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**What Are the
Benefits of
Marriage?**



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What Are the Benefits of Marriage?

God created marriage . . .
but why? For what purpose?
And what can we expect to
gain from it?

By Jeremy Lallier



God created marriage.
That's the truth we need
to start with.
If we were calling the
shots, marriage could look
however we want it to look,
exist between whoever we
want it to exist between, and require as much
(or as little) as we want it to require.

If we don't acknowledge marriage's divine roots—instituted and defined by God Himself in the earliest days of humanity's history—then the benefits of a happy marriage are nothing more than a hodgepodge of little factoids you can find scattered across the Internet:

Higher survival rates for heart attack victims. Improved mental health. More social connections and support. Reduced overall stress.

Interesting side points, but not compelling.
Not the point.

Marriage has a lot more to offer than that—but before we can understand its most profound benefits, we have to acknowledge that the institution God created and blessed as holy isn't one we get to tamper with or remake according to our preferences.

There's a *reason* for marriage. And it's not a reason we can discover in a controlled experiment or in a research study or even by personal experience.

It's something we have to let the Creator explain.

After God created the first woman from the side of the first man, He brought them together. The man recognized that the woman was more than just a fellow human—she was “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (Genesis 2:23). They each provided something unique that the other lacked.

“Therefore,” the Bible explains, “a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast

to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (verse 24, English Standard Version).

The necessary requirements

The marriage we’re talking about in this article is the kind that can exist *only* between a Christian husband and his wife—and not Christian in name only, but Christian in the sense of actively seeking to know and obey God. (For more on that subject, download our free booklet [What Is a True Christian?](#))

But why?

Is it impossible to find a loving, respectful relationship between two people who don’t know (or don’t believe in) God?

Hardly. In fact, you can probably point to a half-dozen marriages between two nonbelievers that are in a healthier state than some of the marriages you’ve seen between Christians.

I can too.

But a failure to live up to the ideal doesn’t invalidate the ideal. It just highlights the gap between imperfect human beings and a perfect God.

Even so, the most important core benefits of marriage *require* a relationship with the God who *created* marriage—because without that framework, *we won’t even know those benefits are there*.

It doesn’t mean all Christian marriages are perfect. (They’re not.) It doesn’t mean happy relationships don’t exist outside the sphere of Christianity. (They do.) It doesn’t mean that believing in God is the only key to a healthy, functioning marriage. (It isn’t.)

But it *does* mean that God gets to set the boundaries for what a marriage is and isn’t. It *does* mean that God gets to tell us what a marriage ought to look like. And it *does* mean that unless we’re willing to listen to God’s definitions, the core benefits of marriage are forever lost to us.

(To dive deeper into what marriage ought to look like and what it has the potential to

become, download our free booklet [God’s Design for Marriage](#).)

Submission and love

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he urged them to live according to the marriage roles God had established.

For women, this meant submitting to their husbands “as to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:22). For men, this meant loving their wives “just as Christ also loved the church” (verse 25).

Those instructions clash with many modern views of marriage. A woman intentionally *submitting* to a man sounds like a step backward in women’s rights. What an archaic, chauvinistic approach—are wives really burdened with submission while husbands are only expected to show love?

Not quite.

A deeper kind of love

“This is a great mystery,” continued Paul, “but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (verse 32).

Obedience and love are two key components uniting Jesus Christ and His Church.

“We love Him,” wrote John, “because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

What kind of love are we talking about, exactly? An incredible moment of self-sacrifice on the stake, yes—but more than that. It was also a love that prompted Him to empty Himself of His divine splendor and live out a lowly but sinless human life that *ended* in crucifixion (Philippians 2:6-8).

Love your wives with *that* kind of love, says Paul—“just as Christ also loved the church *and gave Himself for her*” (Ephesians 5:25, emphasis added).

This is no superficial, transitory kind of love husbands are commanded to show. It’s the kind of love that causes us to see someone

else as a precious treasure, “for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (verse 29).

A mirror of something bigger

Wives, meanwhile, are called to submit to their husbands—to accept his leadership and become a willing support structure for the family unit.

But, again, this is no arbitrary assignment. It isn’t a mark of inferiority. It *mirrors* something.

“Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (verse 24).

This kind of submission is, in its own way, an act of love.

We love Him because He first loved us, right? But how do we show that love?

Jesus told us how: “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). But our obedience doesn’t make us ignorant, mindless servants, either: “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

Jesus shows His love through His sacrifice and through His continued service as our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15). We show our love by submitting our will to His.

Jesus leads; the Church follows. The husband leads; the wife follows. Jesus loves and gives Himself for the Church; the husband loves and gives himself for the wife.

Four thousand years before Jesus set aside His divine form and came to the earth as a human being, God established marriage as a physical representation of the precious spiritual relationship we could one day have with Christ.

And that, more than anything else, is the true benefit of marriage:

A glimpse of something divine.

