

West End Messenger

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Article 1

Where Did God Come From?

As people consider and discuss the origins of this universe, the earth, and life on the earth, it is correctly stated that everything had a beginning and that something cannot come from nothing. The only possible conclusion is that a supernatural God created it all. However, in a universe that had a beginning point, the question about beginnings is then often applied to God, asking, “Where did God come from?” Let’s consider the Bible’s teachings to answer this question.

1) God already existed in the beginning. As the Bible begins and tells about the creation of the universe in Genesis 1, one powerful fact can be so subtle that it gets overlooked: God already existed! Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God did not suddenly pop into existence at the same time He created the universe. Rather, He was already there! Similarly, John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.” Colossians 1:17 adds that Jesus is “before all things.”

2) God created time, space, and matter. It is difficult for people to fully understand the idea that God existed before the beginning of this universe. For, everything we have ever known in the physical realm is bound by either time, space, or matter. However, God is not bound by these because He created them. And, God could create them because He is not bound by them. Again, Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning [time] God created the heavens [space] and the earth [matter].” For example, the one who creates a computer is not bound inside the computer. He does not exist somewhere inside the computer. In the same way, the God who created time, space, and matter is not Himself bound within the confines of them!

3) God is eternal. Rather than teaching a god who has a point of origin, the true God of the Bible who created the universe

is eternal! Psalm 90:2 says, “Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, from eternity to eternity, you are God.” God’s existence cannot be measured by a timeline! He has always existed and will always exist, extending forever in both directions. Revelation 4:8 records some heavenly beings praising God by saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, the Almighty, who was, who is, and who is to come.” So, there has never been a point when God was not in existence. He exists today. And, there will never be a point when God will not be in existence.

4) God’s eternal nature is part of what makes God – God!

Hopefully, you are beginning to see that asking where God came from is asking the wrong question. It is like asking what the color green smells like. Just as you cannot smell a color, you cannot put God on a timeline. This is inherent in His nature of being God! For, if you could put God on a timeline, He would no longer be God. Everything and everyone else had a beginning, because they are all bound by time. But, God is not! Along with being all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present, being eternal is what makes God – God! He is the God who, when asked what His name is, replied, “I AM WHO I AM” (Exodus 3:14). He is the I AM in that He is all-encompassing and self-sufficient. There is never a time when He is not. In Revelation 1:8, God says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega...the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

While it can be challenging for us to understand the eternal nature of God, let’s recognize that this limitation is because of us, not because it is impossible for God. We are the ones who live in a world that is bound by time, space, and matter. God is not! And, rather than the eternal nature of God causing us to reject the reality of God, we should embrace His eternal nature as being the only possible explanation for the origin of the universe and should cause us to praise God for who He is!

Article 2

When Will Jesus Return?

Jesus will come again. Hebrews 10:27-28 promises that Jesus “will appear a second time.” People have been looking for Jesus’s second coming ever since He ascended into Heaven in Acts 1:9-11. Since that time, many have tried to predict when Jesus will come again and have said that we are now living in the final days before His return. However, does the Bible tell us anything about when Jesus will return?

1) Jesus’s coming will not be preceded by signs of the “end times.” Matthew chapter 24 is commonly cited as proof for signs that will proceed Jesus’s second coming. However, a close study of that chapter will reveal that the signs chapter have nothing to do with Jesus’s second coming. Rather, they are signs that would proceed the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in 70 AD). These include things like false messiahs, wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, persecution, etc. The context bears out that these things would happen before Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans. In fact, this is the exact question Jesus was answering (verses 1-3). After Jesus had answered the question about the destruction of Jerusalem, He said, “Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place” (verse 34). Therefore, don’t be deceived by those who would falsely apply Matthew 24:4-34 to the second coming of Christ!

2) Jesus said no one knows when He will return. After discussing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus then transitions to focus on His second coming. Verses 35 and 36 mark this transition. Jesus said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. Now concerning that day and hour no one knows – neither the angels of heaven nor the Son – except the Father alone.” Rather than people being able to know when the time for Jesus’s coming is near, Jesus teaches that He will come at a time when people do not expect (verses 37-44). So, Jesus’s coming could be today, later this year, in a few years, or in many years! We simply do not know because God has not told us when Jesus will come.

