

Common Misconceptions



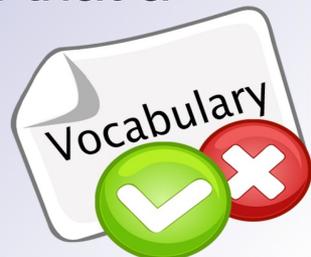
Common Misconceptions

- *Tithing*
- *Cultural Depictions*
- *Beloved Biblical Wisdom*
- *The Holy Spirit*
- *The Reliability of the Bible*
- *Bible Vocabulary (part 3)*



Bible Vocabulary

- Funky little teaching moment...
 - What is a “wraith” (or how would people describe something that is “wraith-like”)?
 - What other common English words look like “wraith” to you?
 (“wreath,” “wrath,” “writhe,” etc.)
 - They all come from the same Old English root word—“wrøth”
 - So what does “wrøth” probably mean?
 - So what does “wraith” probably mean?
(NOTE: The word had functionally dropped out of the English language until philologist J.R.R. Tolkien decided in the 1950s that it would be the etymologically perfect word to use in his Middle Earth books to describe the *Nazgûl*—the Ringwraiths—who’d been twisted by their devotion to the subtly but powerfully evil Ring ... but since Tolkien described the *Nazgûl* as ghostly, most people have just assumed that a “wraith” was something that is ghostly, instead of something that is twisted, and they completely miss the linguistic point that Tolkien was trying to make)



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(“wreath,” “wrath,” “writhe,” etc.)
 - They all come from the same Old English root word—“wrøth”
 - So what does “wrøth” probably mean?
 - So what does “wraith” probably mean?
 - Is what a word *officially means* the same thing as how people *actually use* it?



Bible Vocabulary

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - Let's look at the quintessential example of this in Christianity, and how that messes people up
 - The *original* Apostles' Creed emphasized that Jesus was crucified and was *buried* in a *tomb*—He was really, really *dead*
 - But a later, “tweaked” Creed adds a bit about Jesus descending down to *Hades* (“*ᾗδης*”—the Greek word for the underworld that everyone goes to after death in Greek mythology)



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 - In Latin, the new Creed read that Jesus Christ “*descendit ad inferos*”
(a form of the Latin word, “*infernus*,” meaning “belonging to the lower regions” —like how the Roman god of the underworld, Pluto, was often called “*infernus rex*”)



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 - That got linked to “*descendit... in inferiores*” (from Jerome's Latin translation of Ephesians 4:9)



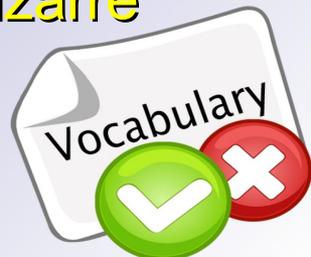
“What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?” (NIV)

“quod autem ascendit quid est nisi quia et descendit primum in inferiores partes terrae?” (Latin)



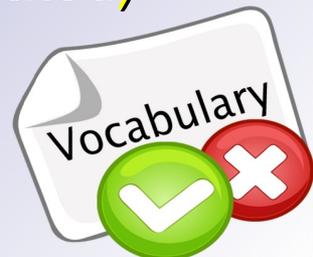
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 - That got linked to “*descendit... in inferiores*” (from Jerome's Latin translation of Ephesians 4:9)
 - But even the writers of the *tweaked* Creed were originally just trying to say, “Jesus was in the grave, the land of the dead, the underworld—i.e.; He really died (He wasn't just “swooning”)...”
 - Still, a whole doctrine began to rise that Jesus descended into Hell to share the Gospel with lost souls, making bizarre use of Ephesians 4:8-10, even though that section has nothing to do with Jesus going to Hell