What a marriage makes

If each person is doing his or her part—and whenever we’re talking about flawed human beings, that is, admittedly, a big “if”—then the ultimate result of marriage is a model of our relationship with our Savior.

It’s not a perfect model, to be sure. No husband could possibly fill the role of the Son of God. But when both husband and wife are striving to do their part—to love each other through submission and self-sacrifice—their married life together starts to reflect the kind of relationship we as the Church can expect to have with Jesus Christ.

And, inevitably, they change in the process.

A husband with a wife who trusts and respects him is going to have a powerful template for what it means to submit *himself* to the will of God. A wife with a husband who consistently makes her needs a priority will likewise have a regular reminder of Christ’s own love for her.

And in the process, they’ll both grow to be more like their Father in heaven.

“For this reason . . .”


Here’s Paul again, pointing us back to the Genesis account:

“‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:31-33).

When two committed, married Christians make it their goal to live up to the Bible’s lofty instructions for husbands and wives, the end result is something beautiful:

A stable, loving, God-centered relationship that continually challenges both husband and wife to become more like the God who created them, strengthening their connection to Him and to each other.

It’s not always easy.

But it’s so, so worth it. 

How Can a Loving God Send Someone to Hell?

Traditional Protestant and Catholic doctrine includes belief in an ever-burning hell. How could a loving God torture people in hell for eternity?

By Bill Palmer

I asked my friend a question that had long troubled me: “How can a loving and merciful God put people in hell forever?” That thought had kept me from being interested in any church. I was shocked by my friend’s simple, straightforward answer: “He doesn’t.”

Have you ever stopped to consider what the common idea of hell—if it were true—would mean? What would it mean about God’s sense of justice? What would it mean about His mercy? And what would it mean about His power?

The purpose of this article is not to discuss whether an ever-burning hell of torture exists. Scripture clearly teaches that for humans “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). This is called the second death—becoming ashes in a [lake of fire](#) (Malachi 4:3; Revelation 20:14-15). It’s not an eternity of agony in a fiery hell.

The biblical teaching is fully explained in our articles “[What Is Hell?](#)” “[Will the Wicked Burn in Hell?](#)” and “[Eternal Torment?](#)”

Instead of *whether* such a hell exists, this article addresses *why* the idea of an ever-burning hell filled with tormented souls is inconsistent with God’s character.



My immediate concern

In my discussion with my friend so many years ago, my immediate concern was about how unfair the idea of hell is. I was troubled by what the existence of hell meant in relation to God’s justice.

An eternity in hell as punishment for a few years of evil is simply not just. True justice is a matter of reaping what one has sown (Galatians 6:7), not an infinite harvest of agony.

Being tormented for billions and billions of years as the result of 70 or 80 years of sin isn’t justice. It’s overkill, and it’s sadistic.

The God of mercy

On top of that, tormenting sinners for billions and billions of years is inconsistent with what we know about the mercy of God. The God of the Bible is not spiteful and vengeful as humans too often can be.

That’s why God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are



higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

The immediate context of these verses is a discussion of God’s mercy. Through Isaiah, He made an appeal to His people to repent, assuring them that if they “return to the LORD,” God “will have mercy” (verse 7).

Unlike humans, who can harbor thoughts of unbridled hate and vengeance, God seeks to extend mercy.

An ever-burning hell is simply inconsistent with God’s thoughts of mercy, which are so much higher than our thoughts of retribution.

Another problem with belief in hell

These issues really troubled me, but there was another one I did not consider until long after that conversation with my friend. What would the common belief in hell mean for God’s power?

The idea that sinners go to hell for eternity and that saints go to heaven sets up a duality in the spiritual world. Ultimately it implies that Satan is on an equal footing with God.

The English poet John Milton, in his epic *Paradise Lost*, portrayed Satan as the one ruling over hell. Milton put these oft-quoted words into Satan’s mouth: “Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heav’n.”

Nowhere in the Bible do we see any suggestion that Satan is a counterpart to God. He can do nothing without God’s permission (Job 1:9-12; 2:4-6).

And yet, in popular culture and in some religious circles, Satan is depicted as engaged in a contest with God over the souls of men and women.

Is Satan winning?

If you believe in the traditional concept of hell, a quick look at world demographics can lead to only one conclusion regarding God’s power to save: God is losing the battle with Satan.

There has never been a time when Christians accounted for even half the world’s population, and generally, they’ve made up *far less* than half.

A 2022 survey about world religions found that Christianity accounts for less than a third (31.6 percent) of the world’s population. Other studies have shown that the percentage hasn’t changed much during the past century.

By numbers alone, it would seem that Satan is winning.

Does God care about Asia and Africa?

Although Christianity began in Galilee and Judea, which are in the Near East, for much of its 2,000-year

history it has largely been restricted to Europe. Even today, Christianity is not evenly distributed throughout the world. Asia and the Middle East, for instance, have few who profess Christianity.

