

“For My Own Name’s Sake”

1. There are several very different ideas about what the basic purpose of the Bible is. In this handout we are going to explore some ideas that may seem strange to some, but are the basis for a completely different “paradigm” or way of looking at the Bible.

- a. The Bible is a book of rules to be obeyed.

To some people, the Bible is primarily a set of “do’s” and “don’t’s” which is sometimes described as a blueprint. There are many verses that say clearly that if we keep all the commandments we will live by them. People who take this approach tend to be very critical of others because they feel that the Bible spells out exactly what needs to be done and often they act as self-appointed police-persons to keep checking on everyone else around to make sure these other people are “measuring up” to the standard they believe in.

- b. The Bible is a description of God’s way of saving you and me—the plan of salvation.

Others, after having tried this approach for some time begin to realize that although the commandments are quite clear, when fully applied, as Jesus suggests in the Sermon on the Mount it is virtually impossible for ordinary people to meet the standard. These people then either become very discouraged and drop out of the church or turn their attention to the many verses in Scripture that focus on God’s forgiveness. It is easy for these people who emphasize the fact that we are saved by “grace” to fall into the trap that says, “I can’t do it anyway, so I will just depend on God’s forgiveness.” They tend then to go on about their somewhat sinful lives and when they sin and their sin is pointed out, they respond as one famous TV evangelist did by saying something like, “I sinned under the blood”. To such people the Bible becomes a book about God’s way of saving you and me. The entire focus is on the plan of salvation.

- c. The Bible is a letter from God to describe His ways of relating to human beings. This has become necessary because God’s enemy the Devil has misrepresented God.

There is another view that is known and understood only by a relative minority of Christians that suggests that the Bible is not primarily about us at all. These people are convinced that the Bible is not primarily about giving us directions for our lives, although it does some of that. They also recognize that it is not primarily about how God saves you and me, although that is also discussed. These people believe that the Bible is primarily a letter from God to us and it is primarily about Him. Now it should be obvious that God is not openly discussed a great deal in the Bible. But what we see in the Bible is a record of how God deals with sinful human beings. It is a record of God’s relationship to humans throughout the course of our existence here on earth.

The best way to test which of these theories or paradigms is correct would be to find some verses where the message of the verse places God’s reputation on the line versus either of the other paradigms. Are there places in the Bible where God actually says things like “I gave you all of the right directions for your life, but you have failed to keep them so now I must do something about my reputation which you are tarnishing since the people who live in the surrounding nations believe that I am losing my power and that is why you are going off into captivity?” Or what about verses that suggest that God finally says, “I have done everything I could to save you from yourselves but now I must let you go and do something for my own

name's sake?"

Ezekiel discusses such issues perhaps more than any other single prophet. We will look first at what Ezekiel says and then compare the words of other prophets and other portions of Scripture.

Ezekiel 20:8,9: ⁸ "But they defied me and refused to listen. They did not throw away their disgusting idols or give up the Egyptian gods. I was ready to let them feel the full force of my anger there in Egypt. ⁹**But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name**, for in the presence of the people among whom they were living I had announced to Israel that I was going to lead them out of Egypt." (GNB)

Ezekiel 20:13-16: ¹³ "But even in the desert they defied me. **They broke my laws and rejected my commands, which bring life to anyone who obeys them.** They completely profaned the Sabbath. **I was ready to let them feel the force of my anger there in the desert and destroy them.** ¹⁴**But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me lead Israel out of Egypt.** So I made a promise in the desert that I would not take them to the land I had given them, a rich and fertile land, the finest land of all. ¹⁶I made the promise because they had rejected my commands, broken my laws, and profaned the Sabbath—they preferred to worship their idols. (GNB)

Ezekiel 20:21-24: ²¹ "But that generation also defied me. They broke my laws and did not keep my commands, which bring life to anyone who obeys them. They profaned the Sabbath. I was ready to let them feel the force of my anger there in the desert and kill them all. ²²**But I did not, since that would have brought dishonor to my name among the nations which had seen me bring Israel out of Egypt.** So I made another promise in the desert. I vowed that I would scatter them all over the world. ²⁴I did this because they had rejected my commands, broken my laws, profaned the Sabbath, and worshiped the same idols their ancestors had served." (GNB)