Bible Vocabulary

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - This part gets a little complicated
 - Paul had written that after His death, Jesus simply returned to where He came from originally
 - Quoting Psalm 68:18, Paul said of Jesus, “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.’ (And what does ‘he ascended’ mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)”
 - So the “lower, earthly regions” (or “*inferiores*” in Latin) would be talking about where we are now, as opposed to being in Heaven above
 - But Tertullian later wrote that here in Ephesians, Paul had referred to *Hell* which—it was commonly believed—is located in the bowels of the Earth (since that’s where the Greeks and Romans had believed that Hades was located)



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 - So the “lower, earthly regions” (or “*inferiores*” in Latin) would be talking about where we are now, as opposed to being in Heaven above
 - But Tertullian later wrote that here in Ephesians, Paul had referred to *Hell*
 - The Church thus began to use the term “*inferos*” (or “*infernos*”) to refer to Hell, since both those words meant “beneath”
 - As time went on, the words lost their *original* meaning and were usually inaccurately associated with the fires of the underworld—which is why we use words like “*inferno*” or “*furnace*” to refer to “fiery” things



Bible Vocabulary

- Funky little teaching moment—
 - So again, what's more important to understand—what a word originally *meant*, or how it's understood by the people *currently using* it?
 - So when we talk about words like “blessing” here, should we look at the original Hebrew and Greek to understand them?
(“בִּרְךְ” or “*barak*,” “εὐλογία” or “*eulogia*,” and “μακάριος” or “*makarios*”)



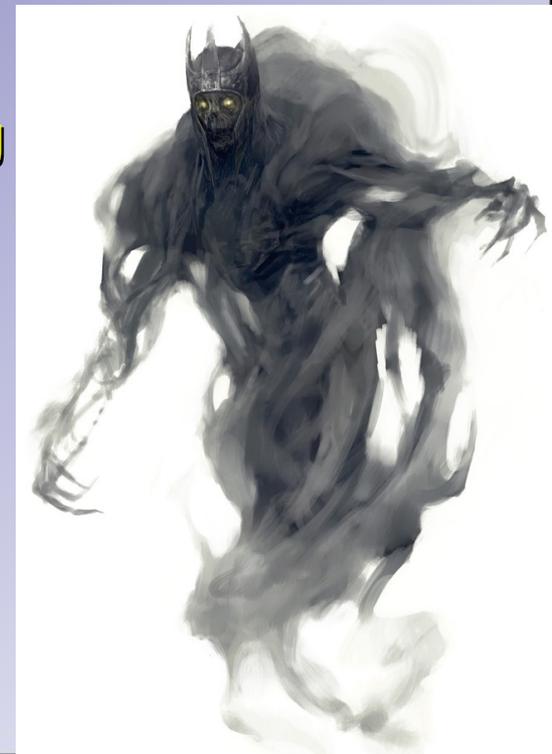
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 - So when we talk about words like “blessing” here, should we look at the original Hebrew and Greek to understand them, or should we look at the original senses of their English translations?
(from “*blædsian*”)
(meaning, “to purify with blood”)



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 - So when we talk about words like “blessing” here, should we look at the original Hebrew and Greek to understand them, or should we look at the original senses of their English translations, or should we look at how they became commonly used? (for instance, that “blessing” came—even arguably in Christ’s time—to mean “to make something special or to bestow a holy gift, simply by speaking to it in God’s name”)



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- Scripture uses words that most secular people don't understand (y'know, “religious-y” words) and that many Christians don't, either
 - “Angel”
 - “Evangelism”
 - “Messiah”
 - “Eucharist”
 - “Holy” or “Sacred”
 - First off, what's the difference between the words “holy” and “sacred” (besides all of the letters)?