Many people have lived where they have never had the opportunity to learn about the God of the Bible. Have they been condemned to writhe in agony throughout eternity because they were unfortunate enough to be born in Asia or someplace where Christianity isn't widespread?

Are generations of Europeans headed to heaven while pre-Columbian native Americans are *all* headed to hell? Are the people in the wealthy Western world, where Bibles are easily accessible, to be eternally more blessed by God than poor subsistence farmers in Bangladesh or Somalia?

Some people argue that such individuals might be judged by a different standard, but that is not biblical. Jesus clearly taught that He is *the* way (John 14:6), not *a* way. Peter later echoed this teaching when he declared there is no "salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12).

Some Christians do believe that billions of people are headed to hell. They argue that the peril facing so many in the world "ought to be one of the impelling motives making evangelism the urgent business of all Christians" (*Zondervan*, Vol. 3, p. 117).

What does this view say about God's character and power?

Not even a third

A third of the world's population today considers itself Christian, but that does not mean all those people really are. Many consider themselves Catholic

or Baptist or Presbyterian because they grew up in families that identified with those churches, even if they rarely attend.

Growing up in a church, or calling yourself a Christian, doesn't make you one. It doesn't even make you aware of what biblical Christianity entails.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke of people who think they are Christians, but aren't: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Many professing Christians know very little about the Bible or what it means to be a Christian. Pollster George Gallup described America, considered the most Christian nation on earth, as "a nation of biblical illiterates."

Our newest booklet—*What Is a True Christian?*—explores the critical differences between true and false Christianity.

The implications of hell

What does the fact that God has called so few—not even a third of the world at any given time in history—mean if you believe in the heaven-or-hell paradigm? If this is what you believe, then (whether you realize it or not) you believe God has limited power.

The common concept of hell comes with a price tag. To believe it means to accept limitations on God's sense of justice, on His capacity for mercy and on the degree of His power.

Scripture, however, presents an entirely different picture of God. The God we see in the pages of the Bible is often defined as a God of justice and mercy,

and He is described as possessing incomparable power. In fact, it is because He is a God of power that He identified Himself to Abram as “Almighty” God (Genesis 17:1).

God of justice and mercy

Many passages highlight God’s love of justice. We are told that “all His ways are justice” (Deuteronomy 32:4) and that “He has prepared His throne for judgment” (Psalm 9:7). He is a just God, and He tells us so: “For I, the LORD, love justice” (Isaiah 61:8).

The Bible also emphasizes God’s desire and capacity for mercy. In fact, He holds off judgment to allow time for repentance—a concept brought out by Paul as well as John and Peter.

Paul explained this to the church at Rome. Using the terms *forbearance* and *longsuffering* to capture the idea of mercy, he wrote that the “goodness of God leads you to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

John tied justice and mercy together, showing how interconnected they are. In his first epistle, he wrote that God “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9). Notice that forgiveness, associated with mercy, is a result of God’s sense of justice.

Peter also wrote that “the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). For a deeper look at *how* God plans to extend His mercy to all people, see our article “[Is God Fair?](#)”

God of power

Throughout the Bible, we see God as unlimited in power—unmatched by anyone.

Facing invading armies from Moab and Ammon, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, publicly prayed for God’s help. In that prayer, he acknowledged God’s power:

“O LORD God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You?” (2 Chronicles 20:6).

Jehoshaphat specifically pointed out that “no one is able to withstand” God. He wasn’t the only ancient king

to recognize this truth. David wrote that “power belongs to God” (Psalm 62:11).

Even in difficult times, God’s people have taken comfort in God’s absolute power. God offered that comfort to Judah as the nation faced destruction and exile to Babylon.

During this dark time, Jeremiah recorded God’s seemingly impossible promise that He would return the exiles to their homeland: “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

What all this means for us

The clear teaching of Scripture is that God is both just and merciful, and that He is without equal in power. He is not at the same level as Satan, and He is not losing a battle with the devil for souls.

All of this points out the inconsistency in the traditional concept of an ever-burning hell in which humans are punished forever. It simply isn’t true. What God has in store for those who repent and for those who don’t is just and merciful, and it is possible because God is all-powerful and not limited by anything, including death.

What does this mean for humans?

First, we can take comfort in God’s justice, mercy and power. Understanding God’s character is key to our faith.

As Paul explained to the church at Rome, “neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

Second, because justice and mercy are key traits of God, we should do our very best to emulate them in our own lives while humbly acknowledging God’s power. That is a goal the prophet Micah urged God’s people to pursue:

“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Study more about God’s power and character in our booklet [Getting to Know the God of the Bible](#). And learn more of what the Bible reveals about God’s plan for what happens after death in our booklet [The Last Enemy: What Really Happens After Death?](#) ⑤

Christian Conversation

How should a Christian communicate? How can we grow in Christian conversation skills?

By Becky Bennett

Linda* is well-known for noticing and talking to those who are off by themselves after church services. Cathy* keeps up with current events and happenings in her community and seems to always be ready to bring up a discussion topic precisely tailored for the person she's speaking to.