3) Jesus will return when God knows the time is right.

Although God has not told us when Jesus will come, He has told us why Jesus has not come yet. When Peter was encouraging Christians not to be distracted by people who were scoffing about the fact Jesus had not come yet, he wrote, “Dear friends, don’t overlook this one fact: With the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:8-9). So, God has not sent Jesus to end this world because He is still giving people the opportunity to repent! However, there will come a time when the opportunity to repent will end and Jesus will come again.

4) You are taught to be ready. Rather than God telling people when to expect Jesus, God simply tells everybody to be ready! 2 Peter 3:10 says that the “day of the Lord will come like a thief.” That is, you will not have any prior warning that He is coming that specific day and hour – just as a thief does not announce his coming prior. In fact, when Jesus used the same illustration about His second coming in Matthew 24:43-44, Jesus said, “But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into. This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” The only way Jesus’s return will not catch you unprepared is if you are always watching for it and living in the way that will please Him when He comes (Matthew 25:1-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11)!

Jesus’s coming can happen at any moment. It is not going to take place after many escalating “signs of the times.” Rather, we are all forewarned that Jesus will come at a time we do not expect. Therefore, you must get your life right with God and keep watching for His coming!

Article 3

How Did We Get The Bible?

One of the greatest mistakes a person can make is to believe that the Bible is just like every other book. Sadly, many people have been led to believe that the Bible is nothing but an old book that has been written by men. Others recognize that the Bible claims to be something special but they really don't know how we got the words contained in the Bible. However, failing to understand the origin of the book we call the Bible can result in failing to have the proper regard for it or drawing some improper conclusions about it.

1) The mind of God. The story of how we got the Bible begins with the mind of God. A question we must all consider is: How can we possibly know what is in the mind of God? How can we know how or why He created this universe? How can we know how or why He created us? How can we know whether there is anything special about the way He created us? How can we know about His plan for saving people from sin? How can we know what is sinful? How can we know how to live to please God? This would all be a mystery to us if we could not know anything about the mind of God. Yet, the Bible has a very serious and impactful connection to the mind of God. For example, 1 Corinthians 2:16 says, "For who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

2) The inspiration of Scripture. How could someone possibly claim to have the mind of Christ – and be accurate in doing so? Earlier in the passage, the author (Paul) said, "Now God has revealed these things to us by the Spirit, since the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except his spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may understand what has been freely given to us by God" (1 Corinthians 2:10-12).

The authors of the Bible claimed that the Bible was inspired by God. For example, 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “All Scripture is inspired by God....” That is, the words contained in the Bible are literally breathed out by God! This happened through the work of the Holy Spirit revealing the mind of God to those who wrote and guiding them into all truth (John 14:25-26; John 15:26-27; John 16:12-15; Ephesians 3:3-5; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Therefore, the words in the Bible contain complete truth from God and perfectly reveal the mind of God!

3) The preservation and distribution of Scripture. The Scriptures have been amazingly preserved throughout history! The oldest portions of the Bible were written approximately 3,500 years ago and the newest portions of the Bible were written around 2,000 years ago. While we do not know of any original manuscripts (called autographs) written by the original Bible writers, their original works were copied extensively. Today, there are many copies of manuscript copies that have been found – in far greater number than any other ancient writing! And, we can be confident that the message is the authentic message from God, in part, due to the harmony that exists in the manuscripts and fragments that have been preserved. For example, whenever Jesus walked the earth (around 2,000 years ago), the Old Testament had been preserved so that he (as well as other New Testament authors) quoted from it. And, when the New Testament was written, it was to be copied and distributed to others (Colossians 4:16).

4) The translation of Scripture. The original writings of the Bible were written in three different languages. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, with a small part being written in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. If you could read these languages, you can read the Bible in its original form today. However, because most cannot read these languages, we are dependent on Bible translations that attempt to put the original words of God into the language people speak. Although the translators are not God-inspired men and women, there are many translations that do a very good job accurately conveying God’s words.

