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## John 3

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

## John 3.

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### Topics.

- Unless one is born again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.
- What is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- The wind blows where it wishes.
- Christ descended from heaven.
- As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness.
- For God so loved the world.
- Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness.
- The friend of the Bridegroom rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's voice.
- He who is of earth belongs to the earth he who is from heaven is above all.

**NOTE:** for information concerning people, places and the meaning of words see Map Locations and People of the Bible, and Bible Dictionary on Website Menu.

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### JOHN 3:1-7

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#### Unless one is Born Again, they cannot see the Kingdom of God.

- **John 3:1-7:** Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi (master) we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again

Nicodemus belonged to a group called the Pharisees which means, the separated ones they were rulers of the Jews and the most-strict and by far the most influential sect of the three prominent societies of Judaism that were around at the time of Christ (the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes). Pharisees loved to wear distinguishing garb so as to be easily recognised and were found everywhere in Palestine not only in Jerusalem. They made three contributions to Judaism so that ultimately Pharisaism and Judaism became almost synonymous. The changes the Pharisees made to the Jewish faith began in earnest after the Babylonian Captivity, the temple worship and the sacrifices had ceased so the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees began to centre the activities of Judaism in Jewish Law, tradition and in the religious rites of the Synagogues.

#### The three changes the Pharisees made to Judaism:

1. **Jewish legalism:** the scribes who were considered experts in interpreting the Scriptures studied the traditional exegesis of the Law which resulted in it becoming a major part of Jewish thought and giving Jewish legalism a great impetus during the New Testament era.

The Pharisees closely associated with the scribes organised the followers of the scribes teaching in the Synagogues thus legalism became widespread in the Jewish faith.

2. **Formalised religion:** the Pharisees formalised the religion of the scribes and their interpretation of the law they placed it into the mind of Jewish faith and the practice of it in the synagogues and religious ceremony. The reason the scribes and Pharisees are often mentioned together in the New Testament is because though the Pharisees were not practical politicians like the more liberal Sadducees, they were the religious leaders of the Jews and the highest qualification for membership into the Pharisees was strict adherence to the Law (Oral or written).
3. **Organisation of Jewish religion:** after the 70-year Babylonian captivity and the Maccabean Revolt (165 BC) the scribes increased tradition and adapted it with the Mosaic Law, but it was the Pharisees who formulated, developed and organised the scribes' teachings into Jewish religion itself. This increased focus on law and tradition resulted in separatism and an almost new religion, because much of it was the opposite from what had been handed down in the Covenant by the prophets.

**The Pharisees became a closely organised group:** the Pharisees were very loyal to their own society and to each other, but separate from others and even their own Jewish people, they pledged themselves to obey all facets of the traditions to minutest detail and were sticklers to ceremonial purity. This developed into a feeling of superiority over other nations and people. From this superior feeling as well as religious emotion, pride found its most extreme expression. They were haughty and arrogant because they believed they were the only interpreters of God and His Word they made life difficult for themselves and bitter for others, and despised those whom they did not consider their equals.

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The Pharisees cultivated a national and religious consciousness, which has hardly been equalled. Their teaching that salvation came by maintaining tradition and keeping the law had such a strong influence on the minds of their followers that God's grace was thought to come from self-effort rather than grace so it was only natural that such a religion would ultimately become a matter of externals and not a faith of the heart. For further information see the title:

- Sanhedrin in, Bible Dictionary (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**Born:** means, to procreate of the father and by extension of the mother, figuratively it means to regenerate, revitalize and or to bring forth.

**Do not marvel that I said, "You must be Born Again,"** Nicodemus no-doubt knowing that the religious organisation he belonged to was against Jesus approaches him secretly during the night. It is interesting to notice that even though Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews he humbles himself before Christ and addresses him as Rabbi which means master added to this, he recognised that Jesus was sent and favoured by God because of the miracles he did.

**Unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God:** when Nicodemus hears Jesus words, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He is stunned and confused by Jesus statement because he thought Jesus was talking about a natural birth, so Jesus repeats his statement adding that to enter the Kingdom of God one must be, "Born of water and born of the Spirit," Otherwise no-one can enter the Kingdom of God. The fact Jesus told Nicodemus twice that he must, "Be born again to enter the Kingdom of God," Shows how important it is to understand the phrase, "Born Again." The words, born of water refers to being water baptised while born of the Spirit refers to believing the Good News of the Gospel of grace, repenting before God, and having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for one's salvation to eternal life. A person is born

of the Spirit in that moment when their mind is enlightened to their fallenness before God, the heart is full of remorse and repentance and they accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. In this supernatural moment a person's heart and life is transformed toward the things of God and toward God Himself.