Dillon's* short but friendly greetings make people smile. If he's holding the door open for an elderly woman, he'll probably say something like, "How are you, young lady?"

Bea's* interest in people is genuine and her knack for listening makes people feel comfortable opening up.

(*Not their real names.)

All of these—and more—can be examples of Christian conversation.

What is Christian conversation?

Christian conversation is about showing love for other people and is rooted in our love for God. It is because



we love God and desire to please and honor Him that we reach out to people in conversation.

Christian conversation can include fellowship among believers. It can be something we do before or after church services. It can take place on the weekly Sabbath or annual holy days.

But it's not limited to any of these. Christian conversation can be *any* conversation that we as Christians have. It can take place on any day of the week, in any location, with any person who is willing and responsive.

It begins in the heart

The mindset necessary for Christian conversation begins with our love for God and a desire to please Him.

We can pray what King David wrote: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD” (Psalm 19:14).

God is the creator of all mankind, and He loves people. He wants humanity to learn about and practice His way of life. Ultimately, He desires all of us to be in His family!

Our knowledge of God and His plan can help us view every person we meet as a potential brother or sister. And it should lead us to ask Him for His help and blessing on our efforts to communicate with our future family members.

The fruit of the Spirit

Christian conversation requires that our words be pleasing to God and Christ. Foul language or vulgarities do not have a place in Christian conversation, and neither do inappropriate topics that revel in or minimize sin. Such works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21) are incompatible with a Christian's life and conversation.

The [fruit of the Spirit](#), on the other hand, can enhance and enrich our conversations as Christians. Love, joy, peace, patience (longsuffering), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)—every single characteristic of that essential fruit

produced in Christians—can be put to work and have a place in what we talk about.

Practical pointers (body language)

Christian conversation starts in our heart with love and concern for another person and showing interest in and respect for him or her. But there are also tangible, practical things we can put to work in our conversations.

Here are a few basic conversation skills that can help:

- Smile. The importance of being friendly really can't be overstated—especially if we're just getting to know someone.
- Make eye contact. Looking the other person in the eye can enhance emotional connection and communication. But we shouldn't be staring the other person down. The goal is to do what will feel natural to the other person, and experts say this means looking away from the other person's eyes briefly every 10 seconds or so.
- Be sensitive to the need for personal space. Giving a conversation partner 4 feet of space is a good rule of thumb, but be alert to the possibility that he or she needs more space. Backing up, looking away or speaking quickly are some possible signals.
- Speak loud enough to be heard. We don't want the other person to have to strain to hear us.

Not all of us are extroverts by nature—and some of us can feel anxious in social situations. However, we can grow in Christian conversation by trying to keep our focus on serving God and others, stretching ourselves a little at a time. Love is outgoing concern for others, and this can help us to forget about ourselves and focus on the other person.

If you find an aspect of conversation particularly difficult, consider looking for a book or online article about conversation skills. For instance, if maintaining eye contact is challenging for you, do an online search for exercises or techniques to practice that can help you improve your skills and feel more comfortable.

But remember, the goal is to focus on the other person and make him or her comfortable, so don't stress about

techniques if that will just make you and the other person less comfortable.

What should we talk about?

Is Christian conversation limited to religious or biblical topics?

It certainly wouldn't be wrong to talk about our faith and our calling! But those aren't the only things we can talk about.

Christianity is to be our way of life and something we practice all day, every day. It can and should touch everything we do and say. So everything that is part of our lives as Christians can be part of our Christian conversation.

We can talk about what's going on in the world (and especially how we see the day of Christ's return approaching), what's going on in our lives, our families, our work and our play, and our trials and difficulties.

If we've just met someone or are talking to him or her for the first time, our conversation might start out with general interest or even trivial topics. It's easy, natural and comfortable to make comments about the building we're in, the general surroundings, the weather, etc.

It can also work to open a conversation with a question and then look for common ground. For instance, when I fly on a plane, I usually ask my seatmate whether he or she is flying home or visiting our destination. That simple question often opens up enough possibilities to keep me and my seatmate engaged in conversation for as long as both of us want. But, of course, some passengers prefer silence, so respect their desire.

What we shouldn't talk about, of course, are things that are inappropriate. It should go without saying that we shouldn't use filthy, vulgar or obscene language or take God's name in vain.

We should take care in how we talk about others. The Bible makes it clear that it's not Christian to [gossip](#).

We should also be mindful not to be rude, argumentative or unkind. We might not always agree

with what someone thinks, but in such cases we can try our best to [disagree without being disagreeable](#).

And if the other person doesn't practice Christian conversation?

We may be doing our best to keep a conversation in the Christian zone, but what if our conversation partner isn't?

