

A Necessary Connection

Maturing In The Faith: Shelf 3 — Volume 30

If we would define God as love—the Bible so defines Him (1 Jn 3:8)—then we must arrive at a necessary conclusion in reference to God’s intervention (transcendence) into that which He created—our world. Not only **must** He intervene in His creation, but there must also be a demonstration of the nature of who He is in his intervention.

The existence of a god who would be as cold and indifferent as space would be a **logical contradiction**. How could we ever conceived of such a being? The very nature of any true God must be personified after the basic nature of who we are emotionally. If god, who created us, were cold and indifferent, then the first problem with the existence of such a god would be that there would be no reason for creating that which is emotional. And we are emotional.

The fact that we are emotional beings who are blessed with the innate motivation to love and be loved **presupposes that we originated from that which at least had the limits of our own emotional character**. If god were cold and indifferent, and we were the product of such a being, then certainly we would also be cold and indifferent. But we are not!

So we are not cold and indifferent. We are emotional. We love. We crave to be loved. It would not be logical, therefore, to assume that a cold and indifferent god would create something that was of a higher emotional character than himself. On the contrary, we would conclude that a true God in His creation, **would of necessity create that which would be inferior to what or who He is as the Creator**. This is true because God did not create God.

God could not create something better, or greater than Himself. **God could not even create another God.** But here we are with our ability to love. And since we love—though handicapped with limits to our love—**then we are driven to conclude that it was a God of love who brought us into existence.** We are not the product of some cosmic being we have created after our own fertile imagination. This means, therefore, that we should not create a god in our minds who is limited to our intellectual or emotional limitations.

Our ability to love assumes that there exists a God of love simply because the physical world in which we live has living humans who have emotional expression.

1. **T or F:** The fact that God created us, necessitated that He reveal His love for us.
2. **T or F:** It is a “logical contradiction” for a God of love to supposedly create humanity, and then have no dealings with those whom He created.

A. The God Beyond Our Limitations

We also assume that **this creating God loves beyond the limits of our love.** This is only logical. What would be the worth of a god who could not love beyond the limits of our love. This reasoning excites our imagination with wonder concerning who and what the one true God must be, who is beyond the limits of our love. We do have at least one necessary conclusion: **Since we love, then we of necessity presuppose that our God, our Creator, is love beyond the greatest living person of love.** And since we must confess that our love is flawed and limited, then we must of necessity conclude that His love is far above the love we can express for one another. If this were not true, then we are all idolaters, having created in our minds a god who is no greater in love than we are.

3. **T or F:** Since we conclude that God must love beyond our ability to love one another, then we must also conclude that God’s love is limited to our ability to love.

B. The Necessity For Creation

This brings us to another necessary conclusion: **We are because He is, and thus, we love because we are the expression of His love.** Our very existence, therefore, drives us to conclude that He exists, for love cannot spontaneously generate out of cold and indifferent physical rocks and trees. Neither can love reside idly in eternity without expressing itself. **Love demands creation of that which can love, and in return, love the One who created.**

Our existence as loving beings, therefore, is the first “proof” of God’s existence. And since love cannot exist alone in eternity, then we had to be brought into existence at some time in eternity. God’s love, therefore, was the primal motivation for our existence, for eternal love had to find expression in creating that which would return love. After all, we would also necessarily conclude that He would not exist if we, as loving creatures, were not the product of His existence.

We are all atheists in reference to belief in a cold and indifferent entity being the supposed “creator” of that which is greater emotionally than the “creator” itself.

All these negative conclusions is what makes the philosophy of evolution so preposterous. **Evolutionary philosophy makes matter in motion—our physical world—the creator of something—us—that is greater than emotionless matter itself.** For this reason, the philosophy of evolution is inherently atheistic in reference to the God of love about which the Bible speaks.

The philosophy of evolution is inherently atheistic because the evolutionist needs no Creator to initiate the beginning of all things.

4. **T or F:** The biological world of which we are a part does not have the ability to evolve humanity into being a living being who has the capacity to love.
5. **T or F:** Since we love one another as human beings, then it is not logical to conclude that we were created by a God of love, but evolved out that which could.
6. **T or F:** The fact that we are loving human beings necessitated that God created us.

- 7. T or F:** If the process of evolution is true, then the process is a “god,” for it created a loving being that is greater than the material world.

