

International Bible Lessons Commentary
1 Corinthians 10:9-22

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, July 20, 2014

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, July 20, 2014**, is from **1 Corinthians 10:9-22**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is usually posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

International Bible Lesson Commentary

1 Corinthians 10:9-22

(1 Corinthians 10:9) We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.

Before and during the wilderness wandering of the Israelites (after Moses led them out of Egypt), the

Israelites tried the patience, justice, love, and integrity of God by complaining against both God and Moses and by disobeying God's laws. In the previous verses, Paul listed some of the many spiritual advantages the Israelites had enjoyed, but in spite of these many blessings they continued to rebel against God; therefore, God disciplined them and refused many of them an entrance into the Promised Land. Likewise, those who claim to be Christians should not test the patience, justice, love, and integrity of Jesus by complaining and disobeying Him. To continue in rebellion against Jesus Christ can lead to the destruction of those who claim to follow Him, but do not.

(1 Corinthians 10:10) And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

God used nature, creatures that He created, serpents, to destroy those who persistently complained, disobeyed, and rebelled against God and Moses (see Numbers 21). Satan appeared to Eve as a serpent and tested her, and she failed the test. Eve tested Adam, and he also failed the test. Satan tested Job and Jesus, but neither of them failed their tests. God rewards His people for their faithfulness, as He rewarded Job and Jesus. Jesus Christ bestows many blessings upon those who remain loyal to Him as their Lord and Savior. By analogy, those who claim to be Christians put Jesus Christ to the test when they persist in

disobeying God's commands. If they do not repent and turn back to Jesus in faith, they can suffer the discipline of the Lord. If they will not truly follow Jesus Christ as their Lord, they will inevitably run into the arms of the destroyer and be destroyed. Jesus saves those who truly know He is their Lord.

(1 Corinthians 10:11) These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.

Paul knew that we need to learn from the historical mistakes of others so we do not make similar mistakes. Paul sometimes referred back to the Old Testament laws of God and the experiences of those who disobeyed God as examples so Christians would not do likewise. From Paul's letters we learn how important and authoritative the whole Bible is for Christians. Paul also wrote, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). With the first coming of Jesus Christ "the ends of the ages have come," and we now await His second coming.

(1 Corinthians 10:12) So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.

The Corinthians thought they were standing because of their knowledge, but “knowledge puffs up,” so they needed to be careful that they did not fall back into sin and away from Christ (see 1 Corinthians 8:1-3). People can become proud of their biblical and theological knowledge, and lose their contact with God. Pride can lead people to think that they are so smart they can disobey God and escape the harmful consequences. As Paul will state later in his letter, Christians should not think that they can sin with impunity because they have been baptized or participate in the Lord’s Supper.

(1 Corinthians 10:13) No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Any tests we experience others have experienced in similar ways. No one can pass a test by declaring that what the Bible declares to be wrong is right. No one can pass a test by declaring that the sins the Bible condemns can now be ignored; that sinful practices can now be celebrated by a changing culture without destructive consequences.

Because God is faithful, those who follow Jesus Christ can pass every test with the strength and wisdom that the Holy Spirit gives them. God is faithful; those who follow Jesus

Christ will be shown the way out so they can endure the test (not escape the test). Those who follow Jesus Christ know that Jesus Christ himself is the Way out: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’” (John 14:6).

(1 Corinthians 10:14) Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols.

In spite of their sins and problems in the church, Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth as his dear friends or beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. Because they knew he loved them, he could speak strongly to them in ways that might seem harsh to readers today. Paul wrote as he did because “love builds up,” and he delivered all of his warnings with that understanding. “Flee” is good advice whenever we are tempted to sin. If we flee the place of temptation, God will give us the strength we need and show us the way out. Rather than the Corinthian Christians in any way showing that they might be worshiping idols in a temple, they needed to flee from their places of worship and from worshiping them to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

(1 Corinthians 10:15) I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.

Paul appealed to their commonsense (the ability to reason that people have because they are created in the image of

God); to their commonsense as enlightened by the Holy Spirit and His teachings about Jesus Christ through the Scriptures, the Apostles' teachings, and Paul's letters. Paul addressed them reasonably and told them to carefully consider what he was writing. Paul did not simply forbid them to do something and give the reason, "Because I said so. I am an Apostle." Paul reasoned with them from God's laws and examples in the Old Testament (the New Testament was still being written and would later include Paul's letters). Paul expected them to judge for themselves and conclude that what he wrote to them was right.

