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With many people wondering what to believe these days, there are some good questions we can ask ourselves that will help to discern what is true and what is false, enabling us to find heavenly answers, just as the Bereans did.

"The Bereans were eager to hear what Paul and Silas said and studied the Scriptures every day to find out if these things were true, to confirm Paul's teaching was in line with Scripture." (Acts 17:11).

Most of us would agree that our opinions and thoughts on matters don't count. We are experts at creating God in our own image and concluding that He endorses whatever we endorse. And yet the Bible tells us that His ways and thoughts are NOT like ours ([Is. 55:8,9](#)), and we see this truth proven again and again in our own experience, and in the history of Israel.

We would also agree that the Scriptures are a *trusted source of truth* and we cannot argue with what is written there. It is the only *objective* source we have. Anyone can say that God told them something, however, that is *subjective*: subject to that person's hearing, interpretation, opinions, attitude, etc. and such things are often proven to be faulty or false. In other words, what someone believes or says, can't always be trusted. So the Bible is the source we're going to for answers.

"There's nothing like the written Word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us." (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Please read the Scriptures contained in this message slowly and carefully, even if you are familiar with the words, asking God to reveal His Truth, Life and Way. We need to pay close attention to what we see in the Word, being honest with ourselves:

"Be doers of the Word, and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth. For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his own natural

face in a mirror; for he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like." (James 1:22-24).

We first need to remind ourselves of what was happening in Israel when the New Testament was written. We don't see a nation with compassionate, effective leaders, or righteous, good government, or even a fair and peaceful society. Instead we see a Roman military dictatorship that had invaded Israel, subjugated the people, and were ruling them with an iron hand amid pockets of rebellion. They were tumultuous times. We also see a religion that no longer represented God, with religious leaders full of hypocrisy.

In light of all that:

1. **Did Jesus protest about or ever mention all the baby boys who were killed when He was born?** (*Matt. 2:16*) *We have not one word recorded from Him about the murder of all those innocent babies.*
2. **Did Jesus encourage insurrection or tell His followers to fight on His behalf when He was arrested?** "Put your sword away! Anyone who lives by fighting will die by fighting." "I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart! And the peace I give isn't fragile like the peace the world gives. So don't be troubled or afraid." (*John 18:10-12; 14:27*).
3. **Did Jesus encourage people to stand up and fight for their rights or those of others?** "If anyone wants to follow in My footsteps he must give up all right to himself, take up his cross and follow Me. For the man who wants to save his life will lose it; but the man who loses his life for My sake will find it. For what good is it for a man to gain the whole world at the price of his own soul?" (*Matt. 16:25,26*).
4. **Does Jesus expect His followers to fight the world?** "My kingdom does not belong to this world; if My kingdom belonged to this world, My followers would fight to keep Me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, My kingdom does not belong here!" "Father, I don't ask you to take My followers out of the world, but keep them safe from the evil one. They don't belong to this world, and neither do I. Your word is the truth. So let this truth make them completely yours. I am sending them into the world, just as you sent Me." (*John 18:36, 17:15-18*).
5. **Did Jesus organise a march, or a protest, or even a petition in objection to the murder of His cousin at the hands of the government?** "John's disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus. Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns. When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick." (*Matt. 14:12-14*).
6. **Did Jesus promote or at least allow for anger, violence, or retribution when it was a just, righteous cause?** "You know our ancestors were told, 'Do not murder' and 'A murderer must be brought to trial.' But I promise you if you are angry with someone, you will have to stand trial. If you call someone a fool, you will be taken to court. And if you say that someone is worthless, you will be in danger of the fires of hell. You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, don't fight back against someone who wants to do harm to you. If they hit you on the right cheek, let them hit the other cheek too. You have heard people say, 'Love your neighbors and hate your enemies.' But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad

people. And He sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong. If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for this? Even tax collectors love their friends. And if you are nice only to your friends, you are no better than anyone else. Even the people who don't know God are nice to their friends. But you must always act like your Father in heaven." (*Matt. 5:21,22,38,39,43-48*).

