

Highlights of the END TIMES

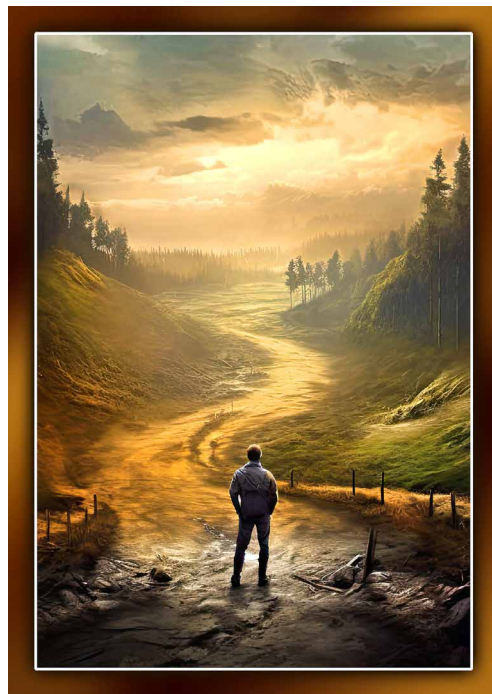
Chicago Bible Students

WHAT GOD LOVES & WHAT GOD HATES

“...who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour...” — Psalms 15:1-3

An election year often seems to bring out the worst in people — both voters and candidates. Sadly, even Christians abandon the proper *“love thy neighbor”* spirit. Many today have lost sight of the qualities of true righteousness, replacing holy standards with moral relativism, which is subject to the popular culture of the time. *“...every man is doing what is right in his own eyes...”* Proverbs 12:15

God’s standards are fixed — not relative to time or the society in which someone lives. And so, Christians need to turn to the Bible to learn God’s fixed principles, and really understand what God expects of those who name the name of Christ. If we are God’s, we have a responsibility to not only know what He loves, but equally important, to know...



WHAT GOD HATES — PROVERBS 6:16-19

1 John 4:8 states that *“God is love,”* and everything that is contrary to this principle is opposed to His benevolent character. As we review the traits that God finds abhorrent, we should ask ourselves, do we see these traits acted out in the world today? Do we see any of these traits in ourselves or in those with whom we keep company? Proverbs 6:16-19 provides a simple formula to determine the answer: *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto Him...”*

1) “A proud look...” — Even pride in one’s facial expression is repulsive to God. This root of sin is what led Satan, the fallen angels and Judas upon the path of destruction. The proud show in their behavior an excessively high opinion of themselves and of their importance. The proud exert their wills upon others to feed their thirst for control, power and dominance. God gives the proud a warning: *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”* (Proverbs 16:18) *“...Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.”* Luke 16:15

The Pharisees certainly stood accused of being prideful. Jesus said: *“...their works they do for to be seen of men: they... love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues... and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi...”* (Matthew 23:5-9) Pride even led them to commit the despicable act of murdering our beloved Lord.

2) “A lying tongue...” — God hates feigned piety — pretending to appear righteous. An example is found in Acts 5:1-5 where Ananias

and Sapphira, his wife, claimed to have given all proceeds from the sale of property to their community, when in fact they had kept back part for themselves. Their lie was designed to appear generous to others, but God read their hearts: *“...why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”* (Acts 5:4) This example teaches the seriousness of lying, which must have been deeply rooted in their hearts, because immediately upon hearing the Apostle’s words, they fell down in death.

The Apostle Paul said that in the *end times* lies would become particularly prevalent. *“...in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron...”* (1 Timothy 4:1, 2) Regrettably, we even see Christians today who find it acceptable to lie, manipulating facts in order to gain popularity.

God looks at lying as a tool of Satan. Jesus said that Satan *“...is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:44) Satan seeks to counterfeit truth by coming across as an *“angel of light.”* (2 Corinthians 11:14) The first lie ever spoken was when Satan told Eve, *“Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods...”* (Genesis 3:4, 5) Since Adam and Eve acted upon that lie, humanity has suffered from inherited sin and death! Therefore, we need to remember that our Father is the God of truth — so, which father do you wish to emulate?

3) “Hands that shed innocent blood...” — How often we have seen this sin in senseless mass shootings, gang violence, domestic abuse, and yes, in the unprovoked wars that are generated by proud and selfish rulers? Most of us would never consider shedding innocent blood, but Jesus and the Apostles pointed out that the definition of *“shedding blood”* extends beyond this. *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer”* in his heart. (1 John 3:15) This murderous spirit in the heart often results in hate-speech, name calling and assassination of another person’s reputation by slander. These are also tools of the *prince of darkness*. This seems to be especially prevalent in political discourse today. *“Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off...”* Psalm 101:5

A murderous spirit reveals heartless cruelty, selfishness and an utter lack of sympathy for humanity. Over the millennia, millions

of innocent people have been persecuted verbally and physically at the hands of self-absorbed political or religious rulers. In our day, this same hate-filled spirit is at the root of racism and antisemitism. Innocent people are traumatized by cruel words and acts of violence.