(NOTE: The simple answer is, “no difference at all” —people tend to use the words synonymously today)

(NOTE²: The slightly less simple answer is that, just like we just talked about, the words' *original, distinct* meanings do have a bearing on how we nuance our understanding of what we mean theologically when we use those words today)



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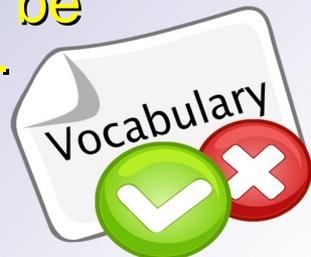
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- “Sacred” comes from the Latin word, “*sacrare*” (meaning “to set apart”)

(which is pretty much what the Hebrew word for it, “שִׁדְדֵּשׁ” or “*qodesh*” meant, too but a smidgey bit different from what the Greek word, “ἅγιος” or “*hagios*” meant)

(it also meant, “set apart,” but came out of a sense of something being horrible or terrifying—i.e.; something to be avoided because it's so awful... so how did the Greeks seem to think about “holy” things... and do we reflect that today?)



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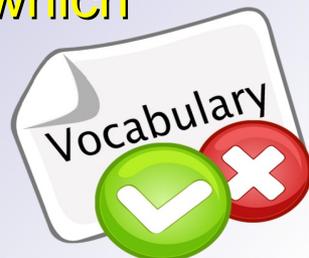
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(NOTE: There's a whole ton of English words that come from this background, especially through its noun form in Latin, “*sanctus*”—such as “**sanctify**”

(“sanctification” refers to the act of setting something apart as holy)

(which is distinct from “justification” which refers to the act of deciding or declaring someone to be righteous)

(how do these two “-tifications” work together in our Christian walk in verses like 1 Corinthians 6:9-12?)



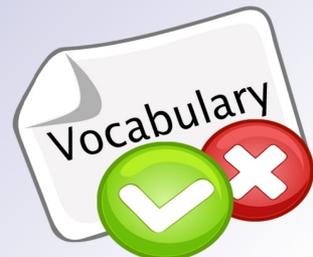
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(NOTE: There's a whole ton of English words that come from this background, especially through its noun form in Latin, “*sanctus*”—such as “sanctify” and “consecrate” and even “saint”)
(a “holy person,” being a corruption of the Old English word, “*sanct*”)



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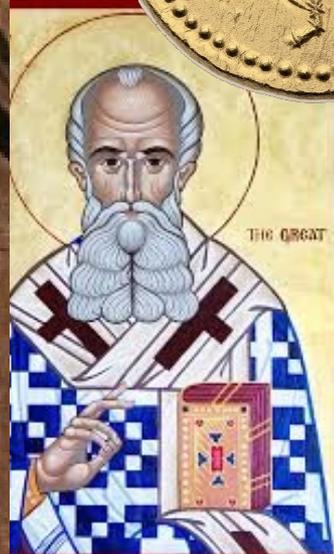
(NOTE²: What do most people mean when they use the word “saint” today?)

- What's this shiny bit here called? (“*ἅλως*” or “*hálōs*” referring to the “disk of light around the sun or moon”)



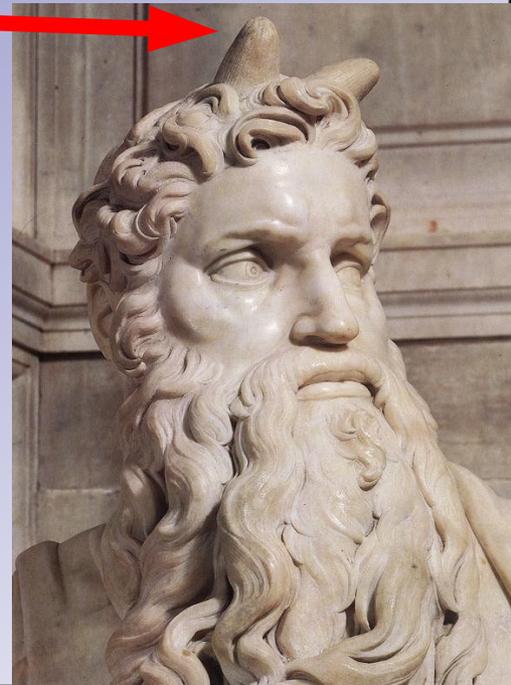
Bible Vocabulary

- Funky little teaching moment...
 - Why do we put shiny halos around saints' heads?
 - 'Cuz that's how Homer (and Greek / Roman myths) described special heroes (see *The Iliad*)
 - 'Cuz that's how Zoroastrians described the “*hvarena*” or “glory” around the heads of Persian royalty
 - 'Cuz that's sort of how the Bible describes Moses



