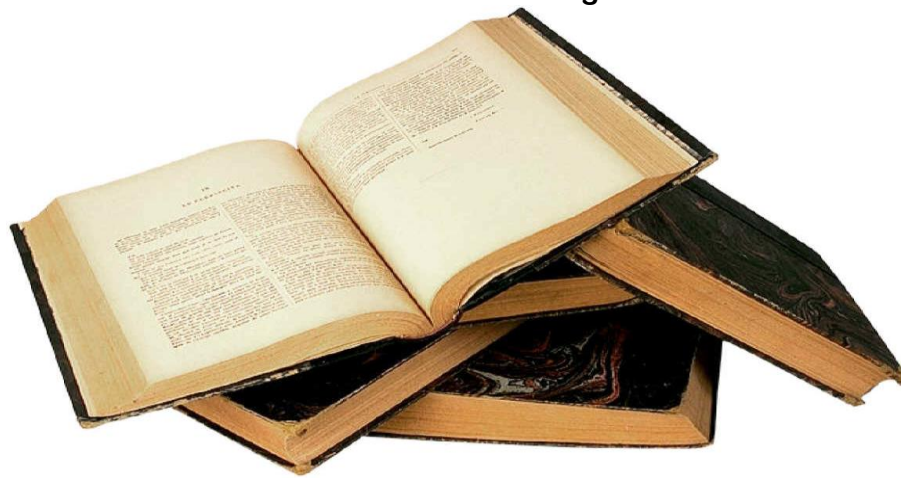


# Spring 2019 Newsletter

## Detroit Bible Students Ecclesia

P.O. Box 51, Southfield, MI 48037-0051  
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## THY WORD IS TRUTH

*“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent...Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*

*John 17:3,17 (NKJV)*

It was in the spring of the year, on the tenth of Nisan, and Jesus, knowing that the proper time had come for him to give his life as “the lamb of God” for the sin of the world (John 1:29), rode into Jerusalem in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy. (Zechariah 9:9; Luke 19:28-40) His entry into the city was triumphal. The common people acclaimed him and strewed palm branches in his path, crying “Hosanna (Hebrew—“oh, save”) to the Son of David,” (Matthew 21:9) but the chief priests and elders of the Sanhedrin were filled with murderous intent.

In his last hours, Jesus’ concern was for his disciples. The words of our heading are part of his last prayer for them. He knew that they would be sorely tested after he was no longer physically present to care for them. He knew they too would face Satan’s attempts to turn them from the truth. So Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by Your **truth**.” (John 17:17)

As expected, Jesus was arrested by the Jewish leaders who wanted him killed, but they feared the common people who followed Jesus gladly. (John 11:47-51) Therefore, they sent him to Pilate with the accusation of sedition. As Jesus stood quietly before him, Pilate asked, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the **truth**.” (John 18:37 *New King James Version*) Pilate, jaded by the myths abounding in Rome’s pantheon of gods asked sardonically, “What is **truth**?” (vs.38)

After just a few words with Jesus, Pilate recognized that the charge against Jesus’ was a **lie** and that his accusers were motivated by envy. (Matthew 27:18) He decided he would use the Passover tradition to release him.

We know the end of that story. Barabbas was released and Jesus was crucified. But, on the third day after his death, Jesus was resurrected by the power of God. (Acts 4:10) He showed himself to his disciples so they would be sure of the **truth** of his resurrection because the time would come when they would give their lives for testifying to this **truth**. (Acts 13:30; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8)

The soldiers guarding Jesus’ tomb also knew of his resurrection and when they told the chief priests about it, the priests counseled them to **lie**—to say that Jesus’ disciples came during the night and stole his body. (Matthew 28:11-15) The Scripture says, “this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” In 1965, Hugh Schonfield resurrected that **lie**, if it had ever died, with his book, *The Passover Plot*.

Why do **lies** have such a tenacious hold on mankind? Because Satan is the god of this world. (2 Corinthians 4:4) Of him Jesus said, “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is **no truth** in him. When he **lies**, he speaks out of his own character, **for he is a liar and the father of lies**.” (John 8:44) What did Jesus mean by this?

How is Satan a murderer and the “father of lies?”