(1 Corinthians 10:16) The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?

Paul now turned to a consideration of the Lord's Supper and began to warn them against any association with idol worship because participation in idol worship involved an association with demons. In the Lord's Supper, the cup of blessing was a cup of wine that represented the blood of Christ shed for them for the forgiveness of their sins. They were not to think that they could persist in committing sins or return to worshiping idols and then come to the Lord's Supper and receive forgiveness and escape the discipline of the Lord or their eventual destruction by the demonic powers they actually worshiped when worshiping

idols. Paul wrote the same truth about the bread. He wrote about the bread last, because he wanted to warn Christians against worshiping idols and sharing food with other idolaters as they worshiped in a pagan temple, with pagans who worshiped idols as they ate. Their eating might leave the impression that it makes no difference to God and others for Christians to worship idols and also worship God in Christ, but such worship showed disloyalty to God in Christ and could mislead others.

(1 Corinthians 10:17) Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Physical bread or food is necessary for physical life; spiritual bread or food is necessary for spiritual life. Jesus Christ is the spiritual food that is necessary for spiritual life. Jesus said he was the bread of life, the living bread, and whoever eats this bread will live forever (see John 6:23; 6:35; 6:48; 6:51). All those who follow Jesus Christ partake of Him, partake of the one bread. All those who eat of the bread of life are also one body: “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Corinthians 12:27). All those who eat of the bread of life are also one spirit with Jesus Christ; because “Anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him” (1 Corinthians 6:17). The members of the body of Christ are partners with Christ and one another; they learn from and

bless one another. All true Christians are connected to Christ and to one another spiritually, just as a body has many parts that are all connected to the body in some way.

(1 Corinthians 10:18) Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?

In some of the Old Testament sacrifices the Israelites feasted together. Eating together made them partners as they sacrificed according to the law of God and shared the food that they had sacrificed. Those who follow Jesus Christ become partners as they eat the Lord's Supper together and share the cup of blessing and the bread. Just as every body part is a partner that helps the rest of the body, so every Christian is in some way a partner that helps others in the church.

(1 Corinthians 10:19) What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

What the Israelites did at their altar to God affirmed their partnership with the true God according to God's law. When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper it is something, because they affirm their partnership with the Lord Jesus Christ and one another according to His command; furthermore, Jesus reigns as King of kings from heaven. Paul did not want to imply by what he had written

up to this point that when pagans become partners in their sacrifices to idols that their idols have the reality and value that the pagans suppose they have. An idol cannot and does not represent the true God.

(1 Corinthians 10:20) No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons.

The Bible forbids making an image of God: “You shall make for yourselves no idols and erect no carved images or pillars, and you shall not place figured stones in your land, to worship at them; for I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 26:1). Paul gave a reason for that command: those who worship idols become partners with demons. Idol worship can lead to a person being destroyed by a demon. Idols can exist in a person’s mind, without a physical representation, and all demons are destructive (see Mark 5:1-19). The gospels show many of the destructive consequences for people who have partnerships with demons; Jesus cast them out (and so did Paul).

(1 Corinthians 10:21) You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Paul insisted that people will receive no benefit from participating in the Lord's Supper while at the same time they are participating with demons in worshiping idols. Indeed, they actually endanger themselves spiritually and in other ways. If a person associates with demons they cannot at the same time associate with Jesus Christ no matter what they may think or say. People need to choose between following Jesus and following demons, though they may not know they are following demons when they worship physical or mental idols or adopt a false theology that allows or promotes immorality.

(1 Corinthians 10:22) Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

“Provoking the Lord to jealousy” means disrespecting, disobeying, insulting, and offending God by your thoughts and actions so He may need to discipline or punish you to lead you to repentance. His discipline may lead to your repentance and return to an undivided loyalty to Jesus Christ. If not, His punishment of you may influence others not to do as you have done, and you will become an example (as the Israelites who were bitten by serpents in the wilderness became an example of what not to do). Placing an attachment on a friend or possession or goal or money or success or any other thing that is greater than your attachment to God can make an idol out of that friend or possession or other things. No one is so strong that they

can defeat God's purposes when He must discipline or punish them for idolatry; that may include removing the friend or the possession or other things from a person's life.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How might some people put Christ to the test today?
2. Why do Christians believe that they should study the Old Testament as well as the New Testament?
3. What would Paul want us to especially remember when we are tested?
4. What are Christians doing when they participate in the Lord's Supper?
5. What are people really doing when they are worshiping idols?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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