Although much more could be said about how we got the Bible, I hope you will appreciate that the Bible contains God’s

words! Therefore, the Bible is unlike any other book in that it is the only book that reveals what is in the mind of God and is the only source of perfect truth. And, I hope you will have confidence that the Bible has been faithfully preserved and translated so that you will strive to learn and live what is written in the Bible!

Article 4

Is Divorce A Sin?

Is divorce a sin? In many places today, the law says a couple can get divorced for many different reasons. But, while this may be acceptable according to human law, we must be concerned about whether divorce is acceptable according to Jesus's law. In fact, since God is the one who created marriage and possesses all authority, He is the one who ultimately gets to decide whether divorce is right or wrong.

1) "Is it lawful?" Jesus addressed this specific question about divorce during the time He was on the earth. Particularly, Matthew 19:3 records a situation in which some Pharisees approached Jesus to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?" That is, is it acceptable to God for divorce to take place for just any reason? Therefore, Jesus's answer must be accepted as the standard on the question about divorce.

2) God joins a man and woman together in marriage. To answer the question about divorce, Jesus appealed to when the first man and woman were joined together (Matthew 19:4-5; Genesis 2:22-24). God clearly established marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman that was designed to last a lifetime! The Scriptures teach that every time two people who have the Scriptural right to marry get married, God joins (binds) them together with a bond that lasts for life (Romans 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 7:39).

3) No person has the right to separate what God has joined together. Divorce must not just be viewed from the perspective of one person's right or a couple's decision. Rather, God has been

directly involved in joining the two together (as long as it was a Scriptural marriage in which both people had God's approval to be married to each other). And, since God has joined these two together, He has the final say in whether or not they can divorce. Jesus said, "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate" (Matthew 19:6). Then, when Jesus was asked why divorce was permitted under the Old Testament, Jesus said, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts, but it was not like that from the beginning" (Matthew 19:7-8).

Up to this point, we should notice that Jesus's answer concerning whether divorce is lawful on any grounds is a resounding "No!" Also read Mark 10:1-12 and Luke 16:18. Whenever two people marry, they (whether they intend to or not) sign up for a relationship God created to last a lifetime. And, there is no Biblical right for someone to separate what God has joined together! Therefore, divorce is (generally) sinful because it violates God's marriage law.

4) One exception given for divorce. After Jesus demonstrated that God does not approve of divorce, He gave one exception under which scenario divorce can occur and not be sinful. Matthew 19:9 says, "I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery." Sexual immorality refers to having sexual intercourse with someone who is not your spouse. So, this unfaithfulness in the marriage is the only grounds given in Jesus's law for divorce. In this scenario, though, only the one who divorces his/her spouse for the cause of sexual immorality is free to remarry. The one who is guilty of the sexual immorality and is divorced has no such right under Jesus's law. Also see Matthew 5:31-32.

Sadly, there are many marriages that have ended in divorce for reasons other than sexual immorality. If you have been guilty of divorcing for an unauthorized cause (something other than your spouse's sexual immorality), you must recognize and repent of your sin. Then, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 says that you only have two options if you want to please God. These are to "remain unmarried or be reconciled" to your God-approved spouse. And, if you have been divorced (even if you did not have want the divorce), God also

gives you these same options (though you are not held accountable for the divorce). Still, you have no authority from God to remarry another as long as your lawful spouse lives (Luke 16:18; Romans 7:2-3).

There is always sin that is associated with divorce. In a divorce for the cause of sexual immorality, the one who has been sexually immoral has sinned. Then, any other divorce is a sin by breaking God's marriage law. While God's marriage law is strict, it is the responsibility of every married couple to live by it! And, if couples will embrace God's marriage law so as to live according to it, the option of divorce will be taken out of the equation when working through problems and more homes will be what God desires from them!

Article 5

Why Did Jesus Perform Miracles?

Jesus was a great miracle worker. For example, Matthew 4:23-24 says, "Now Jesus began to go all over Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. Then the news about him spread throughout Syria. So they brought to him all those who were afflicted, those suffering from various diseases and intense pains, the demon-possessed, the epileptics, and the paralytics. And he healed them." But, why did Jesus perform the miracles He performed?

