119:172) will attempt to “establish their own righteousness,” and thus will not “submit themselves unto God’s righteousness” (Romans 10:1ff). By this Satan very effectively keeps millions from entering the way of life.

PREJUDICE. One of the very

## A WISE CHOICE

Joshua spoke to his people, "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. **But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**" Because of his pledge of allegiance for his family and himself Joshua was wonderfully blessed with military skill that enabled him to take the land promised to the children of Israel, and to distribute it among the tribes of Israel. Before his death Joshua had the people pledge their faithfulness to God. "Now therefore," he said, 'put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel and, now, turn aside the gods of the stranger which are in your midst, and incline your heart unto Jehovah, God of Israel.' And the people said to Joshua, "The LORD our God we will serve, and His voice we will obey!" Thus Israel served God all the days of Joshua and the elders who outlived Joshua. (Joshua 24 15-31).

## BARRICADES

effective devices used by Satan to keep people in ignorance is prejudice, which closes one's heart to an honest investigation of TRUTH. Jesus confronted this spirit in His earthly mission of teaching. In Matthew 13:15 He says, "This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts and should be converted, and I should heal them." These people were hindered from being converted by prejudice; they worshiped, but in vain, for they set aside the commandments of God that they might observe the "traditions of their fathers" (Mark. 7:8). They were as the people described in Ezekiel 14:3; they had "set up their idols in their hearts ..." The Lord warns that one who "loves not the truth" (prejudice), will be sent "a working of error ... that he might believe a lie ... and be damned ..." (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). There is possibly no more effective barrier to the "strait gate" than prejudice!

**PRIDE.** One might come to understand and believe Truth, but fail to comply with it for a number of reasons; and one is pride. There were some of the rulers of Jesus' day who "believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they be cast out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of

God." (John 12:42,43.) Until one's desire to please God is stronger than his desire to please men, he will not enter the way of life, and pride is one of the very effective ways Satan uses to keep people from manifesting a desire to please God, above all else. James urges those desiring to be saved to "... receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

These are some of the road blocks used by the Devil to keep people from entering the way of life. But, even after one gets by these barriers and enters the Way, the Devil does not give up!

### **Barricades in the Narrow Way**

According to the writer of Hebrews (12:1) there are "things which hinder" men from walking in this "narrow way," which hindrances are all placed there by Satan in his efforts to keep those who have begun from finishing the race. The child of God is admonished, "... Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). As those who had already begun the "race" had been required to "lay aside" whatever would have disqualified their entrance, they must now rid themselves of any and everything that would hinder their running the race. Thus, as one must overcome obstacles in order to enter "the way of life," he must also overcome all stumbling blocks within the Way in

## BARRICADES

order to have eternal life which awaits us at the end of that “narrow way.” Some of these barricades are:

**HARDSHIPS.** The apostle Paul warns, “...All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions” (2 Timothy 3:12). Consider the hardships of the apostle himself, as referred to in 2 Corinthians 11:23ff: “... stripes above measure ... in prisons ... beaten with rods ... stones ... perils of waters ... robbers ... own countrymen ... heathen ... false brethren ... hunger ... thirst ... cold ... nakedness ...”; but he, as he admonishes us (2 Timothy 2:3) “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ,” so that at the end he could say, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ...” Thus, he could look with confidence to the “crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:6-8), which the Devil wants none of us to obtain!

**WORLDLINESS.** Satan entices the child of God through “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15f) to conform to this world, rather than being transformed, and many are “overcome by evil” rather than “overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:2,21). In Galatians 5:19ff the inspired writer gives a catalogue of “works of the flesh” and concludes that “those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God!” James reminds us that “friendship with the world is enmity with God”

(James 4:4); and this is exactly what Satan desires, for he knows that this is one way of blocking the way to heaven for us.

**LAZINESS.** Salvation is indeed by grace, but those who would “lay hold on eternal life” provided by our Lord must be “good stewards.” Jesus likens the kingdom of heaven to a man going out to “hire laborers into his vineyard” (Matthew 20:1). The “one talent” man of Matthew 25 did not use that with which he was intrusted, and so was declared to be “wicked and slothful.” As a reward he was “cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The church at Laodicea was “neither hot nor cold,” but lukewarm and indifferent; and Jesus said, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The unfruitful branch shall be “cut off and cast into the fire.” (John 15:1-6. The apostle Paul admonishes, “... be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labors are not in vain in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 15:58.)