C. The Necessity For A Connection

Now that we are here, it was necessary that the “Eternal Lover” intervene in what He created. If there is a God of love, then it is only logical to conclude that this God would seek to connect, that is, **reveal Himself to His creation**. This is true because it would simply be illogical to conclude that a God of love who could create humanity would simply stand back after creation and allow humanity to self-destruct in sin. What would be the sense of a God of love creating people of love, and then hiding from them in order that they not return His love? Would we not, therefore, expect some revelation from Him in order that we not destroy ourselves in our own wars?

This question assumes some very interesting inquiries: **(1)** If indeed we conclude that we are the result of a loving God, then certainly we must be driven to find this God, and how He communicated to us. **(2)** We must logically conclude, therefore, that if He were truly God, then He would make Himself known to His created beings.

In our search for this God, it is thus logical to conclude that the resource for our search can never be our own selves. If we fall into this idolatrous trap, we will create a god after our own imagination.

Think on this for a moment. Our existence is based on one conclusion as to why we are here. If our Creator created, **then we must assume that He created us for the purpose of eternal dwelling with Him in His presence**. After all, what foolishness it would have been on the part of God to create individuals who would have only a few years of existence, and then vanish into annihilation? God would be fiendish if He created those who would have only a brief taste of existence, suffer in an environment of great trials, and then vanish into an abyss of nothingness after their last breath. How could this God be love if He

only desired a few years of our loving and worshipful existence in the midst of a world that seems to have gone wrong in every way? And, how could this be a God of love if He did not make Himself known through some revelation?

A fiendish god would create that which had no possibility of eternity, but a God of love would create for the purpose of bringing His creation into eternity.

8. **T or F:** Since humanity is the creative product of a God of love, then it is reasonable to believe that He has communicated with us.
9. **T or F:** The fact that we are loving human beings necessitated that God created us.
10. **T or F:** In order to discover the God of creation, we have only ourselves as the source of our creation.

D. Filling A Vacant House

Because God desired to fill His eternal house with loving residents, He created within us a spirit that had eternal potential. This is a logical conclusion in reference to a God we have defined as love. If we have eternal potential, then there must be a road map—a connection—that as free-moral beings, **we can find our way out of the despair of this world and into His loving presence.** This would assume . . . Necessitate . . . that in His presence of eternal light, we must have light within us wherein we can voluntarily submit to who He is. There would be no room for rebels in eternity. The last free-moral rebels who were there—Satan and his angels—were kicked out. Since sin is the problem of rebels, **then there had to be a fix for sin for those who sought to reside with their Creator in the light of eternity.**

Since sin is a problem for those who are truly free to choose, then there had to be a fix for sin even before the action of creation took place.

11. **T or F:** Since sin would keep us out of our intended eternal destiny, then it is logical to assume that a loving God would provide a solution for our sins.

E. The Necessary Transcendence

There was the necessity for a transcendent intervention on the part of our Creator into our environment in order to deal with the problem of free-moral individuals who would choose to go their own way, which way would lead them away from their Creator.

In order to offer a fix for the problem of rebellion, **the One who was responsible for creation of necessity had to make a journey into the bowels of His creation in order to reveal His love for humanity.** And when He revealed this love, of necessity there had to be an ultimate demonstration of this love. Not only was it necessary that the Creator incarnate into the flesh of His creation, **His incarnate flesh had to be given as a sacrificial offering on behalf of those He created.** Only in this way could God demonstrate that He is a God of love. Therefore, incarnate blood had to gush forth from a fleshly body that was given as a sacrifice for the created. **This is gospel!** This is great news! This was the way it had to be for us. There was no other way.

If there were no fleshly incarnation on the part of the One who created our flesh, then there would be no meaning in a God we claim to be defined by love.

- 12. T or F:** God could simply say that He loved His creation without a demonstration of His love.

F. Response To The Gospel

Since it was the original purpose of the Creator to bring the created into His presence for eternity, **then the incarnational revelation of the Creator into our world had to be of such a nature that honest people would respond to the awesomeness of His true love for us.** The loved would respond and understand the love that originated their very existence. This transcendent invasion is called gospel because it is good news! It is good news because it presents an opportunity for every person of humanity

to accept God's gospel call, and subsequently take up residence in the eternal home of God.