Depending on the situation, we might try one of the following:

- Let it go and move on. The person we are talking with might be young or new in the faith. Or we may only be getting acquainted. Sometimes we need to listen and show care.
- Change the subject. Our conversation partner might not be a Christian, but sometimes a change of topic is all that's needed to get someone to speak more appropriately.
- Say something gently or perhaps a bit more boldly. This might work if the other person is a Christian, but is perhaps struggling with a difficult circumstance or issue. He or she might need, and even appreciate, getting a nudge in the right direction.
- Excuse ourselves from the conversation. If it becomes clear that the person we're talking to wants to drag the conversation into the proverbial gutter, this might be our best option.

Be patient as you grow

Just as we'll sometimes need to be patient with our conversation partners, so we'll sometimes need to be patient with ourselves. The standards for Christian conversation are high, and we'll fall short at times. But with practice—and prayer—we can become more proficient.

Keep in mind the goal: to love and honor God by showing love and care for other people. Daily ask God for the help you need to be able to do this more effectively. The results can be pleasant and uplifting, as we build up our relationships with Christian conversations. ⑤

Scriptures About Our Words and Conversations

The Bible has a lot to say about our words—our conversations. Its instruction provides us with things we should be striving for and asking God to help us practice. Here are some verses you might want to spend some time thinking about:

- Psalm 19:14: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer."
- Psalm 141:3: "Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips."
- Proverbs 15:23: "A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is!"
- Proverbs 16:24: "Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones."
- Proverbs 25:11: "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver."
- Proverbs 31:26: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness."
- Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers."
- Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."
- James 1:19: "So then, my beloved brethren,

let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

- 1 John 1:3: "That you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ."

The Bible also has instruction for what we need to avoid. The following is a sample of just a few of these passages that we need to be mindful of:

- Proverbs 11:13: "A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."
- Proverbs 12:22: "Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD, but those who deal truthfully are His delight."
- Proverbs 16:28: "A perverse man sows strife, and a whisperer separates the best of friends."
- Proverbs 26:20: "Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases."
- Colossians 3:8: "But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth."
- 2 Timothy 2:23-24: "But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient."
- Titus 3:9: "But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless."

Why Is the Book of Enoch Not in the Bible?

Interest in the book of Enoch has grown following the discovery of fragments of 1 Enoch among the Dead Sea Scrolls. What do we need to know about these writings?

By David Treybig



When fragments of this ancient manuscript were found in the Qumran Caves near the Dead Sea beginning in 1947, scholars and lay readers alike were intrigued by this mysterious and apocalyptic book.

But what exactly is the book of Enoch, and why has it been excluded from the Bible by most branches of Judaism and Christianity?

What are the books of Enoch?

The term *book of Enoch* generally refers to 1 Enoch, but there are actually three books commonly attributed to Enoch:

- **1 Enoch:** Also known as the Ethiopic Book of Enoch, this is the most well-known and is preserved in its entirety in the Ge'ez language (ancient Ethiopic).
- **2 Enoch:** Known as the Slavonic Book of Enoch, it survives only in Old Church Slavonic.
- **3 Enoch:** A later rabbinic work, also known as the Hebrew Book of Enoch, dating to the fifth to sixth centuries.

These books are part of a larger group of ancient writings known as the *pseudepigrapha*—a term meaning “falsely attributed.” These writings are not included in

the biblical canon and were often penned under the names of well-known biblical figures in order to lend them credibility.

1 Enoch and the canon

Of the three Enochic texts, 1 Enoch is by far the most influential. It covers a wide range of topics, including visions of heaven and hell, angels, cosmology, apocalyptic visions and a unique solar-based calendar.

Despite its popularity in some early Christian circles, 1 Enoch has never been included in the official biblical canon of Judaism or the vast majority of Christian churches. Only the Ethiopian and Eritrean Orthodox Churches regard it as Scripture.

The primary reason for this exclusion is that 1 Enoch contains teachings that conflict with canonical Scripture, and it lacks verifiable apostolic or prophetic authorship. The ancient Jewish community did not include it in the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible), nor was it included in the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures widely used in Jesus’ time.

Its omission from both of these key Jewish texts—and later, from Christian canons—speaks volumes about how it was viewed by those responsible for preserving Scripture.

A common argument for inclusion

Some proponents of 1 Enoch argue for its inclusion in the canon based on Jude 1:14-15, which seems to quote from 1 Enoch 1:9.

“Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all’” (Jude 1:14-15).

This passage is similar to 1 Enoch 1:9, but it is not certain that Jude is quoting directly from the book of Enoch. Both Jude and the book of Enoch could have been quoting an original source that is now lost.

Even if Jude was quoting from the book of Enoch, this does not mean he endorsed the entire book as divinely inspired. Other authors of books in the Bible quoted and referred to nonbiblical sources (Acts 17:28; Joshua 10:13; Numbers 21:14; 1 Kings 11:41; 2 Chronicles 13:22). Simply quoting a nonbiblical source would not validate the entire referenced work.

Authorship and composition

Those advocating inclusion of 1 Enoch often claim it was written by Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, mentioned in Genesis 5:24: “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.”