Going back to the beginning, (Genesis 2:7) we learn that “God formed man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.” God put the man into a garden which he had planted with trees that were “pleasant to the sight and good for food.” Man was given just one prohibition from God, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it **you shall surely die.**”(vss.8,9,16,17)



Dying was not an original condition of man’s experience. Death was the penalty for sin that God imposed upon man because of his disobedience. God told Adam, “Because you ... have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life...by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, **till you return to the ground**, for out of it you were taken; for **you are dust, and to dust you shall return.**” (Genesis 3:17-19 *English Standard Version*)

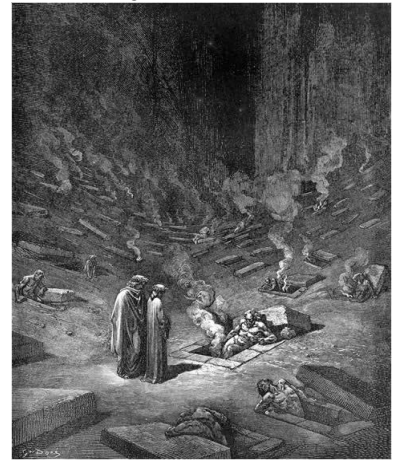
It was Satan in the form of a serpent that told Eve, “**You will not surely die.**” (Genesis 3:4; Revelation 20:2) This **lie** of Satan’s has pervaded all the religions of the world, including Christianity. Whether called Reincarnation, Nirvana, the Happy Hunting Ground, Purgatory, Heaven or Hell, these expectations all rest on Satan’s original **lie** that man would “not surely die.” Death, cessation of life, was the penalty pronounced by God, not life somewhere else.

Since Satan’s **lie** led to the dying of the human race, Satan is as Jesus said, “**a murderer from the beginning.**” With his first **lie**, Satan also had to promote another **lie**—that there is an immortal soul in man that lives on after death. Genesis 2:7 tells us man “became a living soul (Hebrew, *nephesh* = being)”, it doesn’t say he was “given” a soul. One **lie** begets another until a whole belief structure built upon **lies** results. Satan is truly “**the father of lies.**” We have Jesus’ word for it and there is no more authoritative source.

When Jesus made the foregoing statement, he was directing it toward the Pharisees who boasted that they were children of God, not “born of fornication” as they accused Jesus of being. Jesus told them, “If God were your Father, you would love Me...You are of your father the devil and you want to do the desires of your father.” (John 8:39-44) Satan has wanted to usurp God’s glory (Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 10:18) and undermine God’s plan of a ransom for ALL mankind. (Matthew 4:8-10) He has sought in every way he can to pervert the truth and turn man away from belief in God. His original lie that man doesn’t really die has led to the God-dishonoring doctrine of hell-fire and all the hideous descriptions of how God will torture his human creatures.

A classic of medieval literature is Dante’s *Inferno* in which he graphically portrayed the horrors of hell. His depiction of the sufferings awaiting sinners, became firmly embedded as the definitive description of the fate awaiting the unchurched. About this narrative the historian

Will Durant rightly observed: “Half the terrors of the medieval soul are gathered into this gory chronicle. As one reads its awful pages the gruesome horror mounts, until at last the cumulative effect is oppressive and overwhelming. Not all the sins and crimes of man from nebula to nebula could match the sadistic fury of this divine revenge. Dante’s conception of hell is the crowning indecency of medieval theology...Centuries of barbarism, insecurity, and war had to intervene before man could **defile his God** with attributes of undying vengeance and inexhaustible cruelty.” (*The Age of Faith*, p1073) Sadly, there are those today that still envision God as this cruel, vengeful deity.



The Bible describes God differently. The Psalmist wrote: “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.” (Psalm 89:14) The teaching that God plans to torment 99% of his creatures forever, without hope of release, in ways that turn even fallen man’s stomach, is an attack on God’s love and justice. Exodus 21:23-25 gives God’s standard of justice: “...life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.” An eternity of torture for a lifetime of 70, 80, or even 100 years of sin does not fit this formula.

With such a conception of God and the Bible, can anyone wonder that modern, educated minds of today turn away in revulsion from what they see as “medieval superstition?” Is it a surprise that there is the drive to explain man’s existence without the necessity of involving the irrational, sadistic God taught in most churches and by some heathen religions around the world?