**That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit:** (v3), these words of Jesus, firstly refer to a natural birth (i.e., the flesh), and the words, "It is flesh" means those born by a natural birth remain flesh (i.e., they are earthy minded) meaning that their mind gives no thought toward God it is solely focused on the things of this world it is caught up in either the cares and anxieties this world brings or on gaining material possessions or chasing after the pleasures of this world. They are separated from God and more concerned about protecting and satisfying their own ego, pride and wellbeing than they are about how their life reflects God to others.

**That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit:** The words, "That which is born of the Spirit," Refers to those whose minds at the hearing of the Good News of the Gospel are illuminated to their fallenness and separation from God and brought to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for righteousness and eternal salvation in this spiritual moment their sins are forgiven and God's eternal favour is toward them. A person's life and heart is supernaturally transformed toward God when this life changing event happens (i.e., they are now transformed from being earthly minded to being heavenly minded which means that their mind is more concerned with the things that concern God and His Kingdom than the things of this world, added to this they now care about how their life reflects God's character and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ more than they are about their own ego, pride and wellbeing. The apostle Paul explains this life changing event with the following words:

- God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).

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## JOHN 3:8

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### **The Wind Blows where it Wishes.**

- **John 3:8:** The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

There are two aspects to this verse:

- 1 Jesus is likening the Spirit of God to the wind (i.e., the wind appears to have a mind of its own, no-human can control it or stop it from going in any direction the wind simply blows north, south, east or west it goes wherever it wishes regardless of obstacles or what is in its way, but everyone feels it. Jesus is telling Nicodemus no-one can control the Spirit, it cannot be controlled, or stopped from saving those God is going to save, the Spirit goes where it will and saves who it will, whether they are rulers of Jews or Pharisees whether they are Jewish or Gentile, rich or poor no-can tell who the Spirit will convict and save.
- 2 A second aspect of Jesus words is the fact that everyone born of the Spirit no matter who they are, rich or poor and no matter what rank they may or may not hold in life all who are born of the Spirit no matter where they are in the world share the Good News of the gospel whereas under the law only the Levitical priesthood proclaimed God's word to the people and then only from the Temple. (See also the notes following v9-12).

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## JOHN 3:9-12

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## How can you believe if I tell you Heavenly Things?

- **John 3:9-12:** Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we (Jesus and his apostles) speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel and should have recognised Jesus Christ and the great revival that was taking place. The wind in (v8) could be seen as the enormous revival that was taking place among the Jews and the Gentiles at that time. Nicodemus would have heard the voices of all those proclaiming the Gospel and of all who were being saved, but he can't understand it. Jesus seems almost amazed at Nicodemus question, "How can these things be?" Nicodemus has seen the enormous revival taking place throughout the land of Israel and, he no-doubt has heard multitudes of testimonies and amazing stories of the miracles Jesus has performed and yet he still does not understand that it is the promised seed of Abraham and of David Israel's Messiah that he is talking too. Nicodemus being a teacher and ruler of the Jews should have understood that Old Testament prophecy was being fulfilled right before his eyes especially since when he first approached Jesus he said:

- Rabbi (master) we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him (v2).

**Earthly things and heavenly things:** when Jesus said to Nicodemus:

- If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? (v12).

**The earthly things:** Jesus would have spoken to Nicodemus about was most likely the Old Covenant and the law and the revival, miracles and testimonies that were taking place all around him.

**The heavenly things:** would refer to Jesus death and resurrection, the New Covenant of salvation to eternal life and glory by grace and Jesus being the Christ the Son of God and the saviour of the world.

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### JOHN 3:13-15

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#### Christ Descended from Heaven.

- **John 3:13-15:** No one has ascended into heaven except (but in KJV) he who descended from heaven *even* (in the KJV), the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Prior to Jesus resurrection no-one ascended to heaven we know this because Paul says:

- That God's Son was the firstborn (resurrected) among many brothers (Rom. 8:29)

And in the book of Colossians he writes:

- Jesus is the beginning, the firstborn (resurrected) from the dead (Col. 1:18).

Added to these are the following words of the book of Revelation:

- Jesus Christ the faithful witness is the firstborn of the dead (Rev. 1:5)

Obviously if anyone has ascended to heaven prior to Christ then not one of these verses can be believed and Jesus certainly cannot be the first resurrected from the dead to heaven. For further information see the title:

- Heaven in, Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

**He who descended from heaven:** these words carry the idea that Jesus origin was heavenly (as the context states in John 3:31-32) and that he was born of God by the Holy Spirit and sent from above. At his water baptism God spoke from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17) and he is the only man God has given all authority to (v35) preparing him for his ministry. Added to all these Jesus teaching was not his own, but his Fathers it is in this sense that Jesus Christ descended or came from above meaning he was born of God and sent by God.