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 - Remember Exodus 34:29?
 - Remember how the Latin translation led to the bizarre Douay-Rheims English translation, which led to the even more bizarre belief that Moses thus had *horns*...?
 - So, stealing from all of these other traditions, it became a common practice to put a halo around the heads of “saints”—you know, the *special* people who are far more holy than run-of-the-mill Christians



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 - Interestingly, it was a common practice in ancient Christian art not to put a halo around Jesus' head until *after* He had been baptised—why is that?
 - So at what point did Jesus become divine?
 - At what point did Jesus become “holy”?



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- "Sacred" comes from the Latin word, "sacrare"
- "Holy" is an English word that ultimately comes from an Old Germanic word "*hailaga*" (meaning "complete" or "undamaged")

(NOTE: This is why the modern German word for "holy" is "*heilig*"—as in "*Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht*")

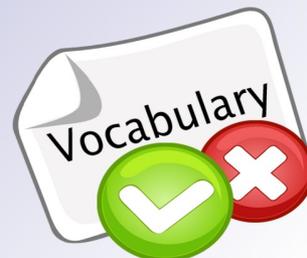
104. Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht.



1. Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht, al - les schläft,
2. Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht, Hir - ten erst
3. Stil - le Nacht, hei - li - ge Nacht, Got - tes - sohn,

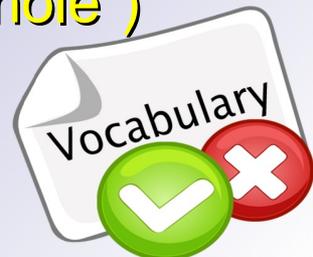


ein - sam wacht nur das trau - te, hoch -
kund ge - macht durch der Eu - gel
o wie lacht Lieb' aus dei - nem



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(NOTE: This is why the modern German word for “holy” is “*heilig*”)
(NOTE²: This is also how we get several other English words from the same etymological root —such as “healthy” and “hale” and “whole”)



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- "Holy" is an English word that ultimately comes from an Old Germanic word "hailaga"

- The choice to use this word focuses on the idea that "sacred" things were *already* things that were pure, untainted, or special to *begin* with

- That makes total sense when we think of verses such as Exodus 12:5 or 1 Peter 1:19

- But what does it do to people's gut-impression of holy *Christians*, such as in Romans 1:7?

- Again, what do *most* people mean when they use the word "saint" today?

- Why would making "saints" special, "magic" holy people be so attractive?



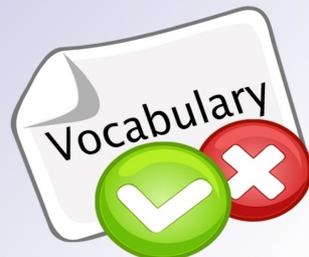
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- Funky little teaching moment...
 - In Catholic tradition, an important part of the Eucharistic Mass is the “elevation” of the cup and the host so that everyone in the congregation can see that the elements had been transmuted into the actual blood and body of Jesus Christ
 - Once the parts have been thus “consecrated” by the priest, they now have special powers
 - According to Catholic tradition (and the Catholic Encyclopedia), it was believed that once a Christian physically saw the holy elements being elevated, “Sudden death could not befall him. He was secure from hunger, infection, the danger of fire, etc.” for the rest of the week, until the next Mass
 - For that matter, because of its properties as a “blessed” and thus “holy” object of divine power, Teresa of Avila wrote
“I know by frequent experience that there is nothing which puts the devils to flight like holy water”
 - In fact, during the Middle Ages, priests were ordered to keep their holy water locked up, since people would often steal it for its magic



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 - First off, what's the difference between the words “holy” and “sacred” (besides all of the letters)?
 - So if we would all agree that “holy” or “sacred” things are important, but not magical, then what's the point?
 - What's the point of eating a “holy meal” in the Lord's Supper if not to receive magical blessings?
 - What's the point in setting aside one day of the week as “holy” if not because there's something innately *already* magical about that day?
 - What's the point in calling Christians “saints” if not to indicate that those were the already special, magical Christians?
 - How do we live out the concept of holiness —of personal sanctification—in our own lives as Christians today as an act of worship?