Ezekiel 20:42-44: ⁴²"When I bring you back to Israel, the land that I promised I would give to your ancestors, then you will know that I am the LORD. ⁴³Then you will remember all the disgraceful things you did and how you defiled yourselves. You will be disgusted with yourselves because of all the evil things you did. ⁴⁴**When I act to protect my honor, you Israelites will know that I am the LORD, because I do not deal with you as your wicked, evil actions deserve.**" The Sovereign LORD has spoken. (GNB)

Ezekiel 36:22:

Alvd }ai yki l arcyl tyBe hc,[o yna} kn[m'l] al ; hwlhy0 ynda} rma'a; hko l arcylA tybd] rma0 :kd ; ²²

Biblia Hebraica .N; !taB;

²² Therefore, say to the house of Israel, Thus said the Lord Jehovah: Not for your sake am I working, O house of Israel, But—for My holy name, That ye have polluted among nations whither ye have gone in. *Young's Literal Translation*

²² ...I doe not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy Name's sake, which ye polluted among the heathen, whither ye went. *Geneva*

²² ...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake,... KJV, NKJV

- ²² ...I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name,... *1890 Darby Bible, 1901 American Standard Version*
- ²² ...It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name,... *The Revised Standard Version; NRSV*
- ²² ...It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for My holy name,... *The New American Standard Bible; 1995 Update*
- ²² ...It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name,... *The New International Version*
- ²² ...Not for your sake do I this, O house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name,... *Leeser*
- ²² ...I am about to do something, people of Israel. I will not do this for your sake but for the sake of my holy name,... *God's Word*
- ²² ...what I am going to do is not for the sake of you Israelites, but for the sake of my holy name,... *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*
- ²² ...Thus said the Lord God: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My holy name,... *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*
- ²² ...You have disgraced my holy name among the nations where you now live. So you don't deserve what I'm going to do for you. I will lead you home to bring honor to my name. *The Contemporary English Version*
- ²² ... I am bringing you back again, but not because you deserve it; I am doing it to protect my holy name,... *The Living Bible, The New Living Translation*
- ²² ...Thus says the Lord GOD: Not for your sakes do I act, house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name,... *The New American Bible*
- ²² ...'This is what the Lord God says: Israel, I am going to act, but not for your sake. I will do something to help my holy name,... *The New Century Version*
- ²² ...'The Lord Yahweh says this: I am not doing this for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name,... *Jerusalem Bible*
- ²² ...'The Lord Yahweh says this: I am acting not for your sake, House of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name,... *The New Jerusalem Bible*
- ²² ...It is not for your sake, you Israelites, that I am acting, but for the sake of my holy name,... *New English Bible, Revised English Bible*
- ²² ... I do not do this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake,... *The Amplified Bible*
- ²² ...It is not for your sakes, O Israel, that I take action, but for the sake of my own sacred honour which has been lowered by your dispersion among the nations. *Smith-Goodspeed*
- ²² ...I will take you out from the nations where you are and bring you back home. I will do this not only for your sake, but also for mine, for the sake of my name that's being so dishonored. *The Clear Word*

Ezekiel 36:23: ²³ **When I demonstrate to the nations the holiness of my great name—the name you disgraced among them—then they will know that I am the LORD.** I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken. I will use you to show the nations that I am holy.” (GNB)

Ezekiel 36:31,32: ³¹You will remember your evil conduct and the wrongs that you committed, and you will be disgusted with yourselves because of your sins and your iniquities. ³²**Israel, I want you to know that I am not doing all this for your sake. I want you to feel the shame and disgrace of what you are doing.** I, the Sovereign Lord, have spoken.” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

Ezekiel 39:6,7: ⁶I will start a fire in the land of Magog and along all the coasts where people live undisturbed, and **everyone will know that I am the LORD.** ⁷**I will make sure that my people Israel know my holy name, and I will not let my name be disgraced any more. Then the nations will know that I, the LORD, am the Holy God of Israel.”** (*GNB*)