Because we exist as the creation of a loving God, the gospel of the cross, therefore, is a logical necessity. If there were no incarnational invasion of our Creator into our world, **then we would be set back to believing in a cold and indifferent "entity" that we suppose exists in cold space.** But this is a logical contradiction in reference to the fact that we have the ability to love one another, which love exists beyond the material world in which we live.

Love that was revealed on a sacrificial cross is evidence of a transcendent God who loves us. Our capacity to love demands that He exists. And because we exist as loving individuals, we conclude that His expression of love for us through the cross was necessary. His love for us demanded that He transcend into our world. This is the only logical explanation that we have for a God of love who is coming back to take us where He originally planned for us to be before the words were spoken, "Let there be."

- 13. T or F:** The incarnational offering of the God who created us must inspire the created to respond to such love.
- 14. T or F:** The fact that God is love does not demand that He transcend into our world.

G. Protecting The Connection

Whenever the Holy Spirit speaks in Scripture specifically concerning the leadership of those who are connected to God through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is time to "listen up." God revealed His love for those who responded to this love in the first century. Because of the responses of obedient love by so many, God set a hedge around His people in order to protect them from any who would damage His loving respondents.

This was true in the first century because of the twisted leadership that prevailed among Jewish religious leaders in the promotion of their religion (See

Gl 1:13,14). Because the leadership of the Jews during the ministry of Jesus held the people captive by misguided religious ceremonialism and traditions (See Mk 7:1-9), as well as their lust for power over the people, their self-righteous thinking and behavior eventually led to the crucifixion of the Son of God. When we consider the crucifixion, we must always view such as a rejection of God's love.

We are not over-reactive, therefore, when we are cautious concerning those who would step forward and seek to lead the flock of God. In fact, the Holy Spirit even had Scripture written to alert us to the seriousness by which we should consider this subject: *“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers [leaders], knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment”* (Js 3:1).

It was for this reason that Paul issued a stern warning to the Ephesian elders upon his departure from Mellitus. He warned these leaders that wolves would eventually enter in among the flock in order to draw away the disciples after themselves. The reason why such wolves would come in among the sheep is quite disturbing in view of the mind of Christ that should be characteristic of every member of the body, especially our leaders (See Ph 2:5-8).

Nevertheless, if there arises among us, or one comes in among us, who is unchecked by the gospel of love of the incarnate Son of God, then the humble behavior of a gospel-responsive body can become the opportunity for lords to arise and dominate. The body, therefore, must always be on guard against these wolves.

If the love that was revealed on the cross, and is revealed through the Bible is worth believing, then it is also worth defending.

- 15. T or F:** Since there was a fellowship of loving respondents to the love of God, then we must assume that God would establish a realm of protection for His loving responds to His love at the cross.
- 16. T or F:** The fact that people crucified God's revelation of love for humanity at the cross, assumes that people can now be saved because of their good works.

H. Living Among Wolves

In the religious world in which we live today, lordship leadership plays itself out as some leaders (wolves) seek to take advantage of a humble faith-driven people who are identified by their love. Self-promoting, political-minded wolves, therefore, become opportunists who seek to lord over a flock of innocent sheep. Peter mentioned this very behavior when he addressed some who were elders (See 1 Pt 5:1-3). Therefore, if such behavior existed among some elders of the church in the first century when Peter wrote, then certainly we are not over cautious to assume that such behavior in leadership can also exist among us today.

In the Mellitus meeting, Paul warned elders about the coming wolves (See At 20:29-30). And sure enough, only a few years after his warning, Peter wrote that the lords (wolves) had already showed up among the sheep in the behavior of some elders. Diotrephes was around when the apostle John wrote concerning these matters. Diotrephes was a wolf who had already taken captive some sheep (See 3 Jn 9,10).

There are always a few who behave as Diotrephes **who love to be first** among the body of members (See 3 Jn 9,10). One may be this way as a young disciple, but he must spiritually grow up in Christ in order to reflect the aroma of the incarnate Son of God (See 2 Co 2:14-16). And the **only** way one can grow out of the worldly desire to be a lord is to understand and follow the Son of God on His incarnational journey into this world, and eventually to the humiliation of the cross. Of course, no person on earth can do this. Therefore, one should be cautious about be a lord. The Son of God lowered Himself for us. If we would follow His example—having the mind of Christ—then we must lower ourselves as much as possible for others. If we reverse this order by exalting ourselves, then we have become a wolf.