- Also see the notes following the title: He who is of Earth belongs to the Earth He who is from Heaven is above All (John 3:30-36).

**Jesus conversation with Nicodemus:** Jesus begins telling Nicodemus that no- one has yet ascended into heaven, then the conversation changes with the word but, (i.e., but the Son of Man who descended from heaven will be in heaven with God). Jesus is telling Nicodemus that the Son of Man will be the first man to ascend to heaven. Obviously, Jesus is not yet in heaven since he is talking to Nicodemus on earth, Jesus had previously asked Nicodemus, if he can't understand earthly things how will he understand heavenly things? (v12).

Jesus is now speaking heavenly things to Nicodemus, things that not even the apostles understood until Jesus appeared to them after his death and resurrection. Jesus is explaining to Nicodemus that a major future event is about to take place which of course is his death and resurrection to heaven. We know Jesus is talking about a future event because after telling Nicodemus that no-one has ascended into heaven, he says that "as Moses was lifted up so will the Son of Man be taken up." Jesus is telling Nicodemus that he will be the first man to ascend to heaven. Jesus words:

- He who descended from heaven even the Son of Man (v13).

Does not mean that Jesus pre-existed in some spirit form in heaven and then descended into the womb of Mary to become a fetus, the words, "He who descended from heaven," is a Jewish idiom which means, "He was sent by God," (i.e., he had God's favour and blessing). Jesus was sent from God and also born of God and it is in this sense he descended from heaven.

**Ponder for a moment:** we understand that Jesus ascended to heaven because we look back in history, but this conversation Jesus is having with Nicodemus would be causing his mind to race in all directions, imagine his confusion as he listens to the man standing in front of him telling him that he will be the first man to ascend from earth into heaven, even the apostles who lived with Jesus for three years did not understand what Jesus meant when he said:

- The Son of Man will be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day (Matt 17:22-23).

**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness:** Jesus words, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (v14) refer to the following words recorded in the book of Numbers:

- So, Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live (Num. 21:9).

**The majestic wonder and beauty of Bible prophecy:** the story of the serpent on the bronze pole fabulously echoes Christ on the cross. A little after Israel's deliverance from Egypt (called the house of bondage) the people of Israel sinned by speaking against God and against Moses so the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people so that many people of Israel died, so Moses prayed for the people and the LORD said to Moses:

- Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live.

Moses erected a bronze serpent on the pole and if a serpent bit anyone, they would look at the bronze serpent and live (Num. 21:5-9). How majestic and beautiful is the word of God, especially when we think of the following words of Jesus:

- When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he (John 8:28) and, “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out and when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself (John 12:31-32).

Bronze is a symbol of judgement and the serpent of course symbolises sin, thus the serpent on the bronze pole is also a wonderful picture of Christ dying for the sin of all mankind, (though he never sinned himself). Just as the people of the Old Testament look at the serpent on the pole and live, so it is now whenever a sinner comes with repentance to the ‘ONE’ who died for them on the cross their sins are forgiven and they are promised life eternal.

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### JOHN 3:16-18

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#### **For God so Loved the World.**

- **John 3:16-18:** "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

This is the Good News of the Gospel and the simplicity of salvation; God loves humans so much that He sacrificed His only Son so that whoever believes in His Son would inherit eternal life and everlasting glory. This is how simple salvation is, many like the religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes) had made it almost impossible for the people of Israel to find God because of all the traditions and extra laws they had added to the Law of Moses. God seeing how difficult it had become for those seeking Him made salvation enormously simple, so simple most can't accept it, especially intellectual religious leaders. God has placed all His eternal promises in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ whoever repents and accepts the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and faithfully follows him will inherit eternal life and everlasting glory.

**NOTICE:** God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world meaning Jesus did not come to condemn sinners, but to save them, his ministry was one of mercy and grace not judgment, in fact the only people Jesus spoke harshly off was the religious leaders of his generation because they were full of pride and hypocrisy and using their privileged position as priests before God to fulfil their own selfish ambition.

**Whoever believes in him is not condemned** (v18), whoever accepts the Lord Jesus Christ is saved to eternal life and everlasting glory, not because of any righteousness of their own but because of the faith they have in Christ, no-one has the power to save themselves simply because we are all creatures of self, ego, pride and greed etc.