7. **Did Jesus encourage patriotism or nationalism in His country on this earth?** "I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce the fruits of it." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who murders the prophets and stones to death those messengers who are sent to her by God... Listen carefully: your house is being left to you desolate, completely abandoned by God and destitute of His protection!" (*Matt. 21:43, 23:37,38*).
8. **Was Jesus tempted to take over nations and establish His Kingdom in this world?** "Then the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in all their greatness. 'All this I will give You,' the devil said, 'if You kneel down and worship me.' Then Jesus answered, 'Go away, satan! The scripture says, Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him!' Then the devil left Jesus; and angels came and helped Him." "I assure you, most solemnly I tell you, the Son is able to do nothing of Himself (of His own accord); but He is able to do only what He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does is what the Son does in the same way." "I am able to do nothing from Myself [independently, of My own accord—but only as I am taught by God and as I get His orders]." "I do nothing of Myself (of My own accord or on My own authority), but I say exactly what My Father has taught Me." (*Matt. 4:8-11; John 5:19,30 8:28*).
9. **Did Jesus intervene in the politics and the evil government of His day, or rebel and speak out against it?** "You brought this Man before me as one who corrupts and incites the people to rebellion. After examining Him before you, I have found no guilt in this Man regarding the charges which you make against Him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and indeed, He has done nothing to deserve death." (*Luke 23:14,15. We can be sure it would have been pointed out at His trial if He had even dropped a hint about rebelling against the government or spoken against it, but He was found to be innocent*).
10. **Did Jesus try to save His own people from the government?** "We were hoping that it was He Who would redeem and set Israel free. Lord, are You going to free Israel from Rome now and restore us as an independent nation? Are You going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?" Jesus said to them, "The Father is the only one who has the authority to decide dates and times. They are not for you to know." "Jesus, knowing that they meant to come and seize Him that they might make Him king, withdrew again to the hillside by Himself alone." (*Luke 24:21, Acts 1:6,7, John 16:15*).
11. **Did Jesus ever speak about the government and its leaders?** "Tell us what You think: Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" "Then He said, Give to Caesar what belongs to him and give God what belongs to God." (*Luke 20:17,25*).
12. **Did Jesus ever speak about the church of His day and its leaders?** "Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around wearing fancy clothes, and they love for people to greet them with respect in the marketplaces. They love to have the most important seats in the synagogues and at feasts." "They tell you to do things, but they don't do those things themselves. They make strict rules that are hard for people to obey. They try to force others to obey all their rules. But they themselves will not try to follow any of those rules. The only reason they do what they do is for other people to see them... These men love to have the places of

honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues. They love for people to show respect to them in the marketplaces and to call them 'Teacher.' "Hypocrites! You shut people out of the kingdom of heaven. You don't enter yourselves, and you won't allow those who want to enter to do so. Hypocrites! You travel over sea and land to make one convert. But when they've been converted, they become twice the child of hell you are. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs. They look beautiful on the outside. But inside they are full of dead bones and all kinds of filth. In the same way you look righteous to people. But inside you are full of pretense and rebellion and lawlessness." "You are a bunch of evil snakes, so how can you say anything good? Your words show what is in your hearts." (*Luke 20:46; Matt. 23:4-7; 23:13,15,27-28; 12:34 and all of Matthew 23*).

13. **What warnings did Jesus give about the end times?** "Watch out for doomsday deceivers. Many leaders are going to show up with forged identities, claiming I am the Christ, the Messiah. They will deceive a lot of people. Be careful that no one misleads you, deceiving you and leading you into error. For many will come in on the strength of My name [appropriating the name which belongs to Me], saying I am the Christ, and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened or troubled, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in place after place; all this is but the beginning... In the confusion, lying preachers will come forward and deceive a lot of people. The love of the great body of people will grow cold because of the multiplied lawlessness, disobedience and iniquity. Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and bewitching performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better. But I've given you fair warning." "False Christs (messiahs, anointed ones) and false prophets will arise and show signs and work miracles to deceive and lead astray, if possible, even the elect." "Beware of false prophets, who come to you dressed as sheep, but inside they are devouring wolves. You will fully recognize them by their fruits." (*Matt. 24:4-8,11-12,24-25; Mark 13:22; Matt. 7:15,16*).

So, what were the instructions that the messengers of Christ gave?

"Let your hope make you glad. Be patient in time of trouble and never stop praying. Take care of God's needy people and welcome strangers into your home. Ask God to bless everyone who mistreats you. Ask Him to bless them and not to curse them. Don't mistreat someone who has mistreated you. But try to earn the respect of others, and **do your best to live at peace with everyone.** Don't let evil defeat you, but **defeat evil with good.** Every person should **obey the government in power.** No government would exist if it hadn't been established by God. The governments which exist have been put in place by God. Therefore, **whoever resists the government opposes what God has established.** Those who resist will bring punishment on themselves. People who do what is right don't have to be afraid of the government. But people who do what is wrong should be afraid of it. Would you like to live without being afraid of the government? Do what is right, and it will praise you. **The government is God's servant working for your good.** But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid. The government has the right to carry out the death sentence. **It is God's servant, an avenger to execute God's anger on anyone who does what is wrong. Therefore, it is necessary for you to obey,** not only because you're afraid of God's anger but also because of your own conscience. You must also pay your taxes. **The authorities are God's servants,** and it is their duty to take care of these matters. Pay all that you owe, whether it is taxes and fees or respect and honor. Love others as much as you love yourself. No one who loves others will harm them. So **love is all that the Law demands.**" (*Rom. 12:13,14,17,18,21; 13:1-7,10*).