The church of those who follow Jesus must never be used as an opportunity for self-promotion or to fulfill our personal desires to rule over other people.

- 17.** In the first century, who specifically warned of “wolves” coming in among the flock of God?
 (A) Jude, (B) Paul, (C) Timothy, (D) Matthew
- 18.** Whom did John identify as loving to be first among the disciples?
 (A) Diotrefes, (B) Peter, (C) Aristarchus, (D) Jude

I. In The Presence Of Opportunists

In the first century, Diotrefes took advantage of some love-responsive disciples to whom John wrote in his latter years. Just as then, there are Diotrefes-minded people today who are out there looking around for a body of humble loving disciples that they can likewise invade and dominate. For this reason, Paul prepared the leaders of the church in Ephesus, as well as ourselves, with the following warning:



*I know this, that after my departure grievous **wolves will enter in among you, not sparing the flock.** Also from your own selves will men arise, speaking perverse things, **to draw away the disciples after themselves.** Therefore, **watch** (At 20:29-31).*

Unfortunately, we have often misunderstood what Paul meant in this warning. We have commonly taught that he was discussing false teachers; those who would teach something contrary to the truth. Indeed, the belief and behavior of wolves is contrary to gospel behavior. This thought is indeed inherent in the warning, but such an exclusive interpretation misses the main point of why Paul gave the warning. The key to understanding that to which Paul was specifically referring is in the phrase, “**to draw away the disciples after themselves.**”

Wolves can teach the truth of the gospel. But

they are not living the gospel by the very fact that they are wolves. This is the thrust of what Paul warned the elders of Ephesus. From among themselves lords (wolves) would arise in order to lead the sheep away after themselves. This is what lords do. Paul's focus, therefore, was on those who had no idea of how to allow the mind of the Son of God to be in them, and thus behave accordingly. They are wolves, therefore, and thus lords who would arise to produce a following; they would steal the sheep of Jesus through their desire to rule and dominate. This is why Paul labeled these wolves as "grievous."

Since the church is a fellowship of innocent and loving sheep, then it is certain that God intended that those who shepherd the sheep should be on guard for those who would take advantage of the sheep.

19. T or F: Wolves seek to lead people away after Jesus.

20. T or F: Since the sheep of God responded to His love for them, then we could correctly assume that those who are seeking a following, will deceived the sheep to follow them.

J. Gospel-Based Protection

We must also consider another understanding of Paul's preceding warning in reference to the truth of the gospel. If a gospel preacher goes to a religious group that has long forgotten the truth of the gospel, or is even ignorant of the gospel, then he is not drawing away disciples after himself by preaching the gospel. On the contrary, when Paul went from synagogue to synagogue, he preached the gospel (See At 17:1,2). People responded to the gospel that Paul preached, not to the person of Paul. He did not, therefore, draw away the people after himself. The people were drawn away to Jesus. But in reference to wolves, they draw away disciples after themselves. A wolf is always made known by that, that is to whom he seeks to draw the sheep.

We must not misunderstand this very important point. We must know that lords draw away people of faith by dominating their consciences with the

bondage of religious traditions and ceremonies. This is how the scribes and Pharisees behaved during the ministry of Jesus.

In contrast to the scribes and Pharisees, those who are preaching the gospel are drawing people away from such religiosity in order that the people obey and follow the Son of God. Jesus said something about this during His earthly ministry: *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Me”* (Jn 12:32). The drawing power of the “lifted up” Son of God is that He brings freedom from the bondage of sin and religion (See Gl 5:1).

In view of the fact that there are wolves out there in the religious world drawing away sincere disciples after themselves is enough for us to take seriously the incarnational discipleship that Jesus lived and left with us in order that we be drawn to Him. Therefore, we must not be unaware of the fact that there are wolves standing at “church house doors,” seeking to draw people away after themselves. But these lords must never forget that when they draw people away after themselves, they are drawing people of faith away from the one Lord to whom we must give our total allegiance. Wolves always stand in competition with King Jesus.

Contrary to the desires of those who seek to draw away the sheep after themselves, those who preach the gospel seek to draw away people out of the world in order to direct them to the Chief Shepherd.