1) To demonstrate compassion. As Jesus went from village to village, He found many who were sick and struggling with all kinds of physical circumstances that prompted His miracles. Some could not walk. Some were lepers. Some were blind. Some had lost loved ones. Some were struggling in other ways. Certainly, seeing people struggle with these things tore at Jesus's heart as He was deeply concerned about people. For example, Matthew 14:14 says, "When he went ashore, he saw a large crowd, had compassion on them, and healed their sick." Matthew 15:32 records that before Jesus fed the four thousand (plus women and children), Jesus said, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they've already stayed

with me three days and have nothing to eat. I don't want to send them away hungry, otherwise they might collapse on the way."

2) To fulfill prophecy. One notable thing Jesus accomplished during His earthly ministry was His fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. For, Jesus said that He did not come to abolish (overthrow) the Law and the Prophets, "but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Bible scholars have estimated that more than 300 prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus. The purpose of this was to prove He really was the Messiah – the one God promised as the Savior and King! One of those prophecies involved Jesus performing miracles. For example, Jesus drove out demons and healed all who were sick "so that what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: He himself took our weaknesses and carried our diseases" (Matthew 8:16-17; Isaiah 53:4). Even John the baptizer knew Jesus as the Messiah by His miracles, in fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 11:1-6).

3) To prove who He is. Jesus's miracles were much more than just a way to help people with what caused them to struggle and suffer. Instead, His miracles were to cause people to recognize that He really is the Son of God. While these miracles did this by fulfilling prophecy, they also did this just by people witnessing the things that were done and knowing that only the power of God could accomplish such! For example, John 4 records Jesus's interaction with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. When He talked with her, He miraculously revealed things to her that only God (or a prophet from God) would have known. Then, the text says that the woman left saying, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" (verse 29). Similarly, when Jesus healed a paralyzed man and forgave His sins, He said, "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...I tell you: Get up, take your stretcher, and go home" (Luke 5:24).

As John had recorded miracles in his record of Jesus's life, he said, "Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31-31). So, Jesus's miracles not only served as proof to people who

witnessed Him do such things while He was on the earth but continues to serve as proof for us today that He really is the Son of God we must believe in and obey! His miracles continue to testify that Jesus is the Messiah and that He demonstrated great compassion!

Article 6

Will God Forgive Me?

Have you ever questioned whether God could ever forgive you? Perhaps you consider that you have done such terrible things in your past that you do not believe God would ever forgive you. Yet, if you do not embrace your opportunity to be forgiven of the sins you have committed, you will remain in a state of hopelessness and separation from God. Only if you embrace your opportunity to be forgiven, will you completely turn your life over to Christ and experience true joy and salvation through Him.

1) God's forgiveness is offered to you through Jesus. God has demonstrated His willingness to forgive many throughout the pages of Scripture. Furthermore, when Jesus was on the earth, He demonstrated His own willingness to forgive. For, that is the reason Jesus was even sent to this earth – to provide the sacrifice necessary to bring about the forgiveness of sin. Jesus was sent as “the Lamb of God” to take “away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). One example of the forgiveness God offers is Saul (later named Paul). He was guilty of murdering Christians. Yet, he wrote, “This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners’ – and I am the worst of them. But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life” (1 Timothy 1:15-16). So, if God forgave Saul, He is also willing to forgive you – no matter what you have done. That is why Jesus came!

2) God wants to forgive you. God's forgiveness is not just available. Rather, God actually desires to forgive you! John 3:16 says that God loved the world so much that He sent His one and

only Son “so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God “wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 2 Peter 3:9 says that God is “patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.” God could not demonstrate His willingness to forgive you any more than He already has! Namely, He has sacrificed His Son on the cross to forgive you and He keeps giving you the opportunity to repent and live for Him. So, if you are not yet forgiven by God, recognize that it is only you who are keeping yourself from it!