Repugnance at the thought that billions will be tortured forever, has opened the door to another modern attack on truth. New Age concepts, Mind Science theories (positive or negative thinking creates reality), and Ecumenism (accepting all religious views, no one is right or wrong), have made inroads in all the churches. In evidence, are the endorsements by well-known ministers **Robert Schuller**, **Billy Graham**, and **Norman Vincent Peale** of John Marks Templeton’s quasi-Christian book, DISCOVERING THE LAWS OF LIFE, which the magazine *Christianity Today* (4/24/1994) promoted with the large print banner, “WILL INSPIRE MILLIONS OF READERS.” Templeton writes that the belief that Christ is the only way to heaven is dogmatism and

pride. He declares: "The basic principles for leading a 'sublime life'... may be derived from any religious tradition, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and others, as well as Christian." (DISCOVERING THE LAWS OF LIFE, pp.6-7). No one should say that God can be reached by only one path [through Christ]. Such exclusiveness lacks humility (THE HUMBLE APPROACH, pp.46, 55)

This modern gospel has found its way into the pulpits of many churches today. The "feel good" gospel of being good persons, accepting all life-styles, and seeking self-fulfillment, has replaced the true Gospel (Matthew 20:28; Galatians 3:8,16,29). There is also the avoidance of any mention of sin, This has the appearance of being Christ-like, **but it is not Christian**. It is a direct attack by Satan on true faith in Christ as man's only redeemer (Acts 4:12; Romans 5:9,10; 10:9) and his Kingdom about which he preached and for which he taught us to pray. (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14,15; Luke 8:1; Matthew 6:10)

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of **all** men, especially of believers." (1 Timothy 4:10 *New American Standard Bible*) While believers are specially blessed now, all will eventually receive God's blessing as the Apostle John wrote: "...we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation [satisfaction] for our sins, and **not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**" (1 John 2:2 *ESV*) The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "When your [God's] judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." (Isaiah 26:9 *NKJV*).

Paul warned Timothy, "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of **science falsely so called.**" (1 Timothy 6:20) Today, the theory of evolution is another ploy of Satan's to undermine the foundation teaching of the Bible—Original sin and Redemption—by replacing man's first parents with monkeys. Of all the sciences, this one most absolutely deserves the name "science falsely so called."

Science is, by its own definition, observable, demonstrable, and replicable. After more than a century, Darwin's theory fails on all points and remains completely unproven scientifically. No missing links have been found, no new life has been observed evolving, no fossil record supports the theory, in fact all evidence is to the contrary. All studies of life end with an inescapable conclusion of intelligent design. Still, evolution is universally accepted. Even the churches have made peace with it although it destroys the Bible's core teaching that Jesus died as the off-set for Adam. (Romans 5:18,19; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45, 47)

Another modern-day **lie** attacking the Bible is that it is not a legitimate historical record—that the people of the Bible were all just legendary figures and their stories myths. Since the Old Testament scriptures are the history of the Jews, the charge is also made that they have no historical claim to their land.

The modern nation of Israel was created out of the ashes of the Holocaust. Their return to their homeland was prophesied in the Bible and prophecy has been fulfilled. (Jeremiah 31:8; Ezekiel 37:1-14) Archeological finds in Israel also confirm the Bible narrative. In fact, the Bible can be used as a sort of archeological treasure map for locating ruins of ancient sites spoken of in the Old Testament. The discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls has proven that the Hebrew Scriptures today are unchanged from those of centuries ago.



Are we foolish to trust the testimony of the Scriptures when so many, even amongst the clergy, are turning to alternative "gospels"? Jesus asked, "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) What is our position? The Apostle Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16) Are we as certain of this as was Paul?

For the Apostles the appearances of Jesus after his resurrection served to stiffen their courage in the face of Jewish and Pagan opposition. For our day, God has provided the fulfillment of prophecy, archeological confirmation, clear evidence of intelligent design on both microscopic and macroscopic levels, as well as internal proofs that the Bible is the Creator's revealed Word. Let us "arm" our faith so when the Bible is attacked as mere superstition, we will be able to give a reason for our hope and "withstand in the evil day." (Eph. 6:13; 1 Pet. 3:15)

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." Ephesians 6:10 (ESV)*

(For information regarding some of the internal proofs, go to [biblenewsletter.org](http://biblenewsletter.org) See: "Bible Prophecy—Can it be Believed?" "The World's Greatest Book," "Creation's Amazing Architect." Or send for the free booklet, *Fascinating Facts for Bible Students*)

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