The most innocent one of all was Jesus. He was holy, harmless and undefiled, and yet, jealousy and misdirected zeal by religious rulers stirred up the masses with their cry, *"His blood be on us, and on our children!"* (Matthew 27:25) Sincere Christians should never be guilty of the sin of hatred and persecution — the sin which God hates!

4) "An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations..." — We are not to allow our minds to wander into forbidden pastures and at the same time presume that God will keep us from acting on these thoughts. We must put before our minds the words of King David. *"Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins..."* (Psalms 19:12, 13) Many who fail to note this point find themselves continually beset by temptations, because, while outwardly avoiding gross immoralities, they secretly harbor sympathies for things condemned — desiring that they might have them, if only they were not forbidden. Remember that the fallen flesh has a heart which is *"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked..."* Jeremiah 17:9

Be it also remembered that *"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* (Ephesians 6:12) These words imply that behind evil actions there could just be invisible evil spirits opposing all that is good. These spirits make suggestions to those who are weak in their resolves to live righteously, and it is up to each one to repel these thoughts — choosing right over wrong. Yes, we are free to do whatever we want, however, there will be consequences for every wrong action, whether now, or in the future day of judgment, when amends and reconciliations will have to be made. *"...for every careless word that people speak, they will give an account of it on the day of judgment."* Matthew 12:36

5) "Feet that be swift in running to mischief..." — *"A wicked man... winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet... Frowardness is in his heart, he deviseth mischief continually; he soweth discord."* (Proverbs 6:12-14) While it is the heart that devises *wicked imaginations*, it will be our actions that join forces to implement sinful acts. The Apostle Paul admonished: *"And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way..."* (Hebrews 12:13) In other words, keep far away from sinful environments and those who are a bad influence. It has been said: *"We can't stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we can stop them from nesting in our hair."* It is important to set boundaries by prayer and firm resolves.

God especially hates wicked schemes that use spiritual advantage for earthly gain. This distasteful behavior can be seen in the constant begging for money by televangelists who lure viewers into believing that if they would only send money, their lives would be rewarded by God with financial security and good health. They perversely distort God's sacred word for personal gain — a mischief which God hates.

Not only are Christians to set boundaries to avoid evil endeavors, but 1 Thessalonians 5:22 admonishes us to *"Abstain from all **form** of evil."* Christians should set a higher standard as ambassadors for Christ and not even give the appearance of evil. 2 Corinthians 5:20



6) "A false witness that speaketh lies" — *"The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth... Their sword shall enter into their own heart..."* (Psalm 37:12-15) What is the difference between being a *false witness* and having a *lying tongue*? One with a lying tongue publicly accuses another of a sin, and spreads false rumors — both of these actions are reprehensible to God. This calls for us to be precise in our analysis of what others say and do, and to verify the truth of the matter before we take issue with them. *"Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled..."* (Hebrews 12:15) Sins such as these often start with just a small spark. *"Now the tongue is a fire, and the world of sin is like a forest. And this tongue, which is one among our members, marreth our whole body; and it inflameth the series of our generations that roll on like a wheel; and it is itself on fire."* James 3:6 (Murdock Translation)

A classic example of a false witness is found in the book of Acts 6:11-14, when false witnesses were brought forward to accuse Stephen of blasphemy. *"This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."*

Likewise, we can see today that many individuals have been harmed by little

sparks set off by Internet conspiracy theories. Spreading *unverifiable rumors* is being a *false witness*. If we do not know the truth of a matter, then we should not carry the rumor forward. Sadly, today, social media platforms make it easy to pass along disinformation by pressing one keystroke to *"forward."*

7) "He that soweth discord among brethren" — Those who tell fabricated stories cause the disruption of friendships. This is abhorrent to our Heavenly Father who desires His creatures to live in love and unity. And how does such discord arise? Divisiveness starts with a small wedge of self-interest or jealousy and then it seeks to ascend above others whether it be in the home, in the church, in business or in politics. Hateful, wicked thoughts lead to hateful, wicked actions.

One notable illustration of sowing discord was when Absalom stirred up animosity against his father, King David. The entire kingdom was divided by Absalom's treachery, and even David's close friend, Ahithophel, turned against him. *"For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me... then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance."* (Psalm 55:12, 13) In the end, it was Absalom who, in his pride and thirst for power, lost his life. (2 Samuel 18:9, 10) This is the ultimate reward to those who sow discord: *"Frowardness is in his heart... he soweth discord. Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly..."* (Proverbs 6:14, 15) We have seen this in the life of Judas, and the same will be the end for Satan who has sown treachery among God's children against Him.

The sum of what God hates is found in Galatians 5:19 — *"Now the works of the flesh are manifest... Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings... they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."*

THOSE WHO LOVE AS GOD LOVES, HE WILL BLESS

Having examined just a few of those things in Scripture which are an abomination to God, it is a delight to identify, by contrast, *what God loves*. Jesus taught many of the things which God loves in the *beatitudes* of Matthew 5:3-12. These exemplify the particular graces necessary to stay on the path toward blessedness.

