

*“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth”* (Genesis 6:5,11-13). These verses describe the corrupt conditions that existed on the earth before God destroyed the world with a flood in the time of Noah. They show that man was extremely evil, and the reason for this was his evil heart. Jehovah saw the wickedness of man’s heart, and knew that his heart would not get better. Therefore, God destroyed the world. This shows how important the heart of man is!

Those who believe in Jesus as God’s Son frequently speak about their “heart.” Many talk about the religion that they can feel in their heart, and point to that part of their chest where the physical heart is located. Is the physical heart that pumps blood the part of man that God saw was evil in the days of Noah (Genesis 6:5)? Of course not. There are two dangerous, false concepts about the heart of man that we must avoid. First, some think that all that we do in service to God is totally based on feelings. On the other hand there are those that think that in our service to the Lord we must not have any feelings at all. Both of these ideas are wrong. Jesus said that we must love the Lord our God with all our heart (Mark 12:30), so we need to understand what our heart is and what role it plays.

Very rarely does the Bible mention the physical organ of the body that we call the heart (2 Kings 9:24 is one instance where “heart” means the physical heart). Most of the time the word “heart” is used in the Bible in a figurative sense. When God said that *“the imagination of*

*man’s heart is evil from his youth”* (Genesis 8:21), we understand that He was speaking about man’s spiritual or figurative heart, for the physical heart has no moral aspect – it is neither good nor evil. When Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint one of his sons as king of Israel, Jehovah said, *“ . . . for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7). Does a person please the Lord? That depends on his heart, but not the physical one, the spiritual one. Through Jeremiah God predicted that there would come a time when He would write His laws in the “hearts” of the Israelites (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10). Does God literally write literal words on literal hearts? No.

According to the Bible, just what does the heart of man include? Of what does it consist? The spiritual heart of man exists. It is connected with our salvation or damnation. It acts. But what is it? ***One part of the heart of man is the intellect or thinking part of the brain.*** This is plainly seen in the following examples. Solomon prayed to God, saying, *“Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad”* (1 Kings 3:9). The queen of Sheba communed with Solomon *“of all that was in her heart”* (1 Kings 10:2). When Mary saw and heard all that Jesus was doing when He was still a boy, she *“kept all these sayings in her heart”* (Luke 2:51). *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). Man can believe only after hearing the word and carefully considering it (Romans 10:17). Where does this belief take place? In the heart. It is obviously not in the physical heart that one believes that Jesus is the Son of God, but in the spiritual heart.

***The heart of man also includes emotions or feelings.*** The Lord spoke of serving Him *“with joyfulness and with gladness of heart”* (Deuteronomy 28:47). Thus, the heart can be glad. The Bible records that on one occasion

Michal, the wife of David, saw his conduct *“and she despised him in her heart”* (2 Samuel 6:16). The Jews who heard Stephen’s sermon *“were cut to the heart”* (Acts 7:54), and as a result killed him. Paul confessed, *“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart”* (Romans 9:2). All of these passages show that in the Bible the heart includes the emotions or feelings of a person. Let us add this word of caution: feelings or emotions are one part of man’s heart, but they are not all of it. Sometimes people say, “You understand this with your mind, but I understand it with my heart.” Think about that statement. Does it not manifest a misunderstanding of what the heart involves? It surely does. Why? Because, as we have already noted above, a person’s heart includes not only emotions and feelings, but also his intellect or brain, i.e. the intellect or mind is part of the heart.

***A third part of man’s heart is the will or desire.*** The faithful scribe Ezra *“prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments”* (Ezra 7:10). *“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank”* (Daniel 1:8). Paul wrote of a father *“that standeth steadfast in his heart”* about whether or not he should allow his daughter to marry (1 Corinthians 7:37). The Bible says the word of God discerns *“the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12). The expressions in all these verses show that in the Bible “the heart” also includes man’s desires or personal will.

***Yet another part of the heart is the conscience.*** *“David’s heart smote him”* after he cut off part of king Saul’s clothing (1 Samuel 24:5). David obviously felt uncomfortable because he had violated his conscience, but the Bible says that it was his *“heart”* that smote him. Thus, in this instance *“heart”* means conscience. Of David it is also written, *“And David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the*

people” (2 Samuel 24:10). This again refers to his conscience. In 1 John 3:21 we read, *“Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.”* The “heart” in this passage is clearly the conscience. From all that we have seen to this point, what conclusion can we make? The spiritual heart of man includes (1) the intellect, (2) emotions and feelings, (3) will, and (4) conscience. We admit that it is not always possible to divide these four concepts one from another, but if we will remember that our heart consists of these four, then this will help us understand just what the Bible means when it speaks of our heart.

But ***we need to go one step further and consider how we should use our heart.*** It is not enough just to have a heart. Every person has one, but not all people will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). It is also not enough just to use our heart. Everyone uses his heart. We must be certain that we use our heart in the right way. Just what should we do with it? First of all, we need to understand just how important our heart is. *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23). The Lord Jesus said, *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”* (Luke 6:45). From our heart come our words and actions! Evil words and actions come from an evil heart, while good words and actions come from a good heart. By our words and actions we will be judged (Matthew 12:36; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore, a person's heart will either lead him to eternal life or eternal destruction!

***We must keep our heart pure.*** *“Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded”* (James 4:8). We can encourage one another to be faithful, but in the end each of us must keep his own heart pure--this is a personal responsibility. In Jesus’

explanation of the parable of the Sower, He said that only those who have a good and honest heart will continue to bear fruit (Luke 8:15). Our Lord also said, *“Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God”* (Matthew 5:8). How can one keep his heart pure? One great help is to follow the example of David. He said to Jehovah, *“Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11). We must continually strive to think only on things that are pure (Philippians 4:8).

What specifically should we do with our heart? Believe. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved”* (Romans 10:9). But just believing in our heart in the Deity of Jesus is not enough. We need to really trust in the Lord: *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5). The Bible further teaches that we must love the Lord with all our heart (Mark 12:30). How is true love for the Lord manifested? By obedience. Obedience to what? Jesus said, *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). Can love and obedience come together from the same heart? They not only can, they must! Paul wrote to the saints in Rome, *“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you”* (Romans 6:17). They were made free when they obeyed the gospel of the Christ.

One who takes the time to study the Bible will easily understand what it teaches about the heart of man. May God help each of us to understand His will, then truly receive it in our heart, trust in Him with all our heart, love Him with all our heart, and continuously obey Him from the heart.

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# THE “HEART” OF MAN