However, textual analysis indicates that 1 Enoch was not written by one man, but rather experts believe it was compiled over centuries by multiple authors. Scholars generally identify at least five distinct sections, each composed at different times.

Why the book of Enoch was rejected

So why wasn’t 1 Enoch included in the Bible? The primary reason is that it contradicts clear biblical teachings.

The recognized books of the Bible do not contradict each other. They are amazingly consistent, written by multiple men over hundreds of years all inspired by

God via the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

Jesus affirmed that God’s Word is truth (John 17:17) and cannot be broken (John 10:35). The psalmist likewise wrote, “The entirety of Your word is truth” (Psalm 119:160).

The book of Enoch fails this test of consistency.

Here are a few key contradictions.

Mistaken belief that Enoch was taken to heaven

The book of Enoch claims that Enoch was taken to heaven, where he received visions and messages from God (2 Enoch 38:1; 2 Enoch 67:1).

However, Genesis 5:24 simply states that “God took him.” It does not say where.

Jesus later said that “no one has ascended to heaven” (John 3:13).

The example of Elijah, who was taken up in a whirlwind, illustrates that being “taken” by God can refer to being relocated as opposed to being taken to the divine realm (2 Kings 2:11).

Elijah was taken up into the sky (Genesis 1:8), which could be called the first heaven, not the “third heaven” where God’s throne is (2 Corinthians 12:2). Elijah must have been transported through the atmosphere to another place on earth, since he wrote a letter many years later (2 Chronicles 21:12-15).

Thus, the book of Enoch’s core premise is built on a misinterpretation of the Genesis passage and stands in direct contradiction to the words of Jesus.

For additional clarity on this point, see the article [“Are Enoch and Elijah in Heaven?”](#)

Mistaken teaching on fallen angels marrying women

A central theme in 1 Enoch is the story of fallen angels—called the Watchers—who descended to earth, took human wives and fathered a race of giants called the Nephilim (1 Enoch chapters 6-16).

This story is based on a misinterpretation of Genesis 6:1-4, which speaks of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men.” While the term *sons of God* can refer to spirit beings or humans, Jesus clarified in Mark 12:25 that spirit beings do not marry.

The book of Enoch’s interpretation not only contradicts Jesus, but also introduces mythical elements not found in Scripture, including 4,500-foot-tall giants. (Even if this number was a scribal error, and it was supposed to be 450-foot-tall giants, it remains mythical.)

It’s an entertaining story, but it isn’t true.

For additional study, see [“Who Were the Sons of God in Genesis 6?”](#)

Mistaken teaching on the immortality of the soul

The book of Enoch says that the souls of the wicked go to Sheol, where they will be tormented forever (1 Enoch 9:10; 22:10-13; 103:7-8). This sounds like later Christian ideas of hell, but it clashes with the biblical teaching.

The Bible teaches that the soul is mortal. Ezekiel 18:4 says, “The soul who sins shall die.” There is no conscious awareness after death. Ecclesiastes 9:5 says, “The dead know nothing,” and Psalm 6:5 adds, “In death there is no remembrance of You.”

The concept of an immortal soul was a Greek philosophical idea, particularly from Plato, and was not a belief held by early Israelites.

The *Jewish Encyclopedia* notes: “The belief that the soul continues its existence after the dissolution of the body is a matter of philosophical or theological speculation rather than of simple faith, and is accordingly nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture . . .

“The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato, its principal exponent, who was led to it through Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries in which Babylonian and Egyptian views were strangely blended” (article “Immortality of the Soul”).

See our online article [“Do Humans Have an Immortal Soul?”](#) for additional explanation.

The Enoch calendar

The book of Enoch presents a solar calendar it says was revealed to Enoch by the angel Uriel. It divides the year into four seasons, each having two 30-day months and one 31-day month—totaling 364 days.

However, this calendar does not include intercalation—a method of adding days to synchronize the calendar with the actual solar year (approximately 365.25 days). Without this adjustment, the calendar would drift out of alignment with the seasons.

By contrast, the Hebrew calendar is a lunisolar calendar carefully maintained by the Jewish people, who were entrusted with the “the oracles of God” (Romans 3:1-2). Through the years the Jews have meticulously preserved both the Old Testament Scriptures and a highly accurate lunisolar calendar that includes intercalation to keep it in step with both the lunar months and the solar year, ensuring the biblical holy days fall in their proper seasons.

Final observations

The book of Enoch is a fascinating piece of ancient literature. It provides insight into how some Jews during the Second Temple period viewed the cosmos, angels, judgment and end times. It documents the influence of Greek philosophy on Jewish thinking regarding the soul, and its vivid imagery and imaginative narratives have captivated generations of readers.

However, the book of Enoch is not Scripture. It was never accepted as part of the biblical canon by Judaism or mainstream Christianity. It contains theological errors, contradicts the Bible and was not authored by the pre-Flood Enoch, despite its name.

While it may serve as an interesting historical and literary text, we should not be deceived into thinking it is equal to the inspired Word of God.