3) God’s forgiveness is conditional. Although God wants to forgive you, He does not forgive you unconditionally. Otherwise, everyone would be forgiven, regardless of how they live. Yet, 2 Peter 3:9 clearly indicated that God’s forgiveness is conditional (i.e. on repentance). Throughout the New Testament, you are taught that there are some things you must do to be forgiven of your sins. To receive God’s forgiveness initially, you must hear God’s word, believe in Jesus, repent of your sin, confess Jesus, and be baptized (immersed in water). For example, Acts 2:38 records people being told, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Then, if you have once received God’s forgiveness, but then went back into sin, God says you must repent of your sin, confess your sin to Him, and ask Him for forgiveness. For example, 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

4) God’s forgiveness is complete. When you comply with God’s conditions of forgiveness, He will completely forgive you of whatever sin has been committed! Listen to the promise made in Acts 3:19: “Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out.” That is, your sins will be entirely removed through the precious blood of Jesus. Hebrews 8:12 promises, “For I will forgive their wrongdoing, and I will never again remember their sins.” So, God will never remember any sin you have committed against you any longer when you do what He says to be forgiven! You simply never have to wonder whether your sins have been forgiven if you believe and obey God!

God stands ready and willing to forgive you no matter what sins you have committed against Him! That is the wonderful news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Without Christ, you would have no hope of being forgiven. But, because of Christ, you can have all your sins completely removed and never held against you again by God. The only question is whether you will seek Him to find the forgiveness He is offering you today.

Article 7

How Many Churches Did Jesus Build?

We live in a world that is very divided religiously. Even within what is called “Christianity,” there are tens of thousands of different kinds of churches – Catholic churches, Baptist churches, Methodist churches, Pentecostal churches, Presbyterian churches, etc. Then, many of these have divisions within themselves (i.e. Southern Baptist churches, Free Will Baptist churches, Seventh Day Baptist churches, etc.). Additionally, there are then many independent/community (non-denominational) churches. However, when you consider this situation, you should recognize that these churches believe, teach, and practice different things rather than all being united in what the Bible teaches. Therefore, you must consider, did Jesus really build all of these churches? Let’s consider.

1) Jesus only promised to build one church. It is an undeniable fact that there are thousands upon thousands of different kinds of “Christian” churches today. So, when we read what Jesus said about His church in Matthew 16:18, our understanding of the church ought to be challenged. He said, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.” Notice that Jesus never intended to establish churches. Rather, He only promised to build His church (singular). In fact, Jesus even prayed that all who would believe in Him would be one as He and the Father are one (John 17:20-23). Certainly, Jesus did not build all the churches that exist today. There is only one church of Jesus’s saved people.

2) Only one church was established in the Bible. Jesus did not establish His church during the time He was on the earth. For, to build His church, Jesus had to die to provide people with the sacrifice they needed to be saved (Acts 20:28). It was not until the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 that Jesus established His church. This day marked the fulfillment of several Old Testament prophecies and the gospel of Christ was preached to those who were present. When the people heard the teaching, some of them were convicted of their sin and asked what they should do (Acts 2:37). Then, Peter answered, “Repent and be baptized, each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). After he continued preaching, verse 41 says that “those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand people were added to them.” This is the first reference to Jesus’s church being in existence in the Bible. For, the church is the collection of Jesus’s saved people. These were the ones who believed and obeyed the message of the gospel, being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins into the one body/church (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). Then, the Lord “added to their number those who were being saved” every day (Acts 2:47). Although there were many local churches in New Testament times, there was only one church established that every person must enter. Today, you must be part of this one church!

3) God created a united system of religion. If God had allowed for people to join the church of their own choice, we should see God approving of religious division in the Bible. However, we see the opposite. This fits with the fact that God only built one church. For example, Ephesians 4 instructs Christians to make “every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (verse 3). Then, Paul demonstrates that God has created a united system of religion by listing seven “ones” (verses 4-6): one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God. Particularly, notice that there is “one body.” Earlier in the letter, Paul said that the body is the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Therefore, God is demonstrating that there is only one church of His saved people – and this church clings to the “one faith” (beliefs, teachings, and practices) revealed in the pages of the New Testament. This means that those who are part of Jesus’s one church will have believed and obeyed the one plan of salvation

taught in the New Testament. And that Jesus's one church will continue following the teachings in the New Testament.