Ezekiel 39:25-29: ²⁵The Sovereign LORD said, “But now I will be merciful to Jacob’s descendants, the people of Israel, and make them prosperous again. **I will protect my holy name.** ²⁶When they are once more living in safety in their own land, with no one to threaten them, they will be able to forget how they were disgraced for having betrayed me. ²⁷**In order to show the many nations that I am holy,** I will bring my people back from all the countries where their enemies live. ²⁸**Then my people will know that I am the LORD their God.** They will know this, because I sent them into captivity and now gather them and bring them back into their own land, not leaving even one of them behind. ²⁹I will pour out my spirit on the people of Israel and never again turn away from them. I, the Sovereign LORD, have spoken.” (*GNB*)

Ezekiel 43:5-9: ⁵ The LORD’s spirit lifted me up and took me into the inner courtyard, where I saw that the Temple was filled with the glory of the LORD. ⁶The man stood beside me there, and I heard the LORD speak to me out of the Temple: ⁷“Mortal man, here is my throne. I will live here among the people of Israel and rule over them for ever. **Neither the people of Israel nor their kings will ever again disgrace my holy name by worshiping other gods or by burying the corpses of their kings in this place.** ⁸The kings built the thresholds and doorposts of their palace right against the thresholds and doorposts of my Temple, so that there was only a wall between us. **They disgraced my holy name by all the disgusting things they did, and so in my anger I destroyed them.** ⁹Now they must stop worshiping other gods and remove the corpses of their kings. If they do, I will live among them for ever.” (*GNB*)

It should be quite clear by now that God needed to speak out very forcefully about His name and what was happening to His reputation.

Jeremiah seems to be suggesting similar ideas in his book:

Jeremiah 14:7:

⁷ My people cry out to me,
‘Even though our sins accuse us,
help us, Lord, as you have promised.
We have turned away from you many times;
we have sinned against you. *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

Jeremiah 14:21: Remember your promises and do not despise us; do not bring disgrace on Jerusalem, the place of your glorious throne.

Do not break the covenant you made with us. *Good News Bible*

Jeremiah 15:15: ¹⁵ Then I said, “Lord, you understand. Remember me and help me. Let me have revenge on those who persecute me. Do not be so patient with them that they succeed in killing me. **Remember that it is for your sake that I am insulted.** *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Isaiah also speaks about God's honor:

Isaiah 48:11:

Biblia Hebraica שׁוֹמֵר אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה לְעַלְמֵי עוֹלָם וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶי לְאֱלֹהֵי אֲחֵרִים¹¹

For My sake, for Mine own sake, I do it, For how is it polluted? And Mine honour to another I give not. *Young's Literal Translation*

For mine owne sake, for mine owne sake will I doe it; for how should *my Name* be polluted? surely I will not give my glory unto another. *Geneva*

For my sake — for mine own sake will I effectually work, for how should it be profaned? And my glory to another will I not give. *Rheims*

For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another. *The King James Version*

For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be profaned? And I will not give my glory unto another. *1890 Darby Bible*

For mine own sake, for mine own sake, will I do it; for how should my name be profaned? And my glory will I not give to another. *1901 American Standard Version*

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will do it; For how should My name be profaned? And I will not give My glory to another. *The New King James Version*

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. *The Revised Standard Version*

For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act; For how can My name be profaned? And My glory I will not give to another. *The New American Standard Bible; 1995 Update*

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for why should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. *The New Revised Standard Version*

For my own sake, for my own sake, I do this. How can I let myself be defamed? I will not yield my glory to another. *The New International Version*

For my own sake will I do it; for how would (my name) be dishonored? And my glory will I not give unto an other. *Leeser*

I am doing this for myself, only for myself. Why should my name be dishonored? I will not give my glory to anyone else. *God's Word*

For My sake, My own sake, do I act— Lest [My name] be dishonored! I will not give My glory

to another. *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures*

What I do is done for my own sake—I will not let my name be dishonored or let anyone else share the glory that should be mine and mine alone.” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

I did this because of who I am. I refuse to be dishonored or share my praise with any other god. *The Contemporary English Version*

Yet for my own sake—yes, for my own sake—I will save you from my anger and not destroy you lest the heathen say their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory. *The Living Bible*

