

MANAGING GOD

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Faith B.C., Murray, KY, June 29, 2006

Harmony M.B.C, April 2, 2017

Romans 9:15-23

15 For he (God) saith to Moses, **I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.**

16 So then *it is* **not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.**

17 For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.

18 Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.

19 Thou wilt say then unto me, **Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?**

20 Nay but, **O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? {repliest...: or, answerest again, or, disputest with God?}**

21 Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?

22 *What* if God, willing to shew *his* wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted (katartizw katartizo *kat-ar-tid'-zo* = to frame or prepare) to destruction: **{fitted: or, made up}**

23 **And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,**

Job 40:2 “ Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him*? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.”

Rom. 1:22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,

Rom. 1:23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

1Cor. 2:16: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?”

God has imbued mankind with a wonderful set of faculties. Only man can look up at the stars and reason that those are not just specks of light up there. Man can comprehend something of the magnitude of the universe out there, or he can study the microscopic universe...he can look at the DNA signature of a laboratory mouse and of himself. He can

delve into the body of a fellow man, remove his heart, look it over, do some repairs, keep the patient alive while doing all this, put the heart back in, start the heart back to beating, sew him up and in a few weeks send him on his way. MAN IS SMART! He sends ships nosing around in space, walks on the moon, schemes ways to take pictures of what those ships see in places he cannot yet figure out how to go, send those pictures hundreds of thousands of miles back to earth. MAN IS BRILLIANT! He has figured out that there are some signals emanating from space, heat and light signatures from a million planets and stars. He has begun to interpret these readings into a rational hypothesis (based on his vast intellectual abilities) about how the universe was, is, and will be some day. MAN IS REALLY COMING ALONG IN THE EFFORT TO COMPREHEND SOME REAL KNOWLEDGE! And with all this forward progress in gaining knowledge, man has begun to think himself the ultimate brain, the epitome of reasoning creatures...the only reasoning creature, master of the universe. .

But nothing is new in this attitude of humans. When we look at the history of man, he has always been inquisitive and often presumptuous. From the tower of Babel to the hill of Golgotha and beyond man has made assumptions about God which were based on his limited view.

I. Humans Try to Manage God Concerning His Person or Character

- ❖ Among men there is Allah, Buddha, Brahman, Kami (gods of the Shinto religion) the Sun god, the Moon god, Nature, the god or goddess of light, darkness, war, love, plenty, and thousands of other manifestations of god types
 - Hindu religion has 15 major deities
 - Australian aborigines recognize at least 77 gods,
 - Chinese have at least 157 gods and an additional 317 different names for these gods
 - Celtic races had 300 different names for their gods and goddesses
 - GodChecker.com, a website that posts a list of all known and reported deities ever worshiped in the world, lists over 1,700 gods. Among all these we find the widest diversity of personalities that we could possibly imagine. The amazing fact about almost all these gods is that they pretty much reflect the culture of the people who worship them. The point is, mankind is, and has been, in the business of customizing his god to fit the human way of thinking and acting. This is **managing the personality and identity of God.**
- ❖ **Isaiah 40:** (God contends with man about this attempt to manage the persona of the most High)
 - 18 To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?
 - 19 The workman melteth a graven image, and the goldsmith spreadeth it over with gold, and casteth silver chains.
 - 20 He that *is* so impoverished that he hath no oblation chooseth a tree *that* will not rot; he seeketh unto him a cunning workman to prepare a graven image, *that* shall not be moved.

- ❖ Again he contends with man in **Isaiah 46**:
 - 5 To whom will ye liken me, and make *me* equal, and compare me, that we may be like?
 - 6 They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, *and* hire a goldsmith; and he **maketh it a god**: they fall down, yea, they worship.
 - 7 They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, *one* shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble.
 - 8 Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring *it* again to mind, O ye transgressors.
- ❖ Let's see some fairly contemporary God managers trying to manage the persona of God (**John 7: 25-27, 42, 52**)
 - John 7:25 Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?
 - John 7:26 But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?
 - John 7:27 Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.
 - John 7:41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?
 - John 7:42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?
- ❖ Is there any managing of the personality of God among those who profess to follow Jehovah and believe in His Son Jesus Christ? The answer is "YES." A quick study of how various religious denominations portray God or Christ will quickly reveal that (so-called) Christian religions are actively managing the image of God's character or personality. Here are some examples:
 - Example: do you know any Christians who believe that God is a God of love only and that there is no wrath or hatred with Him? (Managing the personality of God)
 - God hates disgusting immorality; especially idolatry - **Deut. 12:30-31**
 - God hates iniquity and the workers of iniquity: **Hebrews 1:9 and Psalms 5:5**
The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: **thou hatest all workers of iniquity.**
 - God hates the wicked and those who love violence: **Psalms 11:5** The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.
 - God hates empty ceremonialism in religion: **Amos 5:21 and Isaiah 1:14** Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear *them*.
 - He hates robbery: **Isaiah 61:8**
 - He hated Esau: **Malachi 1:3 and Romans 9:13**
- ❖ It is very true that God is love; but God is also judgment, wrath and exercises hate; (Paul said in **2Cor. 5:11** " Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...." Why did he say that?)