**Whoever does not believe is condemned already:** the following words of Jesus should totally change our attitude to witnessing and how we view the secular world. Jesus said:

- Whoever does not believe in God's Son is condemned already (v18).

In a natural court of Law if a criminal has been tried, found guilty and sentenced to death there is no point in judging or condemning them anymore. This is what Christ is saying, he is the way to God, without him everyone is separated from his Father so what is the point of judging and condemning a person if they are already destined to eternal death. Jesus spent all his effort trying to save people by showing them mercy, kindness



and compassion how much more should those who belong to him do the same. It is only common sense that it is pointless to spend effort and time on judging and condemning people that are already sentenced to eternal death surely like Christ, Paul and Peter etc., our hearts should be focused on salvation not judgement and condemnation.

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### JOHN 3:19-21

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#### **Light has come into the World, and People Loved the Darkness.**

- **John 3:19-21:** And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God."

The light has come into the world refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, he lived a life without sin, he put others before himself and showed kindness, compassion and mercy to all who came to him. His perfect life convicts us all and results in the following two responses:

- 1 Those who love what is right humble themselves and follow him.
- 2 Those who are driven by self, ego, pride and greed etc., reject him because his life exposes their sins.

**NOTE:** evil deeds are not limited to murder, rape, adultery and stealing etc., it also embraces denying God's existence, selfishness, pride, greed and the lack of caring and helping others etc.

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### JOHN 3:22-29

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#### **The Friend of the Bridegroom rejoices greatly at the Bridegroom's Voice.**

- **John 3:22-29:** After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptising. <sup>23</sup>John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptised <sup>24</sup>(for John had not yet been put in prison). <sup>25</sup>Now a discussion arose between some of John's disciples and a Jew over purification. <sup>26</sup>And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, he who was with you across the Jordan, to whom you bore witness—look he is baptising, and all are going to him" <sup>27</sup>John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven (Or God). <sup>28</sup>You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' <sup>29</sup>The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.

**Aenon** (Ainon) is a place of springs in Palestine east of the Jordan River.

A Jew raises the question of purification with some of John's disciples, because under the Old Covenant and the Law only the Levitical priesthood had authority to perform the rights of purification (cleansing). John's disciples accepted John to be a prophet, but it seems after this discussion they are confused as to what authority Jesus and his disciple have to be baptising people so they go to John and he tells them about a bridegroom, a bride and a friend of the Bridegroom.

**The Bridegroom** ----- Is the Lord Jesus Christ.

**The Bride** ----- Are all those who belong to him.

**The Friend of the Bridegroom** --- Is John the Baptist.



In a natural wedding the bridegroom has the bride and his friends are thrilled that he has found the woman of his dreams so not only is the bridegrooms joy complete but so is his friends so they celebrate the event together (thus the Wedding Feast). John is saying being a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ and seeing his bride that John has prepared coming to him is his overwhelming joy and completes his ministry.

**NOTE:** this does not mean that John will not be part of the bridal party at the great marriage feast of the Lamb when Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth (Matt. 25:10) (Rev. 19:7). John is simply using a natural story to show his disciples that his ministry is now complete and must decrease, but his friend's ministry is just beginning and will continue to increase at a rapid rate.

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### JOHN 3:30-36

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**He who is of Earth belongs to the Earth He who is from Heaven is above All.**

- **John 3:30-36:** He must increase, but I must decrease." <sup>31</sup>He who comes from above is above all. He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup>He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. <sup>33</sup>Whoever receives his testimony sets his seal to this, that God is true. <sup>34</sup>For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. <sup>35</sup>The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. <sup>36</sup>Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

The words, "He who is of the earth belongs to the earth and speaks in an earthly way." Refer to John the Baptist, it means John was born of a human father who was a descendant of Adam who is from the dust of the earth. Adam was made of the earth so all humans can be referred to as being earthy or earthly minded, it is in this sense that John refers to himself as belonging to the earth, whereas the words, "He who comes from above is above all." Refer to Jesus who was not born of a human father but by the creative power of God, thus it is in this sense that Jesus is referred to as being from above or from heaven. The words, "He who comes from above," does not mean that Jesus was a spirit being living with God in Heaven as His Son prior to the virgin birth that would mean that Jesus as an existing spiritual entity with a mind and conscience descended from heaven into Mary's womb for nine months to become a baby that fed on her breasts until weaned. Jesus came from heaven or from above simply means that Jesus Christ is the only man (without a human father) to be born of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit, he was sent by the voice of God from heaven at his water baptism and is the only man God has given all authority to (v35). See notes following the title:

- Christ Descended from Heaven (John 3:13-15) (above).

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*As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.*

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