I will rescue you for my sake—yes, for my own sake! That way, the pagan nations will not be able to claim that their gods have conquered me. I will not let them have my glory! *The New Living Translation*

For my sake, for my own sake, I do this; why should I suffer profanation? My glory I will not give to another. *The New American Bible*

I do this for myself, for my own sake. I will not let people speak evil against me, and I will not let some god take my glory. *The New Century Version*

For my sake and my sake only have I acted—is my name to be profaned? Never will I yield my glory to another. *Jerusalem Bible*

For my sake and my sake only shall I act, for why should my name be profaned? I will not yield my glory to another. *The New Jerusalem Bible*

For My own sake, for My own sake, I do it [I refrain and do not utterly destroy you], for why should I permit My name to be polluted *and* profaned [which it would be if the Lord completely destroyed His chosen people]? And I will not give My glory to another [by permitting the worshipers of idols to triumph over you]. *The Amplified Bible*

For my honour, for my own honour I did it; let them disparage my past triumphs if they will: I will not give my glory to any other god. *New English Bible*

For my honour’s sake, for my own honour I did it; I will not let my name be profaned or yield my glory to any other god. *Revised English Bible*

I do this for the sake of my own honour [alas, how sullied it is!] I will not yield my glory to another. *Smith-Goodspeed*

What I have done, I have done for my own sake so no one can say that the God of Israel winks at sin. I will not let myself be misunderstood any more nor will I let my name be dishonored any longer. I will not give my responsibility to another or share my glory with someone else. *The Clear Word*

Daniel certainly understood what was going on:

Daniel 9:15-19: ¹⁵ “O Lord our God, you showed your power by bringing your people out of Egypt, and your power is still remembered. We have sinned; we have done wrong.¹⁶ You have defended us in the past, so do not be angry with Jerusalem any longer. **It is your city, your sacred hill. All the people in the neighboring countries look down on Jerusalem and on your people because of our sins and the evil our ancestors did.** ¹⁷ O God, hear my

prayer and pleading. Restore your Temple, which has been destroyed; restore it so that everyone will know that you are God. ¹⁸ Listen to us, O God; look at us, and see the trouble we are in and the suffering of **the city that bears your name.** We are praying to you because you are merciful, not because we have done right. ¹⁹ Lord, hear us. Lord, forgive us. Lord, listen to us, and act! **In order that everyone will know that you are God, do not delay! This city and these people are yours.**” *Good News Bible: Today’s English Version*

Isn’t it clear from all of this that God is needing to speak up to say something important about Himself? This is not just to spell out in more detail what God wants from us. It is not for the purpose of explaining what God must do or how He must act to save you and me! These very significant statements tell us that something has to be said about God Himself. So what needs to be said about God? Human beings need to get over our egocentric ideas and recognize that *God* is on trial here! Lucifer/Satan has accused Him of being a liar (Genesis 3:4) See handouts #7 on ***The Great Controversy in Scripture*** and #7b ***Satan***. At the same time Satan suggested that God was in fact arbitrarily withholding something from us that would be for our best good! (Genesis 2:17; 3:4,5) Doesn’t God’s statement in Genesis 2:17 seem at least a little arbitrary, even exacting and unforgiving? Satan has claimed that the only way God can get human beings to join His side is to bribe them! (Job 1:10-11)

But if the whole Bible is primarily a book about God’s answers to Satan’s accusations then we must look at it in quite a different way.

2. Why would it be necessary for God to act to preserve His name? Doesn’t everyone know that there is only one God? (See Isaiah 40-55) Is it possible that God needs to say something about Himself that is more important than even saving you and me?

In ancient times many different “gods” were worshiped as if they had powers and authority over different areas of the earth. But in our day, primarily as a result of the influence of two major religious movements, Christianity and Islam, most of the peoples of the world who believe in God believe there is only one true God. Of course, many others, such as Hindus, worship many “gods” while still others, like communists, believe that God does not even exist. Clearly, Yahweh still has not convinced the world even about His existence! So what should God do in such a situation? He will not violate our freedom. He chooses to place His case in open court before all of His children, not only on this planet but throughout the universe. As we make up our minds about God, we are also placing our vote in the court of the universe as to whether or not we believe that Yahweh can be trusted in all that He has said and done. The Bible is the evidence that we must study to try to determine how to cast our vote. And to understand what the Bible is saying to us we must reconstruct as far as possible the settings in which God has spoken in the past so we can best understand why He would say or do such a thing in such a setting. Finally, we must ask ourselves what was going on behind the scenes that might have led God or Satan to do what they did at that time. It is almost like having a final exam where we have the “answers” but we need to figure out what the questions were!