- ❖ Example 2: Do you know any religious groups that call themselves Christian who portray Jesus Christ as a really sincere guy who badly wants people to come to Him and believe in Him, but who doesn't really have any power to make it happen unless the person He is trying to win decides to give Him a chance? There's a pop-Christian song out there in which the chorus has this line in it, "Give Jesus a chance to take hold of your life"
 - Folks, scripture tells us that "all power" is given to Jesus Christ "in heaven and in earth" so, we should be able to figure out that He has power to overpower the will of a human being and make Himself known to that person through saving power.
 - Jesus Christ invites people to come to Him, but men in their natural state will not come to Him of their own volition. It is He alone who gives them the capacity to believe, trust Him as Savior, and come to Him.
 - **John 6:37** "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;"
 - It is not somebody deciding to give Jesus a chance that makes salvation happen.
 - People are trying to manage Jesus Christ, our God, when they teach that He is waiting on the sidelines for them to make a decision to let Him be their Savior.
- ❖ When we customize the personality of God so that in our minds we have Him shaped in ways not scriptural, we are attempting to manage Him concerning His image, His identity, and His personality.

April 9, 2017 – Read **Rom. 1:22-23** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

Read **1Cor. 2:16**: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?"

Last week we began this message on Managing God, and in our introduction we noted that the Lord made the human race an intelligent creature and this very intelligence they have gets in the way of believing in God as He really is. We then looked at the fact that humans are famous for inventing gods in their own image or in the image they need him to be in to suit their philosophy or viewpoint about what deities are supposed to be like. We looked at the idea of people attempting to manage the personality or character of the God and when they do, they devise old wive's tales about God such as the fable that God loves everything and everybody and His personality is one of total hospitality to all of life. We used scripture to show that this was a lie created by people who try to manage God.

As we looked at more aspects of people trying to manage the persona and character of God, we noted that such inventors of fairy tales about the Lord have invented yet another more preposterous fable about Him that says God is sitting around in heaven, wringing His hands as He pleads with men to accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and invite Him into their hearts. In this fable, Jesus Christ is standing around totally dependent on humans waiting for them to make a decision to allow Him to be their Savior and is helpless to do anything about saving them unless they give Him permission to do so.

In both of these God-managing expeditions that we find people involved in, I reminded us that such fantasies are so absolutely contrary to and opposite from the biblical God and Christ who have ALL power, and ALL prerogative, and ALL omnipotence that the very fairy tales themselves are ridiculous when measured by the word of God.

Remind the congregation that the bible speaks of God this way: **Isa. 46:9** Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me,

Isa 46:10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Also, remind them that in **Mat. 28:18** Jesus said, “**All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**”

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Now, today, we want to look at the second point about Managing God and point out that:

II. Humans Try to Manage God Concerning what He Will Do Regarding The Eternal Destiny of His Creatures

- ❖ Some try to manage God’s handling of eternal destiny by creating a plan to bypass Him altogether and be safe after death by reincarnating as something or someone else, until, after multiple reincarnations they become perfected and even become gods.
 - **Hebrews 9:27** **And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:**
 - There are 201 bible references to the word died and in almost all of these they reference the death of some human and that human never came on the scene on earth again.
- ❖ Some try to manage God’s handling of eternal destiny by declaring that there is no hereafter...that death is annihilation.
 - **Psalms 139: 7** **Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? 8** **If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. 9** **If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; 10** **Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.**
 - **Jeremiah 23-24: *Am* I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off? 24** **Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD...**
- ❖ See **Luke 16:20-26** (Lazarus and the rich man)

MANAGING GOD - PART 3 INTRODUCTION

Harmony M.B.C., April 16, 2007 (Morning)

Robert P. Myers

Read:

Job 40:2 “ Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct *him*? he that reproveth God, let him answer it.”

1Cor 2:16: “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?”