Thus, Satan would be just as happy to see us fall, from hardships, conformity to the world, or becoming lazy and fruitless, as to see others hindered from entering the way by other things; yea, and even by OUR BAD EXAMPLES!

How badly do YOU want to go to heaven? Satan does not want you to make it, and thus the barricades. God and His Son desire that you obtain eternal life; and they have provided it for

you. They describe in the Inspired Scriptures “the way of truth”; and we are assured that we can so live as to be “more than conquerors through him that loved us ...” (Romans 8:37). By the help of God we CAN surmount all of Satan’s barricades and make it to the end of the “narrow way” and to eternal life—but it depends upon how strong is our desire to do so! We cannot do it alone; but with “the power (dynamite) of God ... the gospel of Christ”—we can blast away all of Satan’s barricades!

Study, that you might understand His will. Comply with His conditions of salvation—both in order to become a child of God and to serve him faithfully, that you might hear Him say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Do not let the Devil cheat you out of your reward!

— Charles G. Maples, Sr.

*“In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

*(Matthew 7:12–14)*

## A MOST UNWISE CHOICE

In Genesis 3, the first book of the bible, we are told of a most unwise choice that Eve made. For their home God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden providing an abundance of life's necessities. God told them they could eat of every tree of the garden with one exception—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God warned them, “for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die.” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”

Because of their disobedience they were cast out of their paradise on earth into a hostile world and brought themselves under the sentence of eternal death.

A vital lesson: never make a choice that shows disrespect for God's word.

# Heaven

**SHOULD WE WANT TO GO THERE?** For many reasons, the answer is “Yes.”

**1. It is real.** If we believe the Bible, the word of God, we believe that heaven is a real place. It is mentioned again and again in the word of God. The faithful child of God has an incorruptible and undefiled inheritance reserved for him in heaven (1 Peter 1:4).

**2. It is the dwelling place of God.** Jesus taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Surely we want to live so as to come into the glorious presence of God in His heavenly home, for if we do not, we must spend eternity with the devil in endless suffering. At the judgment “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matthew 25:41).

**3. It is the dwelling place of Christ.** Jesus said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6: 38). Having accomplished all that God purposed for him to do on earth, he has now returned to be at the right hand of the Father in heaven. “So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). Like Paul, we should have the desire to be with Christ in that heavenly home. (Philippians 1:23).

**4. It is the dwelling place of angels.** After the angels an-

nounced to the shepherds the birth of Christ, they returned to heaven. (Luke 2:13-15.) The faithful angels are ministering spirits, “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). Heaven must be a wonderful place if it is the dwelling place of God, and his Holy Spirit, and Christ, and the angels.

**5. It is the home of the redeemed.** John saw a great number in white robes before the throne of God. And one of the elders asked him, “What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” But John said, “Sir, thou knowest.” Then the elder said, “These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-15).

**6. It is a holy city.** (Revelation 21:2). We have never lived in a holy city on earth. At the present time cities, with their crime and immorality, are most unholy. It would be wonderful to live in a holy city.

**7. It is Paradise.** There is no sorrow, no pain, no death, no curse, no night, there. (Revelation 7:17:21:4,5). We have never lived in a paradise on earth. This heavenly Paradise continues forever.

**8. It is attainable.** When we as penitent believers confess our faith in Christ, and are baptized in His name for the remission of our

## HEAVEN

sins, we have entrance into God's earthly, and yet spiritual kingdom. (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 11:18; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3,4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; John 3:5.) Then, serving the Father faithfully throughout life, we have this exceeding precious promise: "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowl-

edge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;

for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5-11).

*May we so live that heaven will be our eternal home!—BN*

# The Eastern Orthodox Churches

**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH** is so prominent in Western Europe and in America that it greatly overshadows other Catholic bodies that are not under the Roman pontiff. But Eastern Orthodoxy claims a world population of 123,877,500.

There are nearly four million people in this country who are affiliated with one or another of the 18 Orthodox churches that operate here. The largest is the Greek Archdiocese of North and South America which has 1,900,000 members in 485 congregations. In this article we are setting forth some facts regarding the Eastern Orthodox churches.