Romans 3:4: No, indeed! God tells the truth, even if everyone else is a liar. The Scriptures

say about God, "Your words will be proven true, and in court you will win your case."
(*Contemporary English Version*)

3:4: By no means! God must prove true, though every man be false; as the Scripture says, "That you may be shown to be right in what you say, And win your case when you when you go into court." (*Goodspeed*)

"It was in order that the heavenly universe might see the conditions of the covenant of redemption that Christ bore the penalty in behalf of the human race. **The throne of Justice must be eternally and forever made secure, even tho the race be wiped out, and another creation populate the earth. By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance. Christ alone could restore honor to God's government.** The cross of Calvary would be looked upon by the unfallen worlds, by the heavenly universe, by Satanic agencies, by the fallen race, and every mouth would be stopped....Who is able to describe the last scenes of Christ's life on earth, His trial in the judgment hall, His crucifixion? Who witnessed these scenes?—The heavenly universe, God the Father, Satan and his angels."
The Signs of the Times, July 12, 1899 (4ST 44:1:2)

3. What is our role in this great controversy? Are we spectators, participants, or stars? Does our human experience say anything important about God?

1 Corinthians 4:9: For it seems to me that God has given the very last place to us apostles, like people condemned to die in public as a spectacle for the whole world of angels and of humanity. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Colossians 1:19,20: ¹⁹ For it was by God's own decision that the Son has in himself the full nature of God. ²⁰ Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Ephesians 1:8-10: In all his wisdom and insight ⁹ God did what he had purposed, and made known to us the secret plan he had already decided to complete by means of Christ.¹⁰ This plan, which God will complete when the time is right, is to bring all creation together, everything in heaven and on earth, with Christ as head. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Ephesians 3:9,10: ⁷ I was made a servant of the gospel by God's special gift, which he gave me through the working of his power. ⁸ I am less than the least of all God's people; yet God gave me this privilege of taking to the Gentiles the Good News about the infinite riches of Christ, ⁹ and of making all people see how God's secret plan is to be put into effect. God, who is the Creator of all things, kept his secret hidden through all the past ages,¹⁰ in order that at the present time, **by means of the church**, the angelic rulers and powers in the heavenly world might learn of his wisdom in all its different forms. *Good News Bible: Today's English Version*

Notice that Paul seems to suggest that the entire universe is watching us! This is not to

suggest that God did not win the great controversy all by Himself. But the universe is watching to see how the news of God's victory is impacting the human race. Do we act like it really matters to us? Are we telling everyone who will listen? Are we looking for better ways to explain it? Do we really want Christ to come again? Or are we so "comfortable" that we don't care if He delays His coming? Often it seems like the church is much more concerned about what people think of the church than what they think about God!

For His name's sake, the Lord forgives our sins (1 John 2:12), guides us (Pss. 23:3; 31:3), deals with us (Ps. 109:21), and revives us (Ps. 143:11). For His name's sake, we ought to serve Him (3 John 7; Rev. 2:3), sacrifice for Him (Matt. 19:29), and be willing to suffer reproach (Matt. 10:22; 24:9). All that we do should be for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Cor. 10:31). (*With the Word Bible Commentary on Ezekiel 20*)

So God has struggled down through the ages to communicate a message that seems like it should be so simple. But it is not the kind of message that humans have tended to take much interest in. So God Himself has found it necessary at times to speak out very forcefully about the importance of our respect and reverence. Considering all that is going on in our world today, is it possible that God needs to speak out on His own behalf once again?

See Job 1,2; 42:7,8; Romans 3:4; Exodus 32:1-14; Numbers 14:13-19; Deuteronomy 9:7-29; Joshua 7:9

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