Although people have built many churches, Jesus only built one church. These are His saved people. This church continues to believe, teach, and practice the same things Jesus and the New Testament writers taught. So, if you want to be saved, you must search the Scriptures diligently and determine that you will reject every false teaching and practice and that you will only follow what the Bible teaches in everything!

Article 8

Why Live Sober-Minded?

To be “sober” is to be of sound mind, fully in control of your mental faculties. This is exactly what God wants from us. He does not want us to do something that would impair our judgments or hinder our abilities to respond to situations properly (i.e. through the use of alcohol, drugs, becoming overly emotional, etc.). Specifically, let's consider four reasons to be sober.

1) To be prepared for the right actions. 1 Peter 1:13 instructs you to have your mind “ready for action” and be “sober-minded.” The idea in the Greek is to “gird up the loins of your mind.” This phrase refers to a time when people dressed in long, loose, flowing robes. Whenever they needed to engage in physically demanding activities like working or running, they would take the ends of their robes and tie them into their belts so they would be able to move more freely. So, girding up the loins of your mind indicates that you must prepare your mind for the appropriate action. This, as Peter indicates is closely associated with soberness. You must keep your mind alert and prepared for the appropriate activities.

2) To be holy as God is holy. 1 Peter 1:14-16 then continues to demonstrate that we must, as obedient children of God, refuse to live for sin. Instead of sinning, we must be holy – just as God is holy. To be holy is to be set apart from that which is common, unclean, or profane. Therefore, to be holy as God is holy is to be as set apart from sin as God is separated from sin! But, in order to be

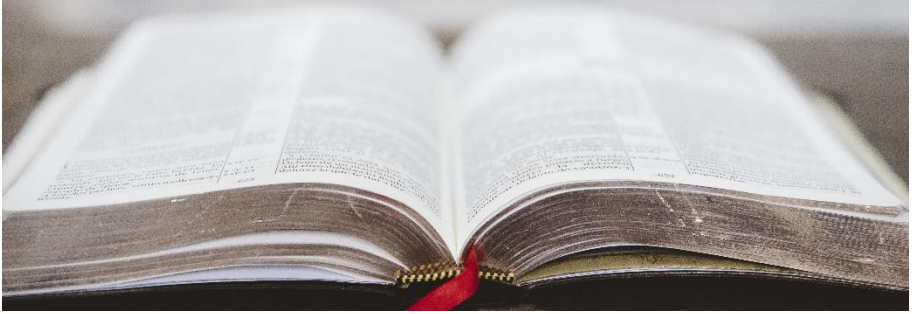
as holy as God is holy rather than living for the ways of sin, we must maintain complete control over our minds. You see, this kind of holiness does not just happen by chance. It requires a focused determination.

3) To resist the devil. 1 Peter 5:8-9 warns those who are Christians to be “sober-minded, be alert. Your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour. Resist him, firm in the faith, knowing that the same kind of sufferings are being experienced by your fellow believers throughout the world.” This passage makes the need for soberness of mind even more pressing. There is an enemy who is working diligently to lure you away from God and destroy your soul. In fact, the Bible identifies this conflict as a war (1 Peter 2:9-10). Surely, in the midst of such a fierce battle with such high stakes, you should want to be sober.

4) To be prepared for Jesus’s return. Paul taught concerning the return of Jesus Christ in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11. In 1 Thessalonians 5:2, Paul identifies the fact that Jesus Christ will come at an unexpected time (as a thief in the night). Many will be caught unprepared to stand before Jesus Christ and be judged. However, those who are Christians ought to be aware of the truth that Jesus’s coming can be at any time. Therefore, Christians are told not to be sleeping (spiritually speaking), but watching for Christ’s return and told to “stay awake and be self-controlled” (1 Thessalonians 5:6, 8). Only those who maintain full control of their minds will be able to conduct themselves in a way that will please God and be ready to stand before Christ in Judgment.

You must be sober if you want to please God. So, if you want to have your mind prepared for the right actions, if you want to be holy as God is holy, if you want to resist the temptations of the devil, and if you want to be prepared for the Day Jesus returns, be sober! Do not allow yourself to be influenced by anything or anyone who will take away your sobriety.

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