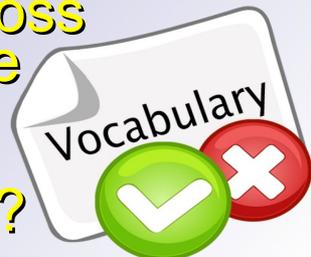
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 - “Worship”
 - Again, let's start by asking what most people think when they use the word “worship” today—
 - What does it mean to the guy on the street to “worship” something or someone?
 - What exactly is the point of a “worship” service? (i.e.; it's not a “worship” service if you don't _____)



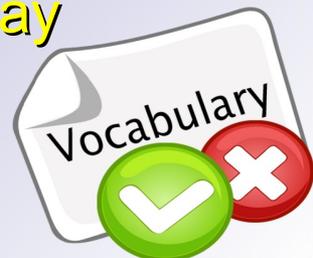
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 - **“Worship”**
 - Again, let's start by asking what most people think when they use the word “worship” today
 - **What does the word *itself* mean?**
 - The modern English word comes from the Old Saxon word, “*weorðscipe*” (which literally means, “the condition of being worthy or of great value”—not that the *worshiper* is worthy, but that you are *ascribing* worship to the object of your worship)
 - So how do our “worship” services (across the board, in various churches) ascribe great worth to God?
 - How can our “worship” services (even in the context of “worship”) *not* do that?



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 - The modern English word comes from the Old Saxon word, “weorðscipe”
 - **The most commonly-used Hebrew word for “worship” in the Old Testament was “שָׁחָה” or “shachah” (meaning “to bow down” or even “to fall flat”)**
 - As we've said, etymology isn't the same as common usage—so what would you say is the “tonal” sense of what “worship” meant to the Hebrews?



Bible Vocabulary

- **Funky little teaching moment...**

- So does that mean that it's wrong to stand and lift our hands in worship, if the word means "to bow down" in worship?

- There are still several places in Scripture where lifting (or even clapping) your hands is presented as a completely appropriate form of prayer or worship

- Read Lamentations 3:41

- Read Psalm 134:2

- Read Psalm 63:4

- Read 1 Timothy 2:8

- Read Psalm 47:1

- So how can lifting (or even clapping) our hands possibly be an act of bowing down before God?

- Read Psalm 95:2

- (NOTE: The word for "thanksgiving" here is "תּוֹדָה" or "*towdah*," which comes from the idea of reaching out your hands with a thanks offering to God)



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 - Read Psalm 47:1
 - So how can lifting (or even clapping) our hands possibly be an act of bowing down before God?
 - Read Psalm 95:2
 - The point is thus to make sure that everything that you do in "worship" is actively reminding yourself that you're doing this to honor God...



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 - **The most commonly-used Greek word for “worship” in the New Testament was “προσκυνέω” or “proskyneō” (meaning “to kiss toward”)**
(like a dog licking the hand of its master or a subject kissing his king's ring)
 - What is the “tonal” sense of what “worship” meant to the Greeks?



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 - **What does the word *itself* mean?**
 - The modern English word comes from the Old Saxon word, “weorðscipe”
 - The most commonly-used Hebrew word for “worship” in the Old Testament was “שָׁחָה” or “shachah”
 - The most commonly-used Greek word for “worship” in the New Testament was “προσκυνέω” or “proskyneō”
 - **So, Biblically, how well do the Hebrew, Greek, and English words line up in terms of meaning?**
 - How would you summarize “worship” here?
 - What are ways that we can consciously, actively “worship” God in our own lives?