"Remind the people to **respect the government and be law-abiding**, always ready to lend a helping hand. **No insults, no fights**. God's people should be bighearted and courteous. Remind people to **submit to the government and its officials**, to **obey** them, to be ready to do any honorable kind of work, to **slander no one, to avoid quarreling**, to be friendly, and to behave gently towards everyone. Anyone who wants to live all out for Christ is in for a lot of trouble; there's no getting around it. These sleepers also defile the flesh, and despise government, and speak evil of them that are in authority. Unscrupulous con men will continue to exploit the faith. They're as deceived as the people they lead astray. As long as they are out there, things can only get worse. *But don't let it faze you*. Stick with what you learned and believed, sure of the integrity of your teachers." (Titus 3:1,2; Jude 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:12-14).

"For there are many, of whom I have told you before and tell you again now, even with tears, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. These men are heading for utter destruction—their god is their own appetite, their pride is in what they should be ashamed of, and **this world is the limit of their horizon, siding with earthly things** and being of their party. But **we are citizens of Heaven**; our outlook goes beyond this world to the hopeful expectation of the saviour who will come from Heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:18-20).

"Place yourselves under the authority of human governments **to please the Lord**. Obey the emperor. He holds the highest position of authority. Also obey governors. They are people the emperor has sent to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. **God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing what is right**. Live as free people, but don't hide behind your freedom when you do evil. Instead, use your freedom to serve God. Honor everyone. Love your brothers and sisters in the faith. Fear God. Honor the emperor." (1 Pet. 2:13-17).

"God has chosen you and made you His holy people. He loves you. So always do these things: **Show mercy to others; be kind, humble, gentle, and patient**. Do not be angry with each other, but forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, then forgive him. Forgive each other because the Lord forgave you. Do all these things; but most important, love each other. Love is what holds you all together in perfect unity. Let the peace that Christ gives control your thinking. You were all called together in one body to have peace. **Always be thankful. Let the teaching of Christ live in you richly**." (Col. 3:12-16).

"**Test and examine all things carefully**. Hold firmly to that which is good. Keep away from every form of evil." (1 Thess. 5:21,22).

How can we "test all things carefully" today? By asking questions and seeing if the answers line up with what the Bible states. Here are some questions we can ask, please take the time to click on the links and read the verses. Ask yourself:

- Are these people sharing good news, or bad news? ([Phil. 1:27](#))
- Do they exude faith and contentment or fear and distrust? ([1 Tim. 6:4-6](#))
- Do they encourage me to trust God no matter what is going on, or do they sow suspicion and doubt? ([James 1:6-8](#))
- Do their words bring peace, gratefulness and joy, or do they generate division, controversy and discord? ([2 Tim. 2:23,24](#))
- Do their words inspire hope and mercy, or are their messages full of doom and gloom? ([Rom. 5:1-5](#))
- Are they illuminating those around them with Light from above, or are they spreading darkness? ([Matt. 5:16](#))

- Are they attracting and drawing people to Christ, or turning people away from Him and focussing on a person, church, politics, ministry, or movement? ([Acts 20:30](#))
- Are they speaking the truth, or is it hearsay, rumours and lies? ([2 Tim. 4:2-4](#))
- Are their words full of thankfulness, trust and faith, or full of complaints, criticism and grumbling? ([Jude 1:16](#))
- Are they exhibiting Love, or are they exhibiting hatred? ([Matt. 5:43-44](#))
- Is their behaviour honourable, peaceful, and attractive to unbelievers, or is their conduct reprehensible, full of treachery and rebellion? ([1 Pet. 3:8-13](#))
- Are their words full of Life, or do they have the stench of death about them? ([2 Cor. 2:15-17](#))
- Are they evangelistic about Jesus Christ and the reality of Him in their life, or are they evangelistic about their own opinions and things related to this world? ([Matt. 23:15](#))
- Do they have the positive attitude of a victorious overcomer, or a negative, victim mentality, thinking the world is out to get them? ([1 John 4:4](#))
- Do they encourage people to look only to Christ, and to hear only Him, or do they encourage people to look to "prophets" and "signs" and "dreams" and "current events" and "experts" and "social media"? ([Matt. 12:39](#))
- Are they reliable witnesses of what is true, verifiable and factual, or do they repeat rumours, gossip and lies? ([2 Cor. 12:20](#))
- When you listen to them, do you come away with more love, peace, joy and grace, or quite the opposite? ([James 3:16-18](#))
- Are they selfless, considerate and kind in their behaviour and words, or are they selfish and unkind, making accusations even about people they do not personally know? ([2 Tim. 3:1-5](#))
- Are they patiently enduring hardship and suffering, or are they advertising their grievances and grumbling about them to anyone who will listen? ([1 Pet. 2:18-21](#))
- Does what they say result in signs of what is from the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, meekness, faithfulness, and self-control, or do they stir up discord, anger, resentment, fear, paranoia, suspicion, distrust and rebellion? ([Gal. 5:19-23](#))
- Are they selling something (eg ads on YouTube to make money)? ([2 Cor. 2:17](#) and [2 Cor. 4:2](#))
- Are they attracting a lot of followers after themselves? ([1 Cor. 3:3-4](#) and [1 Cor. 4:6](#))
- Do they respect and obey the laws of their government, or do they protest and incite rebellion against them? ([Rom. 13:1-6](#))
- Are they offering positive, helpful words to others, or are they dispensing negativity, suspicion and scandal? ([Lev. 19:16](#))
- Are they joyfully accepting their lot in life or do they share one grievance after another? ([James 1:2-3](#))
- Is their focus on *heavenly spiritual things*, or on earthly natural things? ([Col. 3:1-3](#))