**1. The Name: Eastern Orthodox Churches.** This is the designation most acceptable to these people as a whole. "Eastern" expresses their desire to be distinct from Rome. It also indicates the area of the Roman Empire in which these churches arose. "Orthodox" shows their pride in being "orthodox" (holding the "true belief") in regard to the accepted "canon law." The Eastern Orthodox Churches consider themselves "to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, founded by Jesus

Christ in the year of his death, 33 A.D." (Religion in America, p. 80.) "Churches" (plural) indicates the fact that Eastern Orthodoxy is composed of several independent national bodies, rather than being a single organization as the Roman church is. However, the word is often used in the singular. The word "Greek" is sometimes used in designating Eastern Orthodoxy and is historically correct. The church originated and spread through Greek culture and traditions. For many centuries "Greek" was retained in the name of some national churches; but with the rise of nationalism in the last century it was dropped in favor of "Eastern."

**2. The Origin of Eastern Orthodoxy.** The Eastern Orthodox Church is part of the great apostasy foretold in the New Testament and came into existence as a direct result of that apostasy.

It is impossible to date the time of its beginning because it is the product of many centuries of evolution in doctrine and practice. Prior to 1054 the Eastern and Western branches of the apostate church were regarded as one. But in that year the church was finally divided in what is known as "the great schism." While the division was building up for centuries and was both political and ecclesiastical in nature, the break was not officially recognized until 1054. "The Eastern Church has always maintained that it was the Roman Catholic Church which drew apart from the original Christian Church." (Ibid.) The truth of the matter is both drew away from the church of the New Testament and neither branch of Catholicism is the church founded by Jesus Christ.

**3. The organization of the Orthodox Churches.** During the time of the Byzantine Empire the patriarch of Constantinople was the leading power in the Eastern church, but after the fall of the empire in 1453, the Eastern church took on the nature of independent national churches. However, the patriarch of Constantinople (now Istanbul) is

## SIN IN THE CAMP

"Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they have also put it among their own stuff. "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction. Neither will I be with you anymore, unless you destroy the accursed from among you"

It was found that Achan of the tribe of Judah was guilty of stealing. He confessed: "Indeed I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and this is what I have done: When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

As long as there was sin in the camp, Israel could not stand before their enemies. Joshua asked Achan, "Why have you troubled us"?

Because of sin there is much trouble in our land today.

## EASTERN ORTHODOX

still regarded as the "Ecumenical Patriarch" of Eastern Orthodoxy, but the honor is more traditional than real. Ernst Benz says, "The nonorthodox observer is somewhat bewildered by the diversity he finds beneath the roof of orthodoxy." (The Eastern Orthodox Church, p. 75.) Each of the several Orthodox churches that make up Eastern Orthodoxy has its own supreme head. Each national church is ruled independently by a council of bishops, called a synod. These elect the "patriarch" who heads the church. There are three orders of service: deacons, priests, and bishops. Bishops may also hold higher ranks, such as Patriarch, Metropolitan, or Archbishop. The higher orders of the clergy never use modern dress and wearing beards is common among all Orthodox clergymen. Marriage is permitted to priests, but not to bishops. New Testament bishops are required to be married. (1 Timothy 3:2).

**4. The basic authority in the Eastern Churches.** There are four principal sources of the Eastern Orthodox law: Holy Scripture, the oral traditions of the Eastern churches, church customs, and the decrees of the first seven ecumenical councils recognized by the Orthodox churches. In addition

to these there are the decisions of various special synods and the decrees of "the Fathers of the Church," especially Basil, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, as well as the pronouncements of famous ecclesiastical jurists of the Byzantine Middle Ages.

When one takes the time to compare the Eastern Orthodox Churches with the church revealed in the New Testament he sees a vast difference between the two. The simplicity of the New Testament church stands out in sharp contrast to the complexity of Orthodoxy. The New Testament church began with the preaching of the inspired word of God on Pentecost. Those who obeyed the gospel and were added by the Lord to the church wore no names save those given by inspired men. In organization they knew nothing larger than a local congregation. The bishops of the true apostolic church exercised no authority beyond the local congregation and all Christians were priests. In authority the inspired word of God was all-sufficient. So contrary to their claim, the Eastern Orthodox Churches are not the one, true, apostolic church of the first century. They do not bear the identifying marks of the New Testament church.

— Earl Kimbrough

### Contact Information: