

# *Introduction*

## **Part 1**

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### **Our Perception of Reality**

I want to begin by saying *“My convictions are not your convictions.”* The reason I say this is because the Lord speaks to each person in a particular way and does not always lead one person to the same convictions as the next. Examples of this may be found in whether one has long hair verses short hair, the cloths that one wears (i.e. material things), or drinking alcohol, etc. Some people in their walk before the Lord are led to a more ascetic lifestyle (being frugal) while others do not feel led to do such things. I believe it is important for us to always keep this in mind! I am not here to force you or to bang you over the head about walking in God’s ways, in His paths of righteousness. The reason being, we (on an individual level) are to seek the Lord God our Father in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua to work in our lives and for His will to be done as we humbly seek Him. This defines who we are as God’s children when we become mindful of sin and seeking for the Lord to help us to overcome sin in our lives.

Now, under the concept of the Torah and the Gospel Message, the idea of legalism always comes up. The definition of Legalism (or nomism), in Christian theology, is the act of putting the Law of Moses above the gospel, by establishing requirements for salvation beyond having faith in the Messiah . This kind of Legalism leads one to force one’s convictions upon others. For example, if one is sued over a corrupt law, one man may say the bible teaches us to just give them whatever they ask for, all your money, turn the other cheek, and don’t fight back, even if it means losing your house and home and all your

means for taking care of your family. While another man will say no, you should stand for truth and justice and fight this corrupt system so someone else does not get robbed by these corrupt attorneys. As this example illustrates, what one does may ultimately effect a person and his entire family is a matter of interpretation and application of the Scriptures. What we are called to do is to look for a godly way from the Scriptures to live and to respond to these life situations that come upon us while relying upon the Lord God in heaven for help.

As we study the Torah along side of the Gospel Message, we are not looking at a set of rules that one must legalistically follow in order to be saved. It is unfortunate when a Christian hears *“the Torah and the Gospel Message”* the general thought is towards one of performing works in order to get into heaven. Fortunately, the Scriptures do not describe the Torah in this way. This attitude towards the Torah is a product of modern theologies today. The Torah (instruction) of God is not simply a set of rules. At the highest (abstract) level, God’s Torah lays out the standard for moral and ethical living and what it means to love God and to love one another as the children of God. The most significant aspect of the Torah in relation to the Gospel Message is to look at our lives to seek and to see how the Lord is working and leading us to live according to His Word. (i.e. *“Is the Lord God Almighty putting in your heart a desire to obey His word?” In other words “do you want to live righteously for the Lord?”*) In the Apostolic Writings, we are taught having faith in Yeshua, God’s Messiah, our Father in heaven will send us His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts. This is a consistent Torah centric theme of a Holy God dwelling in the midst of His people. The purpose of His Holy Spirit inside of us is to empower our lives, to help to bring to memory God’s Word, and to overcome sin. The definition of Sin is disobedience to God’s commands. The power of the Spirit of God in our lives therefore is to obey His Word (commands) and to have in our hearts a deep desire to do so because of our love for Him. This is the meaning of having faith and being faithful in our lives as we walk with God and His Messiah.

R. C. Sproul and J. I. Packer wrote a book about interpretation stating Protestant theologians are in conflict over biblical interpretation. (Perry, Simon (2005). *Resurrecting Interpretation. Bristol Baptist College: University of Bristol*) The interesting point that is being made,

even though there are a diverse conflict in interpretation, all claim to be led by the Holy Spirit of God and faithful interpretations of the Bible. It is the diverse interpretations that underlie the doctrinal variations in Christianity. If the Scriptures are considered as having been authored by God using the hand of man, rather than an accumulation of disparate individual texts written and edited in the course of history, then any interpretation that contradicts any other part of scripture is not considered to be sound. This is why it is so important for us to return to the Torah, holding fast to God's Word and understanding all of Scripture from a Torah based perspective (hermeneutic). If one takes a Torah centric perspective as the foundation of all Scripture, it is interesting how this approach turns traditional Catholic and Protestant theology on its head. The Torah helps us to discern between what is real (reality) as opposed to what is simply a matter of interpretation that is a function of our imagination or the theologies that we have been taught.

The nature of reality for the individual relies heavily upon one's presuppositions that have led over the centuries to controversial philosophical judgments and assumptions as they are related to biblical interpretation. This has lead to all sorts of doctrines that are difficult to sort out. The less aware we are of the underlying presuppositions and philosophical assumptions, the more these things control our way of thinking and interaction with the Scriptures. We need to be aware of this in order to understand what God wants from us as this is related to being faithful to the Living God in Heaven. Sorting these things out however requires careful effort. In this Torah Series, as we study the Torah and the Gospel Message, we will begin to encounter the different theological systems that are in place and try to keep an openness to God and His Word in a way that is not limited by the presuppositions we have been taught over the years and centuries.

As the time approached to begin this study and other studies, I sometimes begin to have vivid dreams. As a Science Fiction (SciFi) buff, I love to watch SciFi movies, television series, etc. As this study approached, one night I dreamt of being at a distant region in outer in space were we found an alien artifact. I was tasked with reverse engineering the device and having to determine what the machine was and how to operate it. There was a computer terminal that runs the alien system and I remember searching through the menus of the computer

interface. After a while of messing around with the device, I found the help file. I read the help file and learned this alien device was known as a “*reality machine*.” The creator of the machine wrote the purpose was for keeping peace amongst the 20 alien races in the known universe. For example, if a war had broken out and one wanted to create a vast technologically advanced army, all one needed to do was program the machine, run the program, and the machine would know exactly what to do, it would create the army out of nothing. As I was thinking about this machine in my dream, I wondered how this could be possible? It was as if God had created this and left this for us to eventually discover and then use. What is interesting is how this parallels to what we (every man, woman, and child on this planet) actually do. Look at the technologies we have today in virtual reality and augmented reality, we have the capability of modifying and creating an entire world that is fictitious and made up and then interacting with that world. This idea of creating our own reality is very significant and has philosophical significance as it relates to Biblical interpretation with the Scriptures where our brains are our reality machine. This is very significant today since our reality (how we believe things work) is effected by our every day experiences and what we have been taught. Note how this is not simply a matter of bible (scripture) interpretation. Take for example our culture. The USA and the entire world appears to be in its death throws with the increase in moral decline, relative ways of thought on what is truth, gender confusion, religious bias (i.e. pro-islam vs anti-christian), etc. Something very significant is happening in the minds and hearts of all of mankind in these last days that lends itself to the great deception that is coming upon this world which is connected to the nature of reality. This may be illustrated in the Scientific community, such as in the discussions between evolution and creationism. I am quoting from the book “*Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique*, 2017.”

*“Making the rules of science is not the same thing as playing the game of science (that is actually conducting research), rule-making influences the practice and content of science, shaping what it will be as an enterprise and the body of knowledge, including what kinds of hy-*

*pothesis its practitioners will permit themselves to consider.” (Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, 2017, Crossway Publisher, pg. 562-563)*

What happens in the applied sciences, one is presented with a problem statement. Then the Scientist takes the basic knowledge of chemistry and physics and generates a hypothesis on how to solve the problem. Once this is completed, the Scientist proposes a set of experiments to test the hypothesis. The experiments are run, and the results are analyzed based upon the assumptions that are made in the hypothesis. If the data does not agree with the hypothesis, then the hypothesis is modified and more tests are conducted. This iteration step is continued until success or failure. What this demonstrates for us is how what one has been taught (chemistry and physics) effects the way one interprets and conducts research? In order to begin a research project, one must enter in with certain assumptions based upon these fundamental concepts from chemistry and physics (with the idea that *“this is how the world works!”*). This is how we all get along in life. Certain things we know to be true from life experience. Other things we assume based upon our own experience and what we have been taught. This is very similar to what we see going on in biblical interpretation. The authors of the book on *“Theistic Evolution”* go on to say the following:

*“Science is something we humans invent and do, it is has not been delivered to us, and we devise its rules, and methods, and over the course of history, they have changed. But when might a rule need to be changed? In sports, rule changes usually occur when the quality of competition has stagnated or declined. Science is not a game in that exact sense, however, the merits of the success or failure of scientific theories exist, and we can ask the same questions, at a deeper level, about scientific methodology itself. Science should be interested in determining the truth, writes Caltech physicist Sean Carroll, “whatever that truth may be, natural, supernatural, or otherwise.” If the truth is the ultimate goal of*



*scientific investigation, then any rule that may keep us from reaching that goal needs the closest critical scrutiny.” (Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, 2017, Crossway Publisher, pg. 562-563)*

Obviously the idea of “*truth*” is universal, whether scientific or spiritual. Without truth and consistency in chemistry and physics this world could not function as it does today. As a result of this, the idea of coming to the truth is a universal principle and the reason men and women put their hand to biblical interpretation. The difficulty however is to find a set of assumptions that we can all agree upon that leads into correct conclusions. (*i.e. in the Scientific disciplines, what we all agree upon are the basic fundamental principles of chemistry and physics.*) The reason this is so important is a bad set of assumptions will lead to bad conclusions. If we have the wrong assumptions, this will lead to the wrong questions, and consequentially to the wrong answers. The authors of the book “*Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, 2017*” go on to describe this in the following way:

*“Perceived gaps in our knowledge of natural processes responsible for given phenomena or features of the world are based on our background assumption about the kind of processes or entities that ought to be present in nature. In the debate about biological origins, theistic evolutionists and mainstream evolutionary biologists assume that all living systems necessarily were produced by some naturalistic process, and that their origin will, thus, ultimately have a completely naturalistic or materialist explanation. The background assumption implicit in, for instance, the question “How did life first arise via materialistic chemical evolutionary processes or pathways?” Implies a gap in our scientific knowledge when it becomes apparent that no satisfactory materialistic chemical evolutionary process has been discovered that can generate living cells from simpler*

*nonliving molecules. But our present lack of knowledge of any such chemical process entails a gap in knowledge of the actual process by which life arose only if such a materialistic chemical evolutionary process actually did produce first life.” (Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, 2017, Crossway Publisher, pg. 589)*

The basic conclusion is the answers we receive are dictated by the questions we ask, and the questions we ask are shaped by the assumptions and expectations of the hypothesis and theories we embrace. The parallel can be drawn to our biblical faith and belief system that is based upon the assumptions, presuppositions, and expectations we have been taught. If we are not able to think outside of the box, the potential for understanding and learning what God wants for our lives, our presuppositions can lead to blindness in regards to the key aspects of God’s reality for our lives. For example, the one who believes all life arose by naturalistic chemical processes will begin looking in the bible to support that presupposition. There are many examples of this kind of philosophical reasoning in the book titled *“Theistic Evolution: A Scientific, Philosophical, and Theological Critique, 2017.”* Our presuppositions, the questions we ask shape not just our expectations but also our final conclusions and interpretations of Scripture. This is why it is so important for us to hold to a standard (a plumb line), a Torah centric hermeneutic with the Torah as the foundation of all Scripture.

I want to come back to what I said at the beginning by saying *“My convictions are not your convictions.”* This is a significant statement because each of us need to actively be looking at how God is working in our hearts to serve Him, and to live for Him. We have a standard for living, the Torah, but because each of our lives are different, and we have differing life experiences, the Lord speaks to each person in a particular way and does not always lead one person to the same convictions as the next person. Granted, we know what God expects of us to live in righteousness, holiness, justice, and truth, presupposing we will avoid immorality, and hold to the highest standards of ethics and love for one another and for God our Father in heaven and His Messiah Yeshua.

In conclusion for Part 1, I want to give a very real example I received from Ron Cantor and Messiah's Mandate ministry. Ron Cantor speaks about the aid to Syrian refugees from both Christians and Jews.

*“On Sunday, I went to the Golan Heights on the Israeli/Syrian border to interview leaders of FAI Relief. The founder of the group, Dalton Thomas, is a believer and his Chief of Operations is Jewish IDF Lt. Col. Marco Moreno. Moreno was the creator of the Israeli Defense Forces “Good Neighbor Program,” that treats Syrians in need of medical attention and brings in aid. In short, Moreno made contact with the Syrian rebels when the civil war began. They developed a relationship and began to bring wounded Syrians into Israel for treatment. And this is changing the way many Syrians view Israel. “The Syrians when they came the first time, they were surprised because they saw the Arabic language on the signs. They asked, ‘How come it is in Arabic here?’ We told them, ‘We have 1,000,000 Muslims living in Israel, and they are part of us.’ And then they will go to the hospital. They will see a Christian doctor, a Muslim doctor, a Jewish doctor working together.” “They would say, ‘This is not what we have been told [about Israel. We’ve been told that] you guys are the big Zionist enemy and here you are saving our lives.”*

The basic conclusion is what we are talking about today, the things we are taught form our presuppositions and philosophical beliefs which leads to the types of questions we ask about life and about spiritual matters. The conclusion is the answers we receive are dictated by the questions we ask, and the questions we ask are shaped by the assumptions and expectations of the hypothesis and theories we embrace. Obviously the idea of *“truth”* is universal, whether scientific or spiritual. The idea of coming to the truth is a universal principle and the reason there is so much variation in biblical interpretation. The difficulty however is to find a set of assumptions that we can all agree upon that leads to the correct conclusions. This is why it is vital that we hold on



to a Torah centric hermeneutic when exercising biblical interpretation. This is the perspective we will be taking in this Torah Series.

Next week we will look at an example of this from the Torah of a group of men who chose to have their own version of reality based upon their presuppositions whose result led to the death of the people by a miracle that had never been seen before and has never been seen since in order to illustrate the significance of this issue and its influence upon their hearts, their lives, their attitude towards God, and their eternal souls! Our biblical faith and belief system is based upon the assumptions, presuppositions, and expectations we have been taught. If we are not able to think outside of the box, the potential for understanding and learning what God wants for our lives, our presuppositions can lead to blindness in regards to the key aspects of God's reality for our lives. Our presuppositions, the questions we ask shape not just our expectations but also our final conclusions and interpretations of Scripture. This potential blindness has the capacity to damn one's eternal soul. This is why it is so important for us to hold to the standard of the Torah as the foundation of all Scripture.