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GET BEHIND ME, SATAN

Shortly after the apostle Simon Peter made his great confession to Jesus, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:13-20, esp. v. 18), the gospel account next records this interesting — even perplexing — exchange between Master and disciple:

“From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’” (Matthew 16:21-23)

At first reading, Jesus’ words

seem a little harsh, do they not? After all, Peter loved and revered Jesus — he had plainly confessed his faith in Jesus as the Christ. Jesus was Peter’s Lord, his Master, his beloved Teacher, and his dear Friend. The very idea that someone would harm Jesus, much less kill Him, was unthinkable to Peter. He was willing to take up arms (John 18:10) and even sacrifice his own life (Matthew 26:35) to prevent any aggression against the Son of God. Most of us would be delighted to have someone as concerned for our welfare. Why then does Jesus upbraid Peter so sharply, calling him “an offense,” even referring to the apostle metaphorically as “Satan”?

Look carefully at the last part of Jesus’ rebuke: *“You are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.”* Jesus did not deny Peter’s love for

Him, but He recognized that love was, to a certain degree, a selfish one. By now Peter should have understood, having listened to the teaching of Jesus for three years, that God's plan and purpose in sending His Son required His death as a sacrifice for the sins of others. Even if that fact were not entirely clear to the apostle, something else should have been — if the Lord said something had to be, then it had to be. There could be no room for argument, compromise, or second-guessing.

Peter believed in Jesus' mission, but he wanted to see that mission accomplished on terms suitable to him. He desired salvation, but he didn't want Jesus to suffer and die to make it possible — even if God said it was necessary. Peter's motivation — preserving the life of one he loved — would seem noble to our eyes. But Jesus wanted him to understand that no motive is noble if it conflicts with the plan of God.

In the religious world today, we see many who are mindful of the things of men rather than of God. Their motives often appear worthwhile. They don't want anyone to be lost, so they tell others their sins are forgiven and their souls saved even when they have not obeyed God's commands of repentance and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Peter 3:21). They want

people to be happy, so they offer them worldly diversions, even though these things are not according to God's will (Colossians 2:18-23). They want people to attend church services, so they make worship attractive spectacle instead of humble obeisance to the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:40; Colossians 3:16-17). They don't want to offend anyone, so they permit women to lead in worship despite God's prohibitions (1 Corinthians 14:34-38; 1 Timothy 2:11-12) and justify those who unrepentantly engage in immorality (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21).

Jesus' words to Peter prove that even the most sincere individual can be sincerely wrong, when that sincerity is not fully subject to God's will. Peter's love for Jesus could not be permitted to supplant the Father's righteous plan for mankind's salvation. We would be wise to learn from Peter's error, and remember that God's work can only be done God's way (Matthew 7:21-23), lest He say, *"Get behind Me, Satan!"*
- Michael Rankins

GROWING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME, LITERALLY. No matter how much we learn and are enriched by what we know, God's greatness offers still more. Our

whole lifetime should be spent seeking these greater things. Coming to know our Creator more richly is, in a positive sense, life's greatest challenge. It is also our greatest joy and our greatest reward. This is what makes life worth living.

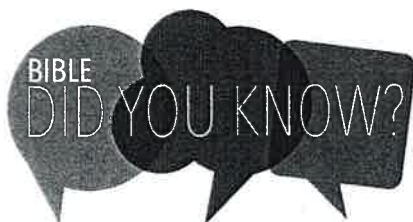
A. W. Pink observed that most Christians "expect little from God, ask little, and therefore receive little and are content with little." If this is a problem today, it is by no means a new problem. The writer of Hebrews found it necessary to exhort his readers with these words: "Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food" (Hebrews 5:12). Too few of God's people have ever grown as they should "in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Arrested development is often the norm.

We would surely be shocked if we could see how wide the gap really is between what God knows Himself to be and what we know Him to be. But there is also quite a gap between what we know God to be and what we COULD know Him to be. We should be sorrowful when we reflect on our complacency. "God's treasure is like an infinite ocean, and yet a little wave of emotion, passing with the moment, is enough for many" (Brother Lawrence). Our desire to know our Heavenly

Father is all too small.

Perhaps it is daunting to think of the magnitude of such a thing as coming to know God. We may shrink from the very thought. But looking at it from another point of view, what could we undertake that would hold more promise? Is this not the greatest adventure, the ultimate undertaking in this otherwise disappointing world? How bracing to climb a little way up the slope and feel the air freshen, to climb even further and catch a thrilling glimpse of the distant summit! The finest qualities of our created nature are called forth when we reach upward, always upward. — Gary Henry

"When I am at my best the Word still towers high above me"
(Bernard of Clairvaux).



Amos was a simple farmer who God used to prophecy judgment and warning against God's people. "The words of Amos, who was among the shepherders from Tekoah, which he envisioned in visions concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah "

People, Places, and Things of the **BIBLE**



The Ophel Treasure

Dr. Eilat Mazar's excavation at the Ophel in Jerusalem was one of the most high-profile investigations in the field of Biblical archaeology. The area between the City of David and the Temple Mount has been known as the Ophel (meaning "a high place to climb to") since the First Temple period. In the Bible, King Jotham "did much building on the wall of the Ophel" (11 Chronicles 27:3) in the mid-8th century B.C.E., and the site's history stretches back well before this construction. In her book *Discovering the Solomonic Wall in Jerusalem*, Mazar recounts the storied excavation history of the site, which sits at the heart of ancient Jerusalem. Ophel investigators include Captain Charles Warren, Dame Kathleen Kenyon and (Eilat Mazar's grandfather) Benjamin Mazar, yet none of these esteemed predecessors uncovered a cache as striking as the one found by Eilat Mazar during the 2013 field season.

The Ophel excavation team came across an archaeologist's dream: a gold cache. A gold medallion stands out as the prize find: the medallion (pictured above) features a menorah, *shofar* (ram's horn) and a Torah scroll, three sacred and iconic Jewish emblems. Alongside the elegantly etched medallion, the team uncovered 36 gold coins and gold and silver jewelry. In a post issued by The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mazar says, "We have been making significant finds from the First Temple Period in this area, a much earlier time in Jerusalem's history, so discovering a golden seven-branched Menorah from the seventh century C.E. at the foot of the Temple Mount was a complete surprise." Discovered in a Byzantine structure originally constructed in the sixth century C.E., Mazar believes that the hoard was hidden during the Persian conquest of Jerusalem in 614, a short-lived but violent conquest. The cache is only the third collection of gold coins ever discovered in Jerusalem.