Last Sunday we looked at the subject of Managing God. In the morning and evening messages we looked at various aspects of this subject. I pointed out how brilliant God has made man and also remarked that man has historically and currently been very presumptuous about all this intelligence. Humans have arrogantly assumed that they are the master intelligence of the universe and have from very early in their history begun to customize their view of God to fit their own perception of what God should be like. We noted that we as a race have concocted a plethora of gods with various characteristics and various personality traits and powers and I used that fact to make the claim that humankind attempts to manage God concerning His person and character. I pointed out last week that godchecker.com, a website that posts a list of all known and reported deities ever worshiped lists over 1,700 gods among the various civilizations and cultures of mankind. I also noted that these gods pretty much reflect the characteristics of the culture to which they belonged. I went on to mention that God contends with mankind about this idolatry in Isaiah 40 & 46, and that He plainly condemns it.

Sunday night we looked at the fact that humans try to manage God concerning what He will do regarding the eternal destiny of His creatures. We looked at the fact that cultures everywhere conjure up all kinds of teaching about the afterlife in an attempt to develop doctrines which fit with their perception of how they want the hereafter to be...teachings from reincarnation to annihilation are forwarded by cultures in an attempt to manage Gods determination about the destiny for mankind. But I reminded us all that God has clearly pointed out that it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment. I pointed out that all humans would be resurrected to stand before God, and based on what they did with Jesus Christ, so their fate would be determined.

This brings us to the third reality of how men try to manage God: that is (go to your outline point # 3).

III. Humans Try to Manage God Concerning Religion and Worship

❖ There are **17 major religious “branches”** classified as “**Christian.**” Of these there are thousands of subgroups. David B. Barrett, an Anglican priest who has spent 40 years studying religion and religious groups compiled a 1,699 page book on the subject of religions, the World Christian Encyclopedia of 2001, and in it he reports that there are **33,830 “Christian” denominations worldwide.**

- ❖ Why do you suppose that is? (We could launch out into the deep on this, but we want to be as brief as possible, so....). It started centuries ago in the Lord's churches and it goes something like this:
 - **1 John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. (When men feel compelled to manage religion and worship for God they will not put up with the holy assembly of God's people...they will go out and form their own church, pursue their own type of religion, practice their own type of worship...all in the name of the Lord. Are they not trying to manage God regarding religion and worship?)
 - We want to remember that children of God have certain earmarks by which you may know them. Look at this earmark spoken by Christ in **John 8:47**: **He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear *them* not, because ye are not of God.**
 - That is why Paul could make the plea he did in **1Cor. 1:10-13** and expect that it would be heard and practiced with varying degrees of success. Listen to what he wrote:
 - **I Cor. 1:10-13**: Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. {divisions: Gr. schisms} **11** For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. **12** Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. **13** Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?
 - **Ephesians 4:5** One Lord, one faith, one baptism,
- ❖ We can find scripture that points out one particularly great error followed by humans which defines one common way that folks try to manage God regarding their obedience and service to Him:
 - See **Matthew 15:4-9**: Notice Jesus Christ's case against them:
 - They customize Gods commandments to fit their situational ethics and morality - vv. 5-6
 - They have made the commandments of God of no effect - v. 6
 - They substitute tradition for the commandments of God - v. 6
 - While giving lip service only to Him (v. 8) they teach the doctrines of men as part of their religious program
- ❖ The fact of humans attempting to manage God concerning religion brings us naturally to the next consideration:

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IV. Humans Try to Manage the Lord Regarding His Church

- ❖ Through the centuries, many humans have tried to manage the Lord's churches regarding doctrine, policy, and conduct. It is proper and scriptural that the Lord provide spiritual leaders for a church, but there is a difference between spiritual leaders who follow the Lord's guidance, and men who imagine that they have an inherent and personal wisdom and "smart" that gives them a right to manage what God will do with a church.
- ❖ Jesus Christ established the rules for how His churches will be governed, what doctrines they shall uphold, what practices they shall keep, what policies they shall have. The Holy Spirit has been commissioned to guide His churches and the bible is their manual of instructions.
- ❖ Through the centuries, individuals and groups have sought to manage the church for God. They have sought to sit as rulers and even dictators.
 - **3 John v 9-10 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.**
 - To presume that one knows what is best for a church apart from the guidance of the Holy Spirit and independent of the opinion or approval of the body of baptized believers is to attempt to manage the Lord with respect to His church. The Lord does not need an assistant manager to help manage one of His churches. What is required are stewards whose hearts are set on obedience to His will and are ready to recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit in the direction determined by Jesus Christ, Head of the church.
 - Note again the first phrase of John's letter here.
 - Note also that almost every one of the epistles in the bible are addressed to churches.
 - Note **Revelation chapter 1, v. 4**. "John **to the seven churches** which are in Asia (not the district manager, not the church manager, not even the pastor; certainly not the board of deacons, not the ecumenical council, not the district board,);
 - note now **verses 10-11**: (John says) " I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and **send *it* unto the seven churches** which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.
- ❖ Make a point out of the fact that there is a class of professed Christians who think it their bound duty to form opinions about how God is running a church and to **judge churches based on how they think a church ought to be and how it ought to be run**. They are managing God regarding the purpose and function of a local visible body of Christ.