Does the Bible give us practical advice on how to live and respond in difficult times? YES! 😊

Be glad in the Lord always! Again I say, be glad! 😊 Let your gentleness show in your treatment of all people. The Lord is near. **Don't be anxious about anything**; rather, bring up all of your requests to God in your prayers and petitions, along with giving thanks. Then the peace of God that exceeds all understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in Christ Jesus. **Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right**. Think about things that are **pure and lovely**, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. **Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about**. In everything you do, **stay away from complaining and arguing** so that no one can speak a word of blame against you. You are to live clean, innocent lives as children of God in a dark world full of people who are crooked and stubborn. **Shine out among them like beacon lights**, holding out to them the Word of Life. **Don't worry about anything**; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank Him for His answers. If you do this, you will

experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your hearts quiet and at rest as you trust in Christ Jesus.

Nobody who serves in the military gets **tied up with civilian matters**, so that they can please the one who recruited them... Remind them of these things and warn them in the sight of God **not to engage in battles over words** that aren't helpful and only destroy those who hear them. Make an effort to present yourself to God as a tried-and-true worker, who doesn't need to be ashamed but is one who **interprets the message of truth correctly**. **Avoid their godless discussions**, because they will lead many people into ungodly behavior, and their ideas will spread like an infection. **Stay away** from people who say foolish things that are not from God. **Stay away** from those who argue against the truth. They use something they call "knowledge," but it is really not knowledge. Some people who claim to have that "knowledge" have gone completely away from what we believe. Dear friends, **don't believe everyone who claims to have the Spirit of God**. Test them all to find out if they really do come from God. **Put everything to the test**. Accept what is good and don't have anything to do with evil.

I urge you, my friends: **watch out for those who cause divisions** and upset people's faith and go against the teaching which you have received. Keep away from them! For those who do such things are not serving Christ our Lord, but their own appetites. **By their fine words and flattering speech they deceive innocent people**. Everyone has heard of your loyalty to the gospel, and for this reason I am happy about you. I want you to be wise about what is good, but innocent in what is evil. Our fight is **not against people on earth**. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world's darkness. We are fighting against the **spiritual powers** of evil in the heavenly world.

I tell you this in the name of the Lord: **You must not live any longer like the people of the world** who do not know God. Their thoughts are foolish. Their minds are in darkness. They are strangers to the life of God. This is because they have closed their minds to Him and have turned their hearts away from Him. They do not care anymore about what is right or wrong. They have turned themselves over to the sinful ways of the world and are always wanting to do every kind of sinful act they can think of. But **you did not learn anything like this from Christ**. Watch your talk! No bad words should be coming from your mouth. Say what is good. **Your words should help others grow as Christians**. Do not make God's Holy Spirit have sorrow for the way you live. The Holy Spirit has put a mark on you for the day you will be set free. Put out of your life all these things: bad feelings about other people, anger, temper, loud talk, bad talk which hurts other people, and bad feelings which hurt other people. **You must be kind to each other**. Think of the other person. Forgive other people just as God forgave you because of Christ's death on the cross. (*Phil. 4:4-8, 2:14-16; 2 Tim. 2:4,14-16; 1 Tim. 6:20,21; 1 Jn 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21,22; Rom. 16:17-19; Eph. 6:12; 4:17-20,29-32*)

Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. (Phil. 1:27)