For further study, see [“The Canonization of the Bible.”](#) ①

Why Sigh and Cry?

Ezekiel saw a vision of people protected from sure death because they sighed and cried. Why did they sigh and cry, and what does that mean for us today?

By Bill Palmer

Soldiers seemed to be everywhere, killing indiscriminately and destroying the city. Jerusalem was in ruins. Even the temple was on fire. Yet there were survivors. Through a vision before the destruction, God had shown the prophet Ezekiel that He would spare some people—that He would “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within” the city (Ezekiel 9:4).

Why did they sigh and cry? What can we learn from this vision?

The men who sigh and cry

The verse that mentions “the men who sigh and cry” is included within a four-chapter description of God’s judgment on Jerusalem. The passage begins with Ezekiel 8 and concludes with chapter 11.

This vision is clearly dated (Ezekiel 8:1), and by comparing historical records, scholars confidently place it in the year 592 B.C. That was six years



before the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586.

Ezekiel was from a priestly family in Jerusalem, but he had been taken into captivity with King Jehoiachin in an exile a few years earlier (Ezekiel 1:1-3). His visions are dated from that initial captivity.

Abominations and glory

The passage begins with Ezekiel being taken in vision to Jerusalem (Ezekiel 8:2-3). Of significance is the use of a couple of special words in the passage, and these words help us understand what was happening.

The first word is *abominations* (always plural in this vision). The word is used nine times in the passage, but the bulk of the references are in chapter 8. The Hebrew word is *tô'ēbâ*, which refers to something “loathsome” or “detestable.”

“When used with reference to God,” according to *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary*, “the word describes [things] that are ‘detestable’ to Him because they are contrary to His nature.” In Ezekiel, there is also the concept of “repeated failures” to obey God.

The second term is *glory*, from the Hebrew *kāḇôd*. It appears eight times in this particular vision of Ezekiel's. The word literally means "heaviness," but scriptural use is always figurative. As such, the word connotes the power and authority of the God of Israel. It also signifies His presence.

The departure of God

What Ezekiel saw and described in chapter 8, according to *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, was "the contrast between God's glory in the sanctuary (vv. 2-3) and the extreme moral and spiritual corruption of the nation's leadership" (Vol. 6, p. 781).

Throughout the passage, God directed His prophet's attention to progressively worse abominations (Ezekiel 8:6, 9, 13, 15, 17; 9:4; 11:18, 21). At the same time, Ezekiel's vision portrays God's glory departing from the temple and from Jerusalem.

Of course, God has never been contained by the temple or any physical thing (1 Kings 8:27). But He had placed His name on the temple (verse 29), and now He said they were sinning "to make Me go far away from My

sanctuary" (Ezekiel 8:6). It seems He had come to show Ezekiel what was occurring (verse 4), and then He would leave the people to their fate.

This departure occurred in stages (Ezekiel 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18-19; 11:22-23). At first the glory of God was in the inner court, but by the end of the four-chapter vision, it had left the temple and Jerusalem altogether. The vile behavior of the people was driving God away.

This is the context in which we can understand those few who weren't committing abominable acts. Not only did they refrain from these abominations, but they were known to "sigh and cry" over this behavior among their neighbors.

What it really means to "sigh and cry"

The English words *sigh* and *cry* can have a variety of connotations, so let's focus in on what this phrase means and doesn't mean.

The English word *sigh* often denotes weariness, or even relief, but that is not what is meant by the Hebrew *'ānah*. The English word *cry* is generally associated

with pain or distress, but that is not exactly the sense of *'ānaq*, the Hebrew word.

Instead, both *'ānaḥ* and *'ānaq* are associated with grief or lamentation. These words portray a deep sense of loss and emotional distress, and in Ezekiel, that distress is the result of the pervasive abominations in the temple, in the city and throughout the land.

These “men who sigh and cry” in the vision were doing so because they were deeply troubled by the same wickedness and sins that are loathsome to God. Like God, they would have been troubled by the pain their countrymen had caused, for themselves as well as for others.

The character of these men reflected God’s own character. For that reason, the same things that were “detestable” to God “because they are contrary to His nature” were detestable to them because they were contrary to their character.

And that is precisely why God set them apart to be delivered. Among the destroying angels was another angel with a different task. He was to “put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry” (Ezekiel 9:4).

Receiving the mark

Many Bible students reading this passage undoubtedly think of the infamous mark of the beast associated with the end times (Revelation 13:16-18). That mark is not from God, and it is not a mark true believers will accept.

The mark in Ezekiel, however, *is* from God. Like the mark of the beast, it sets men apart, but unlike the mark of the beast, it sets them apart for deliverance. Also, this mark in Ezekiel is not the only one in Scripture shown to be a mark God gives to His people.

In the end times God will commission four angels to seal “the servants of our God on their foreheads” (Revelation 7:1-3; 9:4; 14:1). This is also reminiscent of how in Egypt, prior to the Exodus, the faithful were marked for deliverance by putting the blood of lambs on their lintels and doorposts (Exodus 12:7, 22-23).