V. Humans Try to Manage God Concerning His Intent and Purpose for Their Lives; This is especially true regarding their personal Responsibilities, and the unfolding of Experiences in Their Lives

❖ Their Responsibilities

- Let me say right here at the start of this point that any time a human being cops out on his or her responsibility to be a good example of what it is supposed to mean to be a Christian, they are, in a sense attempting to manage God concerning those responsibilities.
- Secondly, while I intend to give some examples of people managing God as it relates to responsibilities and their experiences, I also want to say here that every time a lost person pursues goals and objectives without consulting God about what their life is supposed to be and what they are supposed to do, they are attempting to manage God.
- First example of folks trying to manage God's management of them:
 - **Luke 19: 13-23 - v. 15:** And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, **Occupy** (pragmateuomai pragmateuomai *prag-mat-yoo'-om-ah-ee* = to carry on the business of a banker or a trader...verse 15 supports that the word implicitly meant this idea) till I come.
- In the narration that follows (vv. 16-19) each servant recounts his behavior and in that review they explain what they earned. But...look at the last servant's answer...
 - **20** And another came, saying, Lord, behold, *here is* thy pound, **which I have kept laid up in a napkin:**
21 For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.
- And look at the Lord's answer:
 - **22** And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, *thou* wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:
23 Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?
- Second example of folks trying to manage God's management of them:
Acts 10:9-14: On the morrow, as they went on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour: And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, **Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.** And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.
- Lesson: Even well intentioned believers are tempted to try to manage God

concerning His purposes.

- Third example: See **Mat 17:1-4** And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart. 2 And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. 3 And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4 Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, **let us make here** three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
- If we have difficulty understanding how this is an example of believers attempting to manage God, think of this verse from that account: **Mat. 17:5** While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
- Fourth example: See **Mat 20:20-23** Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him. 21 And he said unto her, **What wilt thou?** She saith unto him, **Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left,** in thy kingdom. 22 But Jesus answered and said, **Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** They say unto him, We are able. 23 And he saith unto them, **Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but *it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.***
- The evidence of God-management here related to responsibilities is in that statement by Jesus in v. 23. They were responsible to follow Christ regardless whether or not they were honored and exalted for it (by being placed alongside Christ).

❖ **People Managing God Regarding The Experiences in Their Lives:**

- **II Kings 5: 1-12** (Naaman, leprosy, and washing) see vv. 10-12.
 - **John 11: 20-21, 30-32** (Martha and Mary both presume to manage Christ's doings and His time)
 - **Genesis 19: 17-20** And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said, Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. 18 And Lot said unto them, Oh, not so, my Lord: 19 Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy, which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life; and I cannot escape to the mountain, lest some evil take me, and I die: 20 Behold now, this city *is* near to flee unto, and it *is* a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (*is it not a little one?*) and my soul shall live.
- ❖ What about **unbelievers** trying to manage God regarding experiences in their lives?"
- How many times have you heard unregenerate people say, "I told the Lord...etc. etc. when talking about cleaning up their act as a swap for getting out of a jam.
 - One of the most classic ones is seen in the account of Simon the sorcerer in **Acts 8:19** (Simon is trying to buy power to convey the Holy Spirit on people. He goes to

the apostles and offers money, “Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.”

VI. What may we learn from all of this effort by men to manage God?

- ❖ It is not man’s place to manage God, but rather to submit to management by the Lord
 - **Eze. 18:4** Behold, all souls are mine;
 - **Psa. 24:1 A Psalm of David.** The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and **they that dwell therein.**
 - See **1 Cor. 3:5-10** and note that a church and the people of God are God’s husbandry (cultivated field), and God’s building (ongoing construction project).
- ❖ Summarize:
 - Attempting to manage God’s personality, character and attributes leads to idolatry
 - Attempting to manage God’s business is born of presumption
 - Attempting to manage God generally leads to dependence on false assumptions
 - Attempting to manage God’s truths leads to false doctrine
 - Attempting to manage God’s religion and spiritual leadership leads to reprobate religions
 - Attempting to manage God opens the door to every evil work