• **Matthew 5:3** *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Those “*poor in spirit*” exhibit an opposite character to the proud and arrogant. They do not trust in self alone, but consider the opinions of others, and they consider what will be for the good of others. *“...be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time...”* 1 Peter 5:5, 6

• **Matthew 5:4** *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”* Having learned from their own sorrow, these are sympathetic and are touched with pity for the *poor groaning creation* as they see them struggling through pain, disappointment and sorrow. (Romans 8:22) They desire to do good for others and wish to bless and not hurt. These see their own imperfections and extend grace to others in their times of weakness. *“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.”* Psalm 34:18

• **Matthew 5:5** *“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”* These are submissive to God’s will — being teachable and anxious to know His truth. The meek are not easily provoked or irritated. They are not bullies and are not self-willed. *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”* (Philippians 2:3) *“The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.”* Psalm 25:9

• **Matthew 5:6** *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.”* These desire to draw near to God, and they seek to live in harmony with his truth and righteousness to the best of their ability. *“...seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger.”* (Zephaniah 2:3) *“The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.”* Psalm 145:18

• **Matthew 5:7** *“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”* The merciful seek to be generous toward others. They practice kindness, benevolence and justice. *“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”* Colossians 3:12 (NAS)

• **Matthew 5:8** *“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”* These have pure motives and intentions. They are honest-hearted, transparent, sincere and not hypocritical. *“Let love be without hypocrisy.”* (Romans 12:9) We may not be able to live up to the Divine standard, but it should be our heart intention. *“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.”* Psalms 24:3, 4

• **Matthew 5:9** *“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”* These fight for truth and against error, but they

do not fight against the ignorant servants of the error. We are never to use carnal weapons in the cause of Christ. *“...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds...”* (2 Corinthians 10:4) Peacemakers seek ways of finding common ground, *“speaking the truth in love.”* (Ephesians 4:15) If we fight against the imperfections of our own natures, we will have comparatively little time for fighting others.

• **Matthew 5:10** *“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* Those who, to the best of their ability, live righteous, pure, peaceable lives in honor of the truth will suffer persecution. Like Jesus, they will stand up for God’s truth and will set the example of righteousness. *“Whosoever will live godly shall suffer persecution.”* 2 Timothy 3:12

God loves those who love His Son. Jesus said, *“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him...”* (John 14:23) Those who do these things may receive the scorn of the worldly, but they can rejoice in that the Father loves them. *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.”* 1 John 4:4

The sum of what God loves is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 — *“Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth...”*



Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
Matthew 18:4

WHAT MANNER OF PERSONS OUGHT YE TO BE?

The Apostle Peter counseled: *“Seeing that all these things [this present evil world] shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?”* (2 Peter 3:11) As we see that this *present evil world* is being dissolved, it is timely for Christians to evaluate whether they have allowed the standards of the world to guide their path, or whether they are being guided by the only true moral compass — that which is laid out in the Word of God. We are to be *“...blameless and harmless, the Sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world...”* Philippians 2:15; 2 Corinthians 7:1

When we see more clearly what it means to live a truly virtuous life, and understand those things which God hates, we should make the commitment to go and *sin no more*. (John 5:14) We can only do this as we make a determined effort to recognize sin for what it is, thank the Lord for opening our eyes to it, learn from our experiences in the failure of our flesh, repent, and then turn away from sin.

How merciful is our God who accepts the *perfect heart intentions* of the true Christian instead of the absolute perfection of our flesh. And because it is impossible for the fallen flesh to walk perfectly, we must keep in mind that *“a just man falleth seven times and riseth up again.”* (Proverbs 24:16) We thank God for His mercy and training in truth and righteousness. Additionally, those who have accepted Christ as their redeemer and who have given their hearts fully to God are invited to go *“boldly before the throne of grace,”* asking for strength to go forward as His ambassadors. Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 6:20



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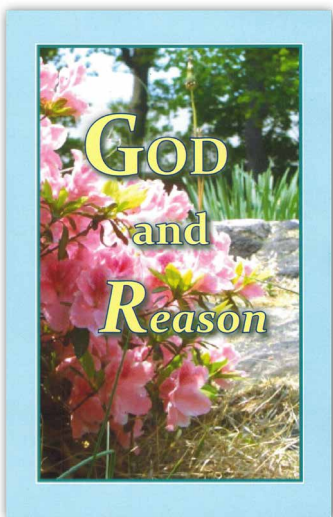
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What is the Bible?

The Bible may be compared to a magnificent edifice that took seventeen centuries to build:

- Its architect and builder is God
- Like this beautiful world, it bears everywhere the impress of a Divine hand
- This majestic temple contains 66 chambers of unequal size; 66 books of the Old and New Testaments
- Each of the 31,173 verses is a stone, a panel of the building which is a Temple more glorious by far than that of Solomon or Zerubbabel

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