The mark in Ezekiel ties in with another theme of the passage. *Expositor’s* points out that “the word for ‘mark’

is the Hebrew letter תָּ (*tāw*), the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet” (Vol. 6, p. 787).

As the last letter of the alphabet, the mark sets these “men who sigh and cry” apart as the *remnant* of God’s people. The concept of a remnant is an important one in the Old Testament, including the book of Ezekiel. Though God punishes His people, He always saves a remnant.

State of the modern world

“The men who sigh and cry” in Ezekiel’s vision did so in a time of blatant idolatry (Ezekiel 8), and also in a time of widespread violence (“bloodshed”) and “perversity” (Ezekiel 9:9). Our modern world is in a similar state today.

Here is a small sample of disturbing modern trends:

- There are 73 million induced abortions performed globally every year.
- Online fraud worldwide is projected to surpass \$100 billion by 2029, up from \$44 billion in 2024.
- Half of the world’s population now living is projected to experience some sort of mental health issue in their lifetime.
- From 2020 to 2024 conflict levels have almost doubled—from 104,371 conflict events to nearly 200,000 (acleddata.com/conflict-index).

One alarming trend is the dramatic increase in human trafficking. According to the U.S. Department of State, “Around the globe, an estimated 27 million people are exploited for labor, services, and commercial sex.”

What’s truly heart-wrenching is that “traffickers prey on some of the world’s most marginalized and vulnerable individuals—profiting from their plight.” These are people without the resources to protect themselves from the greedy and often powerful forces behind the trafficking rings.

The United Nations estimates that human trafficking saw more than a fourfold increase between 2003 and 2022.

Anyone who reads or watches world news is aware of much of the trouble facing this generation, from

war to inflation, and from poverty to famine. This world is broken.

Unable to care anymore

While these disturbing trends grow, the general population is losing its ability to care. Ironically, the more we see and hear about suffering, the harder it is for us to care about the pain of fellow humans.

The “bombardment of negative news and stressful videos shared on social media sites” is a root cause, according to a 2024 issue of *Psychology Today*. This news “gives rise to the desensitization effect.”

The article continues, defining desensitization “as decreased emotional, cognitive, or behavioural response to events after repeated exposure.”

Social media, of course, is not the only source of unsettling news. Television provides a consistent diet of the same, as do our movies and music. All of it desensitizes us.

That is a problem, but so are the political movements designed to change the public attitude toward conduct once understood to be sinful. The push for broad acceptance of homosexuality and transgender rights, for example, is desensitizing us to biblical values.

That is the situation the apostle Paul addressed in a letter to the church at Rome. After mentioning these “vile passions” (Romans 1:26-27), Paul explained that not only did individuals commit these abominations, but they “also approve of those who practice them” (verse 32).

The apostle Peter wrote about the same attitudes being prevalent “in the last days” (2 Peter 3:3). Paul told Timothy that people then “will be lovers of themselves” but “unloving” toward others (2 Timothy 3:1-3). The King James Version renders “unloving” as “without natural affection”—we might say, desensitized.

Should you sigh and cry?

When we stop to look at the condition of the world today, we should care. After all, God’s people have

always been commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves (Leviticus 19:18). Jesus expanded the command to include even our enemies (Matthew 5:43-44).

The people known to sigh and cry in Ezekiel’s vision did so because they saw appalling instances of idolatry, which is a sin against God, and rampant violence and perversions, which are sins against people. These were assaults on God’s two great commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

The sighing and crying rose from hearts in line with God’s own heart. What about you? Is God’s will at the core of your heart? Do you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself?

It’s easy to argue that most of us do not have any power to change what is happening and make the world a better place. That is true, but it was also true for the men in Ezekiel’s vision. They couldn’t change what was happening, but still they were grieved by it.

To sigh and cry is just the beginning

We may not have power to change the world now, but if we truly sigh and cry—if we grieve over the pain in the world and mourn the lack of spiritual understanding—then there are positive actions we can take.

First, we can decide to help the people we can reach. This may mean nothing more than offering an encouraging word or taking time to listen to someone who needs to be heard. It might mean giving someone a ride or volunteering time to serve others.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, we can commit ourselves to praying for God’s Kingdom (Matthew 6:10). We don’t have the power to change the world, but God does.

When we pray for God’s Kingdom, we aren’t suggesting something to God that He hasn’t planned. Instead, we are letting Him know that we are “all in” regarding His will and His timetable.

And if we do these things, our mourning for today’s abominations will lead to our rejoicing at God’s coming glory ①.



When Jesus "began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 4:17), most people didn't understand His message. The reason is quite simple: He purposefully spoke in a way that hid key aspects of the truth. Though multitudes of people thronged to hear Him, most didn't comprehend what He was saying about the Kingdom of God.

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4 THE MYSTERY OF THE KINGDOM



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