- 21. T or F:** Those who preach the gospel are drawing away people from religion in order to follow Jesus.
- 22. T or F:** Lords seek to dominate the people by bringing them into the bondage of established religious ceremonies and traditions.

K. Wolves Turning On Themselves

Since the time Paul warned the Ephesian elders, there have always been wolves roaming around seeking an opportunity to capture innocent sheep. But according to Peter, **we must not become a wolf in order to keep the wolves (lords) out of**

the flock of God (See 1 Pt 5:2,3). On the contrary, we must live after the mind of Christ. The power to keep the lords out is to understand fully the nature of the servanthood thinking that was taught and lived by Jesus, and refined by the instruction letters that were written by the Holy Spirit.

Because of the possible presence of wolves (lords), we must caution ourselves, as well as those we would seek to lead, to refrain from being lords of the flock. It is certainly easy to keep the wolves out by becoming lords ourselves over the flock. But this is not a gospel response to the presence of wolves, nor is such behavior living the mind of Christ. Before even considering oneself as a spiritual leader of the flock, **he must first make his way to the foot of the cross**. It is there that one discovers the significance of the power of leading with the mind of Christ who submitted to the needs of the people. It is in this manner that leaders lead in order to protect the sheep. If we become a wolf in order to keep other wolves away from the flock, then chaotic debate rages. Each seemingly autonomous pack of wolves thinks they are the “saviors” of the church, when in reality it is always the innocent sheep who suffer when two wolf packs engage.

If we are incarnational in our own behavior, then it will be easy to find and identify others who are also at the foot of the cross. **Incarnational leaders live with the blessing of the continual flow of blood from the cross of Jesus on their attitudes**. Therefore, those who would be pompous wolves among us should be careful about finding some robe to dress themselves before an audience, and thus set themselves apart from or exalt themselves over the sheep. In contrast to such behavior, incarnational leaders lead with the burden of the needs of the people on their backs. It is this example that the sheep crave to follow. Since the sheep struggle to live the gospel of Christ, it is only natural for them to seek out those who give a living example of the mind of Christ.

If one becomes a lord in order to keep lords out of the flock, then he will inevitably be in constant struggles against other supposed lords who likewise seek to be lords of the flock.

- 23. T or F:** It is right to become a lord in order to keep lords from taking away the sheep after themselves.
- 24. T or F:** The only way to keep lords from stealing the sheep of God is to continually preach the gospel mind of the Son of God.

L. The Incarnational Leader

The flock must be led by the example of incarnational behavior (See 1 Pt 5:3). This involves incarnational repentance that began in our lives before we come forth from the waters of baptism. It took Saul (Paul) **three days** to go through the process of incarnational repentance before he responded to the plea to arise and be baptized for remission of his sins (See At 9:1-19; 22:16). And after his baptism, it took him at least **five years** before he was ready to lead new disciples in wolf protection. It is for this reason that when the church designates leaders, they must follow the mandate of the Holy Spirit: **“Lay hands hastily on no man”** (1 Tm 5:22).

Unfortunately, lordship leaders are so common among many religious groups today that these leaders find it quite difficult to think and behave outside the paradigm of lording over a particular church or religious organization. However, in such a religious environment today, we do not blame entirely the leaders themselves. The religious groups among which some labor as leaders often pressure the leaders into being the center of reference for all work and decisions. This is especially a problem in smaller churches. Since leaders are often very energetic people who seek to serve the Lord with all their hearts, the local members sometimes become somewhat indifferent, if not lazy. As a result, the members lay back and urge the preacher on to do everything, and thus, make decisions about everything. In this way, unfortunately, local churches

often push their preachers into being lords over the flock.

Nevertheless, taking advantage of such situations as leaders is often based squarely on our lack of understanding of the incarnate Son of God. **Those who understand the gospel journey of the Son of God are cautious about becoming lords over the flock**, even though the members do little to take ownership of their responsibility to work together as an organic body under the lordship of Jesus.

Add to the preceding scenario the fact that we now live in a religious world of corporate nonprofit religious organizations, with controlling presidents, chairmen, and governing bodies of board members. This system of religious function seems to be the norm of the day in many places of the world in order to carry out the mission that should be the business of the church as a whole. Since there is rank and file organization within these religious corporate nonprofit bodies that are controlled by government laws, then we can assume that the same organizational thinking can sometimes find its way into the organic function of the body of Christ.

But in reference to leadership in the church, we would conclude that corporate organizationalism is foreign to the very definition of the incarnational leadership by which the church is to be led. The church is not a government legal organization that is controlled by presidents, chairmen and government laws. **It is an organic body that functions directly under the authority of King Jesus** (See Mt 28:18). On earth, the members follow those who have given themselves as examples of humble service just as the Son of God gave Himself in service to us in reference to our sin problem. **Leadership among the disciples, therefore, is by the example of sacrificial servanthood, just as Jesus left us an example of leaving ourselves in order to serve others** (See 1 Pt 5:3). It is in this way that the shepherds of the flock of God live an example for the sheep to follow.

It is a contradiction in thinking to believe that one can become a lord of the flock of those who have humbly responded to the incarnate Son of God.

- 25. T or F:** It is wise to designate one as a leader in the church as soon as they come forth from the waters of baptism.
- 26. T or F:** The fact that members do not assume leadership in their own lives justifies lords to arise in order to make decisions for the body.
- 27. T or F:** Under the authority of King Jesus, leadership among the disciples must be after the example of the Son of God who humbled Himself for us.

M. The “Hidden Pharisee”

A lordship leader often seeks to be somebody important in his religious behavior in reference to others. Because we all have a desire to be recognized, maybe there is a little Pharisee hidden within each of us that we fail to recognize, and subsequently, we fail to bury in the tomb of water from which we came in baptism. Regardless, if we finally discover this hidden Pharisee in our spiritual character after the water, then it is time to crucify him (See GI 2:20).

And then, the case may be that in our obedience to the gospel, we simply succumbed to a legal obedience of law **without experiencing a truly repentant response to the incarnate Son of God** with whom we assigned our allegiance. **The curse of legalism is that we outwardly obey law, while at the same time we leave our hearts unchanged, that is, unchecked by the gospel.**

When it comes to incarnational living, we must certainly obey the commandments. But just as important is our response to the heart of God that was revealed through the incarnate Son of God. Obedience to law with an unrepentant heart is the definition of hypocrisy. Therefore, we must dig out of our souls the “little Pharisee” who is in us, and crucify him on a cross.

It is in response to the heart of God that was revealed through His Son that our hearts and behavior are transformed. Obedience to law, “getting bap-

tized,” may bring a sense of accomplishment, but baptism must be more than obedience to legal commands. Baptism is an outward immersion to reveal an inward cleansing of our souls by the incarnate blood of Jesus.

Unfortunately, we do not hear enough lessons preached or taught today on the subject of the gospel of the incarnation. If the subject were preached and taught regularly, **the people would be better prepared to be sacrificial slaves of Jesus who live with characters that are continuously checked by the gospel.** Not only would they prevent themselves from becoming a wolf, they would also be better prepared to check for possible wolves in our midst. **We must never forget that wolves flee from crosses.**

The closer one draws to the heart of God, the less likely he will have any desires to lord over those to whom He poured out His heart through His Son.

- 28. T or F:** Those who view baptism as simply an obedience to law often fail to recognize that repentance must involve a response to the incarnate Son of God.
- 29. T or F:** Gospel obedient people continually check their lives by the incarnation of the Son of God.
- 30. T or F:** The cross of the incarnate Son of God draws those who would be lords among the flock.



CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

1. Why would a true God not be confined to the limits of our love?
2. On the basis of our love for one another, why do we conclude that a God of love must exist?
3. If an eternal God of love exists, why it is necessary that we also exist?
4. Why was it necessary for God to intervene in the affairs of those whom He created?
5. Why would God be fiendish if we did not have the possibility and opportunity to exist with Him in eternity?
6. Other than acting on the basis of His own love for us, what other reason moved God to create?
7. Why was the incarnation of the Creator necessary?
8. Why could God's love for us be revealed only in an incarnational sacrifice?
9. Why was the incarnational offering of the cross necessary in view of the fact that God is love?

10. If the connection of the cross between created and Creator, why would it be difficult to believe in a Creator of all things?
11. Why does the rise wolves among the sheep of God indicate that the sheep themselves are falling away to religion